

# **SSC BANKING MANTHAN**

## **Current Affairs Supplement**

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# **January 2021**

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## **Preface**

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**Dear Readers,**

The “Current Affairs” section is an integral part of any examination. This edition of Manthan has been developed by our team to help you cover all the important events of the month for the upcoming exams like Banking, Insurance, CLAT, MBA etc. This comprehensive bulletin will help you prepare the section in a vivid manner. We hope that our sincere efforts will serve you in a better way to fulfil aspirations.

**Happy Reading!**

**Best Wishes**

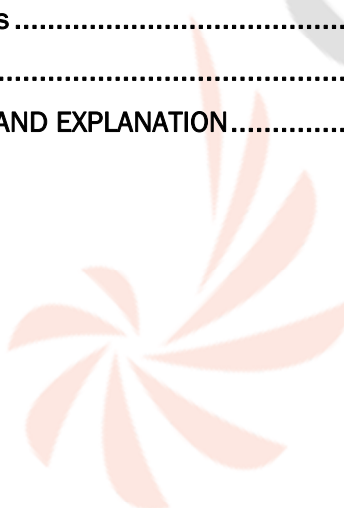
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## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### National



#### India unfurls Blue Flags on its beaches

- **India**, which has become the first country in the world to receive the Blue Flag Certification for 8 beaches in a single attempt, hosted the Blue flags in all its beaches. **India unfurled the 8 Blue Flags on its beaches** which once again showcases a national level campaign to safeguard its coastal region.
- National level campaign integrated with the **BEAMS (Beach Environment and Aesthetics Management Services) program** for continuous awareness and education of people for Blue Flag certification journey.
- **BEAMS is an Integrated Coastal Zone Management initiatives undertaken for sustainable development of 13 coastal regions of the country**, with a prime objective to conserve the pristine coastal and marine ecosystems.

**Blue Flag certification** is given by the non-governmental organisation (NGO) the Foundation for Environmental Education, the Blue Flag is a well-recognised voluntary eco-label given to a beach, marina, or sustainable boating tourism operator which meets its standards. It is headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark. A beach has to meet **33 criteria** including environmental, educational, safety, and accessibility criteria fixed by the FEE to get the tag.

#### The 1818 battle of Bhima-Koregaon

- **The 1818 battle of Bhima-Koregaon, should be included in the history textbooks**, said Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale who is also president of the Republican Party of India (A). Mr. Athawale visited the battle's victory obelisk or ranstambh at Perne near Koregaon-Bhima village and offered tributes.
- **Bhima-Koregaon, a small village in Pune district of Maharashtra**, has a rich Maratha history. Two hundred years ago, on **January 1, 1818**, a few hundred Mahar soldiers of the East India Company, led by the British, defeated the massive Peshwa army, led by Peshwa Bajirao II, in Koregaon.
- Being the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the gathering in Bhima Koregaon 2018 was much larger than usual. **Many Dalit and Bahujan groups collectively organised a public conference in the name of Elgar Parishad at Shaniwar Wada**, which was the seat of the Peshwas until 1818. On **January 1, 1927**, Bhimrao Ambedkar started the ritual of holding a commemoration at the site of this pillar, one that is repeated every year.

**The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989** is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to prevent atrocities against scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The Act is popularly known as the **SC/ST Act, POA, the Prevention of Atrocities Act, or simply the Atrocities Act**. It was enacted when the provisions of the existing laws (such as the Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955 and Indian Penal Code) were found to be inadequate to check these crimes (defined as 'atrocities' in the Act). **Recognising the continuing gross indignities and offences against Scheduled Castes and Tribes, the Parliament passed the 'Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989**. The rules for the Act were notified on **31 March 1995**. **The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015** to ensure more stringent provisions for prevention of Atrocities against Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.



## Madhya Pradesh: India's first tiger reserve hot air balloon safari launched

- Recognised as the 'Tiger State' of India, Madhya Pradesh has launched India's first hot air balloon safari in its famous Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve located in Umaria district. It is the first in any tiger reserve in the country. Now like Africa's forests, tourists in India will also enjoy hot air balloon wildlife safari.
- Madhya Pradesh has witnessed a consistent rise in its tiger population. According to the Tiger Census report 2019, the state topped the survey with total 526 tigers compared to 308 tigers in 2014. It took over Karnataka which enjoyed the title of Tiger State in previous years.

Project Tiger is a tiger conservation programme launched in April 1973 by the Government of India during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's tenure. Kailash Sankhala was the first director of Project Tiger. As the Bengal Tiger is the national animal of India, this project aims to stem the dwindling population of the big cats and work to increase their numbers.

## PM Modi flagged off 100<sup>th</sup> Kisan Rail from Sangola in Maharashtra to Shalimar in West Bengal

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the 100<sup>th</sup> Kisan Rail from Sangola in Maharashtra to Shalimar in West Bengal through video conferencing.
- The multi-commodity train service will carry vegetables such as cauliflower, capsicum, cabbage, drumsticks, chillies, onion, as well as fruits like grapes, oranges, pomegranate, banana and custard apple. Kisan Rail has been a game changer in ensuring fast transportation of agriculture produce across the nation. It provides a seamless supply chain of perishable produce.
- Loading and unloading of perishable commodities will be permitted at all enroute stoppages with no bar on size of consignment. The Central Government has extended a subsidy of 50 per cent on transportation of fruits and vegetables.
- The first Kisan Rail was introduced from Devlali to Danapur on 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2020, which was further extended upto Muzaffarpur. As a result of good response from the farmers, its frequency was also increased from weekly to three days in a week.

## MoRTH extends validity of vehicular documents till 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has extended the validity of vehicular documents such as driving licenses (DLs), registration certificates (RCs) and Permits till 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2021 in the light of need to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
- The Ministry had earlier issued advisories on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 9<sup>th</sup> June and 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020 regarding extension of validity of documents related to Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989. It was advised that the validity of Fitness, Permit (all types), License, Registration or any other concerned documents may be treated to be valid till 31<sup>st</sup> of December this year.

Nitin Jairam Gadkari was served as the President of the BJP from 2010-2013. He is the current Minister for Road Transport & Highways of India and Shipping Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in the Government of India. Gadkari represents Lok Sabha from Nagpur constituency, Maharashtra.

## Indian & Vietnamese Navy conclude naval passage exercise PASSEX in South China Sea

- Indian and Vietnamese Navy concluded the two-day naval passage exercise PASSEX in the South China Sea as part of efforts to boost maritime cooperation between the two countries. Indian Naval Ship Kiltan, carrying humanitarian assistance reached Vietnam's Nha Rong Port in Ho Chi Minh City to deliver 15 tonnes of relief material for flood-affected people under Mission Sagar-III.
- This mission of INS Kiltan was part of India's Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) assistance to Friendly Foreign Countries during the ongoing pandemic. Mission Sagar-III is being undertaken in accordance with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) and reiterates India's position as a dependable partner, and the Indian Navy as the Preferred Security Partner and First Responder.

The South China Sea is a marginal sea of the Western Pacific Ocean. The South China Sea disputes involve both island and maritime claims by several sovereign states within the region, namely Brunei, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of China (ROC/Taiwan), Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The nine-dash line area claimed by the Republic of China, later the People's Republic of China (PRC), which covers most of the South China Sea and overlaps with the exclusive economic zone claims of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

## PM Modi inaugurated New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor in Uttar Pradesh via video conferencing. The 351-km section, which has been built at a cost of Rs 5,750 crore, will open new avenues for local industries in Uttar Pradesh.
- PM also inaugurated the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor's (EDFC) operation control centre at Prayagraj. "We have planned to start two dedicated freight corridors. The first one will connect Punjab's Ludhiana to Dankuni in West Bengal. The second one will connect JNPT (Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust), Maharashtra to Dadri in Uttar Pradesh, which will be close to Jewar Airport," PM Modi said.
- First 2 DFC, Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC), from Uttar Pradesh to Mumbai and Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC), Ludhiana in Punjab to Dankuni in West Bengal. Two DFC will decongest railway network by moving 70% of India's goods train to these two corridors, are both on track for completion in December 2021. The EDFC route covers Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. The World Bank is funding a majority of the EDFC.
- The WDFC covers Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. It is being funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

The Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL) is a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) corporation run by the Government of India's Ministry of Railways to undertake planning, development, and mobilisation of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the "Dedicated Freight Corridors" (DFC). The DFCCIL was registered as a company under the Companies Act 1956 in 2006.

## India's first pollinator park opens in Uttarakhand's Haldwani

- The Uttarakhand forest department dedicated the newly built Pollinator Park to the public, claiming it to be the country's first such park, spread over 4 acres in Haldwani in Nainital district.
- The park has more than 40 pollinator species with displays on the mechanism of pollination of plant species by various species of butterflies, honeybees, birds, insects, moths, beetles, wasps, and small mammals. The park also has small water bodies for mud puddling of butterflies through which they take certain nutrients like salt and arrangement of ultraviolet light to attract night pollinators like moths.

Uttarakhand is often referred to as the Devbhumi, due to many Hindu temples and pilgrimage centres found throughout the state. On 9 November 2000, Uttarakhand became the 27<sup>th</sup> state of the Republic of India, being created from the Himalayan and adjoining northwestern districts of Uttar Pradesh. Trivendra Singh Rawat is the eighth and current Chief Minister of Uttarakhand. Baby Rani Maurya is serving as the seventh governor of Uttarakhand since 26 August 2018. The winter capital of Uttarakhand is Dehradun, the largest city of the state, which is a rail head. Gairsain, a town in Chamoli district is the summer capital of Uttarakhand. The High Court of the state is located in Nainital.

## Jharkhand's Kisan Fasal Rahat Yojana

- Jharkhand's Kisan Fasal Rahat Yojana will take three months to come into effect. It is a compensation scheme aimed at providing security cover to Jharkhand farmers in case of crop damage due to natural calamity. It will cover both land owning and landless farmers.
- The Department of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Co-operative will be the implementing agency and it will work in association with a project management unit, which will be a consultancy firm that will take care of technical requirements.

Jharkhand is a state in eastern India, carved out of the southern part of Bihar on 15 November 2000. The city of Ranchi is its capital and Dumka its sub capital. Draupadi Murmu is the current and first woman Governor of Jharkhand. Hemant Soren is the current Chief Minister of Jharkhand. Previously, he had also served as the Chief Minister of Jharkhand from July 2013 to December 2014. He is the son of Shibu Soren, former Chief Minister of Jharkhand. “Jharkhand” means ‘land of bush or forest’.

## Punjab CM launches DigiNest app

- Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh virtually launched a mobile application ‘DigiNest to give people access to the state government’s directory, which can be synced with a smartphone.
- The Chief Minister also rolled out an online Punjab Advertisement Release Order System to bring transparency and efficiency in the process of releasing state advertisements and payments to media houses. The system would help streamline the process of issuance of advertisements and release of payments.

The state capital of Punjab is Chandigarh, a Union Territory and also the capital of the neighboring state of Haryana. The five rivers from which the region took its name were Sutlej, Ravi, Beas, Chenab and Jhelum; Sutlej, Ravi and Beas are part of the Indian Punjab. Captain Amarinder Singh is currently the 26<sup>th</sup> Chief Minister of Punjab and Vijayendrapal Singh Badnore is the current Governor of Punjab.

## Chhattisgarh signs contract to set up state’s 1<sup>st</sup> ethanol plant under PPP model

- The Chhattisgarh government signed a contract to set up the first ethanol plant in the state under the Public-private partnership (PPP) model.
- As per official release, the contract was signed by Boramdev Cooperative Sugar Factory Kawardha and Chhattisgarh Distillery Limited’s subsidiary NKJ Biofuel for a period of 30 years.
- This is the first example in the country to set up an ethanol plant by PPP model. Chhattisgarh will also have an important contribution in the production of biofuels in the country by setting up an ethanol plant in the state.”

Chhattisgarh was formed on 1 November 2000 by partitioning 10 Chhattisgarhi and 6 Gondi speaking southeastern districts of Madhya Pradesh. It is a land locked state of India. The capital city is Raipur. Anusuiya Uikey is present Governor of Chhattisgarh. Bhupesh Baghel is serving as the third and current Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh.

## PM Narendra Modi dedicated Kochi-Mangaluru Natural Gas Pipeline to nation

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the Kochi - Mangaluru Natural Gas Pipeline to the nation through video conferencing. The event marks an important milestone towards the creation of One Nation One Gas Grid. The 450 kilometre long pipeline has been built by GAIL (India) Limited. It has transportation capacity of 12 Million Metric Standard Cubic Metres per day.
- It will carry natural gas from the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Regasification Terminal at Kochi, Kerala to Mangaluru, Karnataka, while passing through Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod districts. The total cost of the project was about three thousand crore rupees and its construction created over 12 lakh man-days of employment.

National Grid is the high-voltage electric power transmission network in mainland India, connecting power stations and major substations and ensuring that electricity generated anywhere in mainland India can be used to satisfy demand elsewhere. All the willing rural households would be provided with cooking gas and electricity connection by 2022 that is by the 75<sup>th</sup> year of India’s independence. India is the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases after the US and China. The Grid would be helpful in meeting emission reduction targets that were signed at Paris Agreement which would be done by increasing the usage of natural gas and Green fuel.

## India gets its first women’s team in disaster combat

- In yet another example of shattering of the proverbial glass ceiling, the first batch of over 100 women disaster combatants and rescuers has been inducted into the country’s federal calamity force NDRF.



- An all-woman team of freshly trained **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel** was recently **deployed for contingency duties on the banks of the Ganga River in Uttar Pradesh's Garh Mukteshwar town.**
- Every NDRF battalion has been seconded by a **Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) like the CRPF or the ITBP and the parent force is responsible for feeding its manpower,** who are sent on a time-bound deputation to the force.
- The NDRF has 12 operational battalions at present located in various States. It is a specialised unit that was **raised in 2006 for specific tasks of relief and rescue during natural and man-made disasters or life threatening situations.**

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is an **Indian specialized force constituted "for the purpose of special response to a threatening disaster situation or disaster" under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.** The **"Apex Body for Disaster Management in India** is the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).** The Chairman of the NDMA is the Prime Minister. **The responsibility of managing disasters in India** is that of the **State Government.** The **'Nodal Ministry'** in the central government for management of natural disasters is the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).** National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is under the National Disaster Management Authority. The head of the NDRF is designated as Director General.

### Supreme Court clears Central Vista Project in National Capital

- **The Supreme Court gave its nod to the Central Vista Project in the National Capital** in a majority verdict. The apex court said the exercise of the **power under the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) Act** was valid and the recommendations of environmental clearance by the Ministry of Environment were proper.
- **The three-judge bench comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari, A. M. Khanwilkar and Sanjiv Khanna** also called upon the Environment Ministry to install smog towers in future projects, particularly in those cities where pollution is an issue.
- The Apex Court said in its judgment that the **heritage conservation Committee approval is needed** when construction work is to begin. It also directed the project proponents to get approval from the heritage committee.
- On 10 December 2020, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone** with a ceremony of sarva dharma prarthana (inter-faith prayer). **The new Parliament Building is being constructed at a cost of 971 crore rupees** which will house more Committee Rooms and Political Parties offices than the existing Parliament House.
- **"The new building is an intrinsic part of the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and will be a landmark opportunity to build peoples' Parliament for the first time after independence, one which will match the needs and aspirations of 'New India' in the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence in 2022."**
- **The Central Vista project includes construction of a new Parliament building, with the existing building converted into a museum.** Five big office buildings each would come up on both sides of Rajpath, while the National Museum and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts buildings would be pulled down to make way for the new buildings.

Originally called the House of Parliament, it was **designed by the British architects Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker in 1912-1913** as part of their wider mandate to **construct a new administrative capital city for British India.** Construction of the Parliament House began in 1921 and it was **completed in 1927.** The opening ceremony of the Parliament House, which then housed the Imperial Legislative Council, was **performed on 18 January 1927** by Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India. The construction cost back then was **Rs 83 lakh** - a princely sum in those days. **The current Central Vista project is estimated to cost Rs. 971 crore.**

### Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurates migrant worker cell in Surat

- Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has **inaugurated a migrant worker cell of Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) at Udhna based iLab in Surat.** This will help in connecting **'Shramshakti'** to relevant industries and **boost their livelihood** and also ensure their dignity.
- **Migrant workers' Cell** has been created by Surat Municipal Corporation for the first time in the Country under the **'National Urban Livelihood Mission Scheme'.**

- The aim to create this cell is to **prepare a database of migrant workers in Surat city with mapping**. The city has a **presence of over 15 lakh migrant workers**. Their data is required during natural calamities and other situations like pandemic.

**Dharmendra Debendra Pradhan is currently serving as the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Minister of Steel in the Second Modi Ministry. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha in March 2018 from Madhya Pradesh.**

## World's first hospital train 'Lifeline Express' currently stationed in Assam

- **The Indian Ministry of Railways** recently took to the social media and shared few of the pictures of **World's first and India's only hospital train 'Lifeline Express' which is currently stationed in Badarpur, Assam.**
- **The hospital train Lifeline express (Jeevan Rekha Express)** is equipped with two modern operation theatres, 5 operating tables and other necessary facilities. Patients from across the country are treated free of cost on the train, mainly those who come from far-flung and remote areas under the government's flagship programme. A team of doctors is always present on the train.
- **The first hospital train in the world, Lifeline Express provides treatment to patients across the country,** mainly those who come from far-flung and remote areas under the government's flagship programme.

**Indian Railways (IR)** is the **fourth-largest railway network in the world by size**. There are a total of **18 Railway zones**. **South Coast Railway Zone is the newest and 18<sup>th</sup> railway zone, headquartered at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.** **Piyush Vedprakash Goyal is currently serving as the Minister of Railways and Commerce in the Government of India.** He was elected as the **BJP candidate from Maharashtra for the Rajya Sabha on 3 June 2016.** **The practice of a separate Railway Budget was started by the British in 1924 under the recommendation of a 10-member Acworth Committee headed by British economist William Mitchell Acworth in 1920-21.** **On 21 September 2016, Government of India approved the merger of the Railway Budget with the Union budget of India,** and thus came to end — a 92-year-old practice of separate rail and general budgets.

## India to be a co-chair of regional forum to conserve wildlife habitats

- After successfully increasing population of wild animals such as tigers, lions and leopards through protecting their habitats, **India will be the co-chair of the IUCN-supported Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP) for three years** and it would, in this capacity, assist other Asian countries in managing their protected areas.
- The APAP is a regional platform to help governments and other stakeholders to collaborate for more effective management of protected areas (PA) in the region. **The APAP currently consists of 21 members from 17 countries including China, Japan, South Korea, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.**

**International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** is an international organization **working in the field of nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.** The organization is best known to the wider public for compiling and **publishing the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species,** which assesses the conservation status of species worldwide. **Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland.**

## Madhya Pradesh rolls out 'Launch Pad Scheme' to make youth self-reliant

- **In Madhya Pradesh, 'Launch Pad Scheme' is being started for boys and girls coming out of child care institutions and having completed 18 years of age.**
- The objective of this scheme of the Women and Child Development Department is to **provide such a platform to these youth, through which they will be able to become self-reliant by continuing their education and training.**
- **Under the launch pad scheme, 52 districts of the state have been divided into 5 clusters.** Five divisional headquarters are being started in Indore, Sagar, Gwalior, Jabalpur and Bhopal. This innovation of Madhya Pradesh Government has also been approved by the Central Government and will be implemented in the current financial year.

- Under this scheme, the District Administration will provide space to these youths for opening of coffee shops, stationery, photocopying, computer typing and DTP work. **An amount of Rs 6 lakh will be provided by the Women and Child Development Department for the installation of each launch pad.** These launch pads will be operated through non-governmental organizations.

**Madhya Pradesh (meaning Central Province)** is a state in central India. Its **capital is Bhopal**. Nicknamed the **“Heart of India”** due to its geographical location in India. **Madhya Pradesh is the second-largest state in the country by area after Rajasthan.** This state was the largest in India by area until 2000, when its southeastern Chhattisgarh region was made as a separate state. MP has the largest reserves of diamond and copper in India. **The current governor of Madhya Pradesh is Anandiben Patel.** Shivraj Singh Chouhan is the current Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh.

## Toyathon 2021 launched to promote manufacturing of indigenous toys

- Union Education Minister **Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’** and Union Minister for Textiles and Women & Child Development **Smriti Zubin Irani** jointly launched the **Toyathon 2021.**
- This Toyathon is aimed to conceptualize innovative toys based on the Indian value system which will inculcate the **positive behaviour and good value among the children.** There will be two categories for the Toyathon, one is for online toys and another for physical toys.
- **Toyathon is an inter-Ministerial initiative of six Ministries** wherein nine themes will be promoted under three tracks for junior level participants, senior level participants and start-ups & professional level.

The **Ministry of Education (MoE)**, previously the **Ministry of Human Resource Development (1985-2020)**, is responsible for the implementation and formulation of the **National Policy on Education** approved by Union cabinet of India and to ensure that it is implemented in letter and spirit. The Ministry is held currently by **Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank.** He represents the **Haridwar Parliamentary constituency of Uttarakhand** in the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha. **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad** is the **First Minister of Education** in the Indian. He is commonly remembered as **Maulana Azad**; the word Maulana is an honorific meaning **‘Our Master’** and he had adopted **Azad (Free)** as his pen name.

## Cabinet approves signing of Memorandum of Cooperation between India, Japan on partnership in ‘Specified Skilled Worker’

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing of a **Memorandum of Cooperation between Indian and Japan on a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to ‘Specified Skilled Worker’.**
- The Memorandum of Cooperation would set an **institutional mechanism for partnership and cooperation between India and Japan on sending and accepting skilled Indian workers,** who have qualified the required skill and Japanese language test, to work in fourteen specified sectors in Japan.
- These Indian workers would be **granted a new status of residence of Specified Skilled Worker by the Government of Japan.** The Memorandum of Cooperation would enhance people-to-people contacts, foster mobility of workers and skilled professionals.

**Naruhito** is the **Emperor of Japan.** He acceded to the **Chrysanthemum Throne on 1 May 2019,** beginning the **Reiwa era,** following the **abdication of his father, Emperor Akihito,** on 30 April 2019. He is the **126<sup>th</sup> monarch according to Japan’s traditional order of succession.** **Tokyo** is the **capital city of Japan** and **yen** is the **official currency of Japan** and it is the **third most traded currency in the foreign exchange market after the United States dollar and the euro.** The current Prime Minister is **Yoshihide Suga.**

## Narendra Singh Tomar, Nitin Gadkari, Smriti Irani to participate in online Davos Agenda summit

- Several union ministers including **Narendra Singh Tomar, Nitin Gadkari, Smriti Irani, Piyush Goyal and Dharmendra Pradhan** along with top business leaders such as **Mukesh Ambani and Anand Mahindra** will participate in a **five-day online Davos Agenda summit of the World Economic Forum** this month.



- While the WEF will host its physical annual meeting in May in Singapore, as against the regular venue of Swiss ski resort town of Davos, the Geneva-based organisation is hosting an online event, named ‘Davos Agendaaround’ the same time it generally hosts its yearly congregation of the rich and powerful of the world.
- While the WEF annual meeting for 2021 will be held on May 13-16 in Singapore, the high-profile summit will return to Davos in 2022.

The World Economic Forum (WEF), based in Coligny, Geneva Canton, Switzerland, is an international NGO, founded in 1971. The WEF’s mission is stated as “committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas”. The WEF hosts an annual meeting at the end of January in Davos, a mountain resort in Graubunden, in the eastern Alps region of Switzerland. The WEF was founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab.

### India to get UN tag of international disaster response force for NDRF

- India could soon be a part of the United Nations (UN) mandated international disaster rescue operations as the country’s federal contingency force, NDRF, is expected to obtain a globally recognised standardisation later this year.
- The authorisation will be done by the Switzerland-headquartered INSARAG (or the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) which is a network of more than 90 countries and organisations under the UN umbrella to deal with urban search and rescue related issues.
- “Just like we have the Bureau of Indian Standards in the country, the UN agency INSARAG standardises disaster response teams across the world. It is an international gold standard,” NDRF director general S N Pradhan told.

### Indian Railways achieves a train speed of 130 kilometer per hour on Golden Quadrilateral - Golden Diagonal route

- Indian Railways has started the New Year by achieving a landmark to enhance the maximum speed to 130 kilometres per hour for 1,280 km length out of 1,612 Km in Golden Quadrilateral - Golden Diagonal route. This covers the entire GQ-GD route over South Central Railway, except Vijayawada - Duvvada section, where signaling upgradation work is in progress.
- The Ministry of Railways said that the enhanced speed limits could be achieved due to the systematic and planned strengthening of track and its infrastructure by removing bottlenecks in these sections at a fast pace. This included heavier rails, laying of 260 meters long welded rail panels, improvement of curves and gradients among others.

Golden Quadrilateral (GQ) is a national highway network connecting most of the major industrial, agricultural and cultural centres of India. It forms a quadrilateral connecting the four major metro cities of India, viz., Delhi (north), Kolkata (east), Mumbai (west) and Chennai (south). Diamond Quadrilateral is a project of the Indian railways to establish a high speed rail network in India. The Diamond Quadrilateral will connect the four mega cities in India, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, similar to the Golden Quadrilateral expressway system.

### Centre to form panel to resolve issues relating to Ladakh land, culture

- The Centre has decided to form a committee under Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy to find a solution to issues associated with preservation of Ladakh’s land, culture and language apart from demands from the region to be included under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
- A 10-member delegation from Ladakh met Home Minister Amit Shah. The delegation is learnt to have expressed concern over threat to the region’s unique culture, language and demography due to recent changes brought about by the Centre to the status of the region.
- Fears have also been expressed about land rights and demand for inclusion in the Sixth Schedule was discussed. The delegation included former MPs Thiksay Rinpoche and Thupstan Chhewang, former BJP minister Chering Dorjay, Leh chief executive councillor Tashi Gyalsen and sitting BJP MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal.

The Sixth Schedule was originally intended for the predominantly tribal areas (tribal population over 90%) of undivided Assam, which was categorised as “excluded areas” under the Government of India Act, 1935 and was under the direct control of the Governor. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution provides for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to safeguard the rights of the tribal population in these states. This special provision is provided under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution. The Sixth Schedule provides for autonomy in the administration of these areas through Autonomous District Councils (ADCs).

## Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of the Ecosystem Services (NCAVES) India Forum-2021

- NCAVES India Forum 2021 is being organised by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). India is one of the five countries taking part in this project - the other countries being Brazil, China, South Africa and Mexico.
- The NCAVES Project, funded by EU, has been jointly implemented by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD).
- In India, the NCAVES project is being implemented by the MoSPI in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC). The participation in the project has helped MoSPI commence the compilation of the Environment Accounts as per the UN-SEEA framework and release environmental accounts in its publication “EnviStats India” on an annual basis since 2018.
- Another feather to the cap under the NCAVES project is the development of the India-EVL Tool which is essentially a look-up tool giving a snapshot of the values of various ecosystem services in the different States of the country, based on about 80 studies conducted across the country.

## I&B Minister launched Govt’s Digital Calender, Diary App

- Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar launched Government’s Digital Calender and Diary App in New Delhi. Government calendar that has adorned the walls in the past will now adorn mobile phones.
- He said, now technology has changed and there are now 120 crores mobile phones in the country. The Minister said, 70 crore people are using mobile phones and they are using calendar in mobile. Mr Javadekar said, paperless governance has come to offices and files are now moving as e-files.
- The digital calender is an environment-friendly initiative. Mr Javadekar said, the digital calender inaugurated is available in Hindi and English, but it will be available in 11 languages from 15<sup>th</sup> of this month. The calender has a theme for every month and it will also have all informations of 100 revolutionary programmes of the government.
- The GOI Calender and the Diary App is available for download on both Google Play store and iOS App Store. The app has been designed and developed by Bureau of Outreach and Communication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The app will do away with the need for a new calendar every year.

Prakash Javadekar is currently serving as the Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Minister of Information and Broadcasting and Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises. He is currently elected to the upper house Rajya Sabha as a Member of Parliament from Maharashtra in 2018.

## India to chair three-key subsidiary bodies of UNSC

- India will be chairing three-key subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The panels are, Counter-Terrorism Committee (for 2022), Taliban Sanctions Committee, and Libya Sanctions committee.
- India will chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee of UNSC in 2022. India will be assuming the chair of the Libya Sanctions Committee at a critical juncture when there is an international focus on Libya and on the peace process.

**United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. Under the Charter, the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 Members, and each Member has one vote. Under the Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions. The permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (also known as the Permanent Five, Big Five, or P5) are China (formerly the Republic of China), Russia (formerly the Soviet Union), France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Antonio Guterres is a Portuguese politician and diplomat who is serving as the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations. Previously, he was the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees between 2005 and 2015.

## Air India's Zoya Aggarwal to command world's longest route

- An all-women pilot team of Air India will fly over the North Pole on the world's longest air route as the carrier's first non-stop service between San Francisco and Bengaluru will start.
- Captain Zoya Aggarwal, Captain Papagari Thanmai, Captain Akansha Sonaware and Captain Shivani Manhas will be among the all-women pilot team to fly the longest commercial flight in the world.
- The flight will be commanded by Captain Aggarwal, who has a flying experience of more than 8,000 flying hours. She has command experience in a B-777 aircraft of more than 10 years and more than 2,500 flying hours. She was also the youngest woman pilot to fly a Boeing-777 in 2013.

## World's largest repatriation exercise Vande Bharat Mission brings back over 44.7 lakh people

- The Phase-9 of Vande Bharat Mission has been made operational from 1<sup>st</sup> of this month and 1,495 international flights have been scheduled which will be operated from 24 countries.
- The World's largest repatriation exercise Vande Bharat Mission has been brought back more than 44.7 lakh people since May 2020.

Vande Bharat Mission is the biggest evacuation exercise to bring back Indian citizens stranded abroad amidst the coronavirus-induced travel restrictions. The Indian Navy has also launched Operation "Samudra Setu" (Sea Bridge) to repatriate Indian citizens from overseas.

## NIXI offers free Domain in local Indian languages

- The National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) has announced that it will offer a free Internationalized Domain Name, IDN in any of the preferred 22 official Indian language along with every IN domain booked by the registrant.
- Applicant will also get a free email in local language. This offer has been created to stimulate the adoption of भारत IDN domain name and proliferation of local language content.

National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) is a not for profit organization working since 2003 for spreading the internet technology to the citizens of India through the activities like Internet Exchanges through which the internet data is exchanged amongst ISPs and between ISPs and CDNs, IN Registry managing and operation of IN country code domain and भारत IDN domain for India and Indian Registry for Internet Names and Numbers (IRINN), managing and operating Internet protocol IPv4 or IPv6.

## India becomes first country to culture U.K. variant strain

- India has successfully cultured the new coronavirus strain, which originated in the U.K., the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said. Culture is the process by which cells are grown under controlled conditions, generally outside their natural environment.
- In a tweet, the ICMR claimed that no country has yet reported successful isolation and culture of the UK-variant of SARS-CoV-2. Culture is the process by which cells are grown under controlled conditions, generally outside their natural environment. "UK-variant of the virus, with all signature changes, is now successfully isolated and cultured at the National Institute of Virology (NIV) from the clinical specimens collected from UK-returnees," the ICMR said.

The new UK virus variant, which scientists have named “VUI – 202012/01”, includes a genetic mutation in the “spike protein”, which could result in coronavirus spreading more easily between people. It was **first announced by Matt Hancock, the UK health secretary, on December 14**, and was subsequently confirmed by Public Health England and the UK’s Covid-19 sequencing consortium. **Screening back through databases of SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes Covid-19, the first sample was taken in the county of Kent on September 20. A virus is a small collection of genetic code, either DNA or RNA, surrounded by a protein coat. A virus cannot replicate alone. Viruses must infect cells and use components of the host cell to make copies of themselves.**

**Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The first case was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. It has since spread worldwide, leading to an ongoing pandemic. Symptoms of COVID-19 are variable, but often include fever, cough, fatigue, breathing difficulties, and loss of smell and taste. Symptoms begin one to fourteen days after exposure to the virus. Various testing methods have been developed to diagnose the disease. The standard diagnosis method is by real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) from a nasopharyngeal swab.**

## India ranked high in the latest edition of the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) released by non-profit Germanwatch

- **India ranked high along with the European Union and the United Kingdom** in the latest edition of the **Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) released by non-profit Germanwatch**, December 7, 2020. However, the country needed to focus more on renewable energy, both, as a mitigation strategy and for its post-novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) green recovery, the report said.
- **No country was doing enough to meet the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement**, according to the index. Six G20 countries were ranked among very low performers. **The United States, with a rank of 61, was the worst performer.**
- **India, for the second time in a row, continued to remain in the top 10.** The country scored 63.98 points out of 100. It received high ratings on all CCPI indicators except ‘renewable energy’, where it was categorised as having a ‘medium’ performance.
- **Last year, India had been ranked at the ninth position, with an overall score of 66.02.** The CCPI is an independent monitoring tool for tracking countries’ climate protection performance. It has been **published annually since 2005.**
- Political momentum on climate policy was **growing despite the postponement of the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**, as several countries had updated their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the report said. But India’s performance under ‘climate policy’ was rated as ‘medium’. **India’s reluctance to update its NDC might be due to fears of lack of reciprocity from the developed countries**, the report said.

**In 2015, ahead of the UN significant climate conference in Paris, India announced three major voluntary commitments called the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC): 1. Improving the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33–35% by 2030 over 2005 levels. 2. Increasing the share of non-fossil fuels-based electricity to 40% by 2030. 3. Enhancing its forest cover, thereby absorbing 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide. The Paris Agreement is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), dealing with greenhouse-gas-emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance, was adopted by 196 parties at the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of Parties in Paris, on December 12, 2015, and was enforced on November 4, 2016. On June 1, 2017, United States President Donald Trump announced that the U.S. would cease all participation in the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation and withdrawal took effect on November 4, 2020, one day after the 2020 U.S. presidential election.**

## Jallikattu is a bull-taming sport held in Tamil Nadu

- **As Pongal celebrations began in Tamil Nadu on 14 January 2021, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi witnessed an Jallikattu event near Madurai and spoke of the “Tamil spirit” and “emotions of the Tamil people”.**



- **Jallikattu is a bull-taming sport that has traditionally been part of the festival of Pongal.** The festival is a celebration of nature, and thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest, of which cattle-worship is part.
- Governments at the state and Centre have wrestled with **formulating a regulatory mechanism for Jallikattu, and a matter relating to whether Tamil Nadu can conserve it as a cultural right under Article 29(1) of the Constitution** — “Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same” — is before the Supreme Court.
- **In 2014, the Supreme Court had ruled that the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, “over-shadows or overrides the so-called tradition and culture”.** The court drew upon Upanishadic wisdom and advised Parliament to “elevate rights of animals to that of constitutional rights... so as to protect their dignity and honour”.
- **A tradition over 2,000 years old, Jallikattu is a competitive sport** as well as an event to honour bull owners who rear them for mating. **It is a violent sport in which contestants try to tame a bull for a prize; if they fail, the bull owner wins the prize.**

**Article 51 (G) of the Indian Constitution states that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures. Kambala is an annual race held in Karnataka where people sprint 142m through paddy fields with buffalo.** During the race, the racers try to bring the buffaloes under control by holding their reins tight and whipping them, making it amply clear that the animal plays an equally important role in achieving the timing.

### Home Minister Amit Shah launched ‘Single Window Clearance System’ for coal mines

- **Ministry of Coal launched Single Window Clearance Portal, a unified platform** that facilitates grant of clearances and approvals required for starting a coal mine in India.
- **Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah launched the portal in presence of Union Minister of Coal & Mines Shri Pralhad Joshi in an event organized in New Delhi to execute agreements with successful bidders of India’s first ever commercial coal mine auctions.**
- **Shri Shah said that 19 successful bidders have been allotted mines under the country’s first commercial coal mining auction.** This will give the states estimated revenue of about Rs 6,500 crore per year and will also create more than 70,000 jobs.

**Amit Anilchandra Shah is currently serving as the Minister of Home Affairs.** He served as the President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from 2014 to 2020. He was **elected to the lower house of Parliament, Lok Sabha, in the 2019 Indian general elections from Gandhinagar.** Earlier, he had been elected as a member of the upper house of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, from Gujarat in 2017. Sworn in at the age of 54, he is the youngest serving full-time Home Minister.

### Ramesh Pokhriyal inaugurated virtual International Akhand Conference EDUCON-2020

- **Union Education Minister Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’ inaugurated the two-day Virtual International Akhand Conference ‘EDUCON 2020’** through a video the conferencing platform on January 7, 2021.
- This two-day International Conference is being **organised by the Central University of Punjab, Bathinda (CUPB) in collaboration with the Global Education Research Association (GERA)** under the patronage of Prof (Dr) Raghavendra P Tiwari, Vice-Chancellor, CUPB & Padma Shri Dr Mahendra Sodha (Patron, GERA).
- **The focal theme of EDUCON-2020 is Envisioning education for Transforming Youth to Restore Global Peace.** This International Conference commenced with the inaugural address by Hon’ble Minister of Education Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’.

The **Ministry of Education (MoE)**, previously the **Ministry of Human Resource Development (1985-2020)**, is responsible for the implementation and formulation of the **National Policy on Education** approved by Union cabinet of India and to ensure that it is implemented in letter and spirit. The Ministry is **held currently by Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank.** He represents the **Haridwar Parliamentary constituency of Uttarakhand** in the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha. **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is the First Minister of Education in the Indian.** He is commonly remembered as **Maulana Azad**; the word Maulana is an honorific meaning ‘Our Master’ and he had adopted **Azad (Free)** as his pen name.

## High Level Committee to commemorate 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

- A High Level Committee, headed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been constituted to commemorate the 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in a befitting manner. Union Culture Ministry has said that the High Level Committee will decide on the activities for a one year long commemoration, beginning 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021.
- The Commemoration is being held as a tribute and as a mark of gratitude to the colossal contribution Netaji made to India's freedom struggle. The members of the Committee will include experts, historians, authors, family members of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, as well as eminent persons associated with Azad Hind Fauj-INA.
- The Committee will also lend guidance to the commemoration activities in Delhi, Kolkata and other places associated with Netaji and Azad Hind Fauj, both in India as well as overseas.

Subhas Chandra Bose was an Indian nationalist whose defiant patriotism made him a hero in India, but whose attempt during World War II to rid India of British rule with the help of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan left a troubled legacy. The honorific Netaji ("Respected Leader") first applied in early 1942 to Bose in Germany by the Indian soldiers of the Indische Legion and by the German and Indian officials in the Special Bureau for India in Berlin, was later used throughout India. He rose to become Congress President in 1938. However, soon after being reelected in 1939, he was ousted from Congress leadership positions following differences with Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress high command. The Provisional Government of Free India (Arzi Hakumat-e-Azad Hind) or, more simply, Azad Hind founded on 21 October 1943, the government was inspired by the concepts of Subhas Chandra Bose who was also the leader of the government and Head of State. He died from third-degree burns received when his plane crashed in Taiwan on 18 August 1945.

## Madhya Pradesh's Kuno Palpur to be India's first cheetah sanctuary

- More than 70 years after Maharaja Ramanuj Pratap Singh Deo of Koriya drove the last of India's Asiatic cheetahs into extinction, the animal is set to return to India. And the Kuno-Palpur wildlife sanctuary, which was upgraded to a national park in 2018, has been designated the new habitat of the fastest animal on land, which can sprint at speeds of 80-128 km per hour.
- Located in the Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh, the Kuno-Palpur National Park is spread over an area of 750 square kilometres. It currently has leopards, jackals, spotted deer, sambhar, neelgai, chinkara, wild boar and the four-horned antelope, a prey base ideal for felids.
- The sanctuary was also chosen for the lion reintroduction project in 2013, despite strong objections from Gujarat, which claimed that lions were part of the state's heritage, that MP had a poor record in wildlife management, that Kuno Palpur had other big cat species which would jeopardise lion relocation.
- Kuno Palpur, therefore, was well on its way to become the only wildlife sanctuary in the world to host all four major cat species—lion, tiger, cheetah and leopard.

## 16<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas organized

- The 16<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was organized. This one day virtual convention was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- During the inaugural session, President of the Republic of Suriname and Chief Guest, Chandrikapersad Santokhi addressed the participants. The Valedictory Address was delivered by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- The theme of this 16<sup>th</sup> Pravai Bharatiya Divas is "Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat".
- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is celebrated once in every two years which provides a unique platform to engage and connect with the overseas Indians.
- January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion because it was on this day in 1915, Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa. After his arrival, Mahatma Gandhi led India's freedom struggle and India got independence.



- The first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was organized in the year 2003 to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India. This convention provides a forum to discuss issues and concerns of the Indian diaspora and honour those individuals who have made exceptional contributions to various fields. Fifteen winners of the Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz also announced during the convention.

## Prime Minister urges youth to be part of Startup India International Summit ‘Prarambh’

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said events’ being held virtually has given a great opportunity for youngsters to be a part of many interesting domestic and global forums. Prarambh, the Startup India International Summit, which is being held on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of this month is one such opportunity.
- This Summit seeks to bring together the top minds from industry, academia, investment, banking, finance and young start up leaders. Nation would also be marking 5 years since the Start-Up India initiative began. This initiative has propelled India to be among the most attractive start-up eco-systems globally.

Startup India is an initiative of the Government of India. The campaign was first announced by Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi during his speech in 15 August 2015 address from the Red Fort, in New Delhi. A startup defined as an entity that is headquartered in India, which was opened less than 10 years ago, and has an annual turnover less than Rs.100 crore (US\$14 million).

## Nitin Gadkari launched “Khadi Prakritik Paint” developed by KVIC

- Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari launched an innovative new paint developed by Khadi and Village Industries Commission. The eco-friendly, non-toxic paint, called “Khadi Prakritik Paint” is a first-of-its-kind product, with anti-fungal, anti-bacterial properties.
- Based on cow dung as its main ingredient, the paint is cost-effective and odourless, and has been certified by Bureau of Indian Standards. Khadi Prakritik Paint is available in two forms - distemper paint and plastic emulsion paint. Production of Khadi Prakritik Paint is aligned with Prime Minister’s vision of increasing farmers’ income.

Nitin Jairam Gadkari was served as the President of the BJP from 2010-2013. He is the current Minister for Road Transport & Highways of India and Shipping Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in the Government of India. Gadkari represents Lok Sabha from Nagpur constituency, Maharashtra.

## Indian Navy coordinated second edition of largest coastal defence exercise Sea Vigil-21

- Indian Navy coordinated the second edition of the largest coastal defence exercise Sea Vigil-21 starting. The two-day biennial pan-India coastal defence exercise, inaugural edition of which was conducted in January 2019, was undertaken along the entire 7,516-kilometre long coastline.
- The exercise also includes Exclusive Economic Zone of the country and will involve all the 13 coastal States and Union Territories along with other maritime stakeholders. It also included the fishing and coastal communities. The entire coastal security set up was reorganised after the 26/11 Terror attack at Mumbai which was launched via the sea route.
- SEA VIGIL and TROPEX together covered the entire spectrum of maritime security challenges, including transition from peace to conflict. Assets of the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, Customs and other maritime agencies participated in SEA VIGIL. The exercise is also facilitated by the Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs, Shipping, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Fisheries, Customs, State Governments and other agencies of Centre and State.

## India to set up \$ 1 million financial facility for academic collaboration with Arab world

- India decided to set up one million dollar facility for academic collaboration with the Arab World in a step that will have far reaching impact on people to people contacts between Delhi and its extended neighbours.
- This was decided at third Senior Officials Meeting of the Arab-India Cooperation Forum held via video conference. The financial facility will be a rolling one and continue to be replenished.

The Arab world also known as the Arab nation consists of the 22 Arab countries which are members of the Arab League. A majority of these countries are located in Western Asia, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa; the southernmost member, the Comoros, is an island country off the coast of East Africa.

## Defence Secretary co-chairs 13<sup>th</sup> India-Vietnam Defence Security Dialogue with his Vietnamese counterpart

- Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar co-chaired the 13<sup>th</sup> India-Vietnam Defence Security Dialogue along with his Vietnamese co-chair Sr Lt Gen Nguyen Chi Vinh, Deputy Defence Minister of Vietnam. During virtual interaction, both of them expressed satisfaction at the ongoing defence cooperation between the two countries in spite of the limitations imposed by COVID 19.
- During the interaction, the Defence Secretary and the Deputy Defence Minister exchanged views on the **plan of action that has emanated from the recently concluded Virtual Summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Xuan Phuc in December 2020.**

Vietnam is the easternmost country on the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam. The dong has been the currency of Vietnam since May 3, 1978. Nguyen Phu Trọng is the current President of Vietnam. Nguyen Xuan Phuc is the current Prime Minister of Vietnam.

## India's first Fire Park comes up in Odisha

- Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the 'Fire Park', a first of its kind initiative in the country, to bring awareness on fire safety measures. He also launched a dynamic online portal, 'AgnishamaSeva' of Odisha Fire Service on virtual platform. Located inside the premises of the Odisha Fire and Disaster Academy in Bhubaneswar.

The modern state of Odisha was established on 1 April 1936, as a province in British India. The ancient kingdom of Kalinga, which was invaded by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka in 261 BCE resulting in the Kalinga War, coincides with the borders of modern-day Odisha. Konark Sun Temple is a 13<sup>th</sup>-century CE sun temple at Konark about 35 kilometres northeast from Puri on the coastline of Odisha, India. The temple is attributed to king Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty about 1250 CE. Ganeshi Lal is current Governor of Odisha. Naveen Patnaik is the current and 14<sup>th</sup> Chief Minister of Odisha.

## NIC and CBSE to jointly launch CollabCAD Software

- National Informatics Centre and Central Board of Secondary Education, CBSE jointly launched CollabCAD Software to provide a total engineering solution for students and Faculty of Engineering Graphics Curriculum. This initiative aims to provide a great platform to students across the country to create and modify 3D digital designs with a free flow of creativity and imagination.
- This software will also enable students to collaborate over designs across the network and concurrently access the same design data for storage and visualization. National Informatics Centre, NIC, CBSE, and Atal Innovation Mission also jointly released a comprehensive e-book on CollabCAD 3D modeling. The Electronics and IT Ministry said, it will guide CAD students, beginners, and professionals in understanding and using CollabCAD Software.

National Informatics Centre (NIC) is an attached office under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) established in 1976 in the Indian government. The NIC provides infrastructure to help support the delivery of government IT services and the delivery of some of the initiatives of Digital India.

## India proposes 8 point agenda to UN Security Council to combat terrorism

- External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar has said that COVID-19 has further aggravated the terrorism concerns for the world. Speaking at the United Nations Security Council open debate on the topic of Threats to International Peace and security caused by terrorist acts, Dr Jaishankar said the economic uncertainty caused due to the pandemic has made the radical extremist ideologies more susceptible towards terrorist activities.

- **External Affairs Minister proposed an eight point action plan in order to combat the menace of terrorism.** He said, the council should not countenance double standards in their battle against terrorism. Dr. Jaishankar added that there are no good and bad terrorists. He asserted, those who propagate such distinctions have an agenda and those who cover up for terrorists are equally culpable.

**Subrahmanyam Jaishankar** is the current **Minister of External Affairs of the Government of India** since 31 May 2019. He is a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party and is a **Member of Indian Parliament in the Rajya Sabha since 5 July 2019, representing Gujarat.** He has previously served as the **Foreign Secretary** from January 2015 to January 2018. He joined the **Indian Foreign Service in 1977.**

## Farmers in Maharashtra benefiting from ‘Rin Samadhan Yojna’

- **State Bank of India has provided a major relief to farmers under its loan settlement schemes.** Many farmers in Maharashtra are benefiting from this **Rin Samadhan Yojna.** The bank has appealed to the **borrower farmers to immediately contact their respective SBI branch** to avail the benefit of this loan waiver scheme.
- **Under the Rin Samadhan Yojna, if the farmer, who has borrowed loan, pays 20 per cent of the principal amount of the total dues, pending since two years,** then the entire loan will be waived. At the same time, new agricultural loans are also being given to these farmers. This is providing a great relief to the farmers.

**Maharashtra is India’s second-most populous state and third-largest state by area. Nagpur is Maharashtra’s second capital and hosts the winter session of the state legislature. Pune is its cultural capital. Shiv Sena President Uddhav Thackeray takes oath as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. Uddhav Thackeray is the first of his family to be the chief minister of Maharashtra. His father Bal Thackeray founded the Shiv Sena over five decades ago. Bhagat Singh Koshiyari is serving as the current Governor of Maharashtra.**

## Kevadiya, India’s first railway station with green building certification

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off eight trains connecting different regions of the country to Kevadiya, Gujarat via video conferencing. Kevadiya station is India’s first railway station with a Green Building Certification.** Kevadia is home to the Statue of Unity dedicated to Vallabhbhai Patel, in Gujarat.

## India’s first Labour Movement museum to come up in Kerala

- **India’s first Labour Movement Museum, showcasing the history of world labour movement, will be launched in Kerala’s houseboat tourism hub, Alappuzha.**
- The museum will feature a huge repository of documents and exhibits that **shaped the labour movements across the continents and impacted Alappuzha, the cradle of the labour movement in the country, in particular and Kerala in general.**
- A trade union can be defined as an organised association of workers in a trade or profession, formed to further their rights and interests. **In India, Trade Unions in India are registered under the Trade Union Act (1926).**

## In a first in India, Haryana launches Air Taxi services

- **Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar inaugurated air taxi services from Chandigarh to Hisar from Chandigarh Airport under UDAN scheme of the central government. For the first time in the country, a small aircraft in the form of an air taxi is being used for services.**
- The launch of the flight operations under UDAN RCS is in sync with the **government’s objective to provide air connectivity with metros to the Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities of the country.** The second phase services for Hisar to Dehradun started on January 18. On January 23, in the third phase, two more routes from Chandigarh to Dehradun and Hisar to Dharamshala will be added.

**Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN)** was launched as a regional connectivity scheme under the **Ministry of Civil Aviation in 2016.** The scheme is implemented by the **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** and is operational for a period of 10 years. **In April 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the first Shimla-New Delhi flight under a government scheme to boost regional air connectivity. The first flight operations from Belgaum (Karnataka) to Surat (Gujarat) to Kishangarh (Ajmer) were flagged off under the RCS-UDAN (Regional Connectivity Scheme – Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) of the Government of India.**



## In A First for India, Bhopal Issues ID Cards for Third Gender

- In a first for India, the local administration in Bhopal has started issuing ID cards to people from the third gender to help them avail the benefits of the state government's welfare schemes. Through the ID cards, the third gender would be eligible for the schemes that are run by the social justice department in the state. Bhopal is the first district in the country to give ID cards to the transgender community.

Third gender, or third sex, is a concept in which individuals are categorized, either by themselves or by society, as neither man nor woman. In 2014, In National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India case, the Supreme Court of India declared transgender people to be a 'third gender'. It also affirmed that the fundamental rights granted under the Constitution of India will be equally applicable to transgender people, and gave them the right to self-identification of their gender as male, female or third-gender.

## Govt launches PMKVY 3.0 to empower youth with new-age skills to boost employability

- The government launched the third phase of its flagship skilling scheme Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY 3.0) in a bid to empower the country's youth with employable skills by making over 300 skill courses available to them.
- PMKVY 3.0 envisages training 8 lakh candidates over the scheme period of 2020-2021 with an outlay of Rs 948.90 crore. The third phase of the scheme is designed towards making skill development more demand-driven and decentralised in its approach, with focus on digital technology and Industry 4.0 skills.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is a skill development initiative scheme of the Government of India for recognition and standardisation of skills. The aim of the pmkvy scheme is to encourage aptitude towards employable skills and to increase working efficiency of probable and existing daily wage earners, by giving monetary awards and rewards and by providing quality training to them. National Skill Development Council (NSDC) has been made coordinating and driving agency for the same.

## Private space: On public notices under Special Marriage Act

- In a significant judgment affecting inter-faith couples seeking to get married under the Special Marriage Act, 1954, the Allahabad High Court has ruled that it would be optional and not mandatory for them to publish a notice about their intended marriage.
- The provision for mandatory publication of notice, derived through "simplistic reading" of the particular law, "would invade in the fundamental rights of liberty and privacy, including within its sphere freedom to choose for marriage without interference from state and non-state actors, of the persons concerned," the court said in a judgment delivered on January 12.
- Since the matter relates to protection of fundamental rights of a large number of persons, the judge directed the senior registrar of the court to send a copy of the order to U.P. Chief Secretary. The same is to be communicated "to all the marriage officers in the State and other concerned authorities as expeditiously as possible". The Allahabad High Court has struck down the provisions under Section 5 of the Special Marriage Act that required parties to give a 30-day mandatory public notice of their intention to marry.
- Justice Vivek Chaudhary mandated that while giving notice under Section 5 of the Special Marriage Act, 1954 it shall be optional for the parties to the intended marriage to make a request in writing to the marriage officer to publish or not to publish a notice under Section 6 and follow the procedure of objections as prescribed under the Act.

Basis of Judgement is progressive rulings by the Supreme Court: Aadhaar case (2017) which made the right to privacy a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. Hadiya Marriage Case (2018) which held that the right to choose a partner is a fundamental right. Navtej Singh Johar vs. Union of India case (2018) in which the court decriminalised homosexuality striking down the Section 377 of IPC.

## Parakram Diwas celebrations mark 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary year of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

- Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's, 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary on 23 January 2021 is observed as Parakram Diwas. The day is celebrated to honour and remember Netaji's indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation. The day

is being celebrated as **Parakram Diwas**. The Government has decided to celebrate the birth anniversary of Netaji as 'Parakram Diwas' every year.

- **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897, in Cuttack in Odisha.** He graduated from Kolkata and proved his mettle by becoming an **Indian Civil Services (ICS) officer**. But he left the comfort and amenities that came with his job and decided to be part of the freedom struggle. **With the slogan "Give me blood and I will give you freedom"**, he awakened the country towards fighting against the British.
- **At the time of India's Independence, Clement Attlee the British Prime Minister** said that the **loyalty of the Indian army and navy to the British state** was declining due to the increasing military activities of Bose's Azad Hind Fauj and this was one of the major reasons that nudged Britishers into leaving India.
- **The All India Forward Bloc (AIFB) is a left-wing nationalist political party in India.** It emerged as a faction within the **Indian National Congress in 1939, led by Subhas Chandra Bose**. The party re-established as an independent political party after the independence of India.
- **A High Level Committee, headed by the Prime Minister, has been constituted to commemorate the 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose** in a befitting manner. Union Culture Ministry has planned a number of activities and projects for this year-long commemoration.
- **The Ministry of Education proposed to establish five chairs on Netaji in five Indian Universities,** organize online Lectures and Webinars on teachings of Netaji. NFDC under I&B Ministry will organize a short-film competition on - How to fulfill Netaji's dreams for India.

**Indian National Army (INA) or Azad Hind Fauj (Free Indian Army)** was an armed force formed by **Indian nationalists and Imperial Japan in 1942** in Southeast Asia during World War II. Its aim was to secure Indian independence from British rule. The army was first formed in 1942 under Mohan Singh, by Indian PoWs (Prisoners of war) of the British-Indian Army captured by Japan in the Malayan campaign and at Singapore. Rash Behari Bose handed over INA to Subhas Chandra Bose. It was revived under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose after his arrival in Southeast Asia in 1943. Netaji built a force known as the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army) giving the slogan of "Dilli Chaloo". By 1938 Bose had become a leader of national stature and agreed to accept nomination as Congress President. Subhas Chandra Bose was re-elected as the Congress' president in 1939, defeating Pattabhi Sitaramaiah at the Tripuri Congress which prompted Mahatma Gandhi to label Pattabhi Sitaramaiah's defeat as his own. This, Chandra Kumar Bose claims, is very 'unfortunate' as Netaji had 'great respect for Mahatma Gandhi' and pointed out that it was **Subash Chandra Bose who first hailed Gandhi as the 'Father of the Nation'** while leading the Azad Hind Forces. His mentor was Chittaranjan Das who was a spokesman for aggressive nationalism in Bengal. Subhas Chandra Bose's death occurred from third-degree burns on 18 August 1945 after his overloaded Japanese plane crashed in Japanese-ruled Formosa (now Taiwan).

### TRIFED and IFFDC enter into MoU to work together for tribal livelihood generation

- **The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) and Indian Farm Forestry Development Co-operative Ltd (IFFDC) entered** into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work together for tribal livelihood generation.
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs in a statement said that the **two organizations have agreed to partner with each other to organise training programmes for tribal artisans** in the area of entrepreneurship skill and business development. They will also collaborate further to **identify and implement Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and tribal development efforts.**

**Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) launched Van Dhan Samajik Doori Jagrookta Abhiyaan,** which is aimed at educating Tribals engaged in gathering Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in forest areas, on covid-19 response, key preventive behaviour like social distancing, home quarantine, and hygiene tips. Van Dhan Kendras, established under the scheme initiated by TRIFED, Ministry of Tribal Affairs are leading the way in helping tribals generate their livelihood in these distressed times. TRIFED is a national level cooperative body under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. It was established under the Multi-state co-operative societies act 1984 under the former Ministry of Welfare. Arjun Munda is the current Minister of Tribal Affairs.

## First India-EU IPR dialogue held to strengthen relation

- The first India-EU IPR dialogue between the European Union (EU) Commission and Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) was held through a virtual platform.
- “The meeting was jointly hosted by EU Commission and DPIIT and was co-chaired by the Joint Secretary of DPIIT Ravinder and Carlo Pettinato, Head of Unit Investment & Intellectual Property, Directorate-General for Trade European Commission”.
- The India Co-Chair provided an overview of various IPR developments, with an aim to meet the objectives set forth in the National IPR policy 2016. He also reiterated importance of legislative reforms brought in by India to stimulate innovation and creativity among start-ups and MSMEs.

The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union of 27 member states that are located primarily in Europe. EU policies aim to ensure the free movement of people, goods, services and capital within the internal market. Passport controls have been abolished for travel within the Schengen Area. A monetary union was established in 1999, coming into full force in 2002, and is composed of 19 EU member states which use the euro currency. The United Kingdom became the first member state to leave the EU on 31 January 2020. The EU traces its origins to the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC), established, respectively, by the 1951 Treaty of Paris and 1957 Treaty of Rome. The latest major amendment to the constitutional basis of the EU, the Treaty of Lisbon, came into force in 2009. It is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. Ursula Gertrud von der Leyen is a German politician and physician who has been the president of the European Commission since 1 December 2019. Charles Michel is a Belgian politician serving as President of the European Council since 2019.

## MoRTH notifies Inter Country Transport Vehicles Rules 2021

- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has notified Inter Country Transport Vehicles Rules, 2021 which would facilitate and regulate the movement of passenger and goods vehicles between India and neighbouring countries.
- As per the rules, the State Transport Authority has been given the power to grant the Inter Country Transport Permit after thoroughly examining the application. The permit will remain valid for a period of one year from the date of its issue and it will be renewable for a period of five years on yearly basis.
- The decision has been taken considering the requests made by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to notify rules under provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act 1988 to facilitate movement of vehicles carrying goods and passengers between India and neighbouring countries. The frequency can be reviewed by the State Transport Department and it can be increased as per the demand.

Nitin Jairam Gadkari was served as the President of the BJP from 2010-2013. He is the current Minister for Road Transport & Highways of India and Shipping Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in the Government of India. Gadkari represents Lok Sabha from Nagpur constituency, Maharashtra.

## Madhya Pradesh takes lead in undertaking power sector reforms stipulated by Department of Expenditure

- Madhya Pradesh has taken the lead in undertaking power sector reforms stipulated by the Department of Expenditure of the Ministry of Finance.
- As part of the reforms, the State has started Direct Benefit Transfer of electricity subsidy to farmers in one district of the state with effect from December last year. Thus, the State has successfully implemented one out of the three stipulated reforms in the power sector.
- The Ministry of Finance in a statement said that successful implementation of the reform has made the State eligible to mobilise additional financial resources equivalent to 0.15 per cent of its Gross State Domestic Product.
- The Department of Expenditure has granted permission to the State to mobilise additional financial resources of Rs 1,423 crore through Open Market Borrowings. It has provided the much needed additional financial resources to the State to fight COVID-19 pandemic.



- Power Sector reforms stipulated by the Ministry of Finance **aim at creating a transparent and hassle free provision of power subsidy to farmers and prevent leakages.** They also aim at improving the health of power distribution companies by alleviating their liquidity stress in a sustainable manner.

**In view of the resource requirement to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic,** the Government of India had on 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 **enhanced the borrowing limit of the States by 2 percent of their GSDP. Half of this special dispensation was linked to undertaking citizen centric reforms by the States. The States get permission to raise additional funds equivalent to 0.25 percent of GSDP on completion of reforms in each sector.** The four citizen centric areas identified for reforms were (a) **Implementation of One Nation One Ration Card System,** (b) **Ease of doing business reform,** (c) **Urban Local body/ utility reforms** and (d) **Power Sector reforms.**

### Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani announces ‘Horticulture Development Mission’

- **In Gujarat, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani announced the ‘Horticulture Development Mission’ (Bagayat Vikas Mission).** Mr. Rupani said that the aim of this mission is to double the income of farmers involved in medicinal and horticulture farming.
- Under this mission, **the waste land of the government will be given on 30-year lease for farming of horticulture and medicinal crops.** As per an estimate, the government has about 50,000 non-cultivated land waste lands. The government intends to convert this land into cultivation. A list of land blocks for land allotment in transparent manner will be released on I-Khedut portal.

**Gujarat is a state on the western coast of India with a longest coastline of India 1,600 km (990 mi). Its capital city is Gandhinagar, while its largest city is Ahmedabad. Gujarat International Finance Tec-City is a business district promoted by the Government of Gujarat through a joint venture company. GIFT City is India’s first operational smart city in the Ahmedabad and international financial services centre. Acharya Devvrat is Governor of Gujarat and Vijay Rupani is the current Chief Minister of Gujarat. Gujarat has become the first state to implement newly-introduced 10 per cent reservations in government jobs and higher education for the economically weaker sections in the general category and followed by Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh.**

### NITI Aayog releases 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of India Innovation Index-2020

- **NITI Aayog released the second edition of the India Innovation Index-2020.** The index demonstrates the government’s continued **commitment towards transforming the country into an innovation-driven economy.** The index illustrates that India is on the right path and the states are endeavouring to improve their innovative ecosystem.
- In the India Innovation Index-2020, the States and Union Territories have been **divided into 17 Major States, 10 North-East and Hill States and nine Union Territories and Small States** for effectively comparing their performance.
- In the 2020 ranking, **Karnataka retained its first position in the Major States category.** Maharashtra moved one position higher and stood at 2<sup>nd</sup> spot while Tamil Nadu slid to 3<sup>rd</sup> position. Bihar stands last in the **Major States category.**
- **In the North East and Hill States category, Himachal Pradesh stands at first position followed by Uttarakhand and Manipur while Meghalaya stands last in the same category. Delhi stands at the first position while Chandigarh retained its second spot in the Union Territories and small States category while Lakshadweep stands last in the same category.**

The National Institution for Transforming India, also called NITI Aayog, was formed via a resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015. It was established to replace the Planning Commission which followed a top-down model. NITI Aayog is the **premier policy ‘Think Tank’ of the Government of India,** providing both directional and policy inputs. The **current chairman of NITI Aayog is Shri Narendra Modi, current vice chairman is Dr. Rajiv Kumar and the current chief executive officer is Shri Amitabh Kant.**

### Telangana, Gujarat join Hands to help Women Entrepreneurs

- **In a first, two state governments have joined hands to boost women-led start-ups in various focus sectors.** Telangana government’s WE Hub has **partnered with Gujarat government’s I-Hub, to support women entrepreneurs in both the states.**

- For the initiative to be implemented, **around 240 women entrepreneurs** will be selected for the **pre-incubation programme**. A total of 20 will be shortlisted for the co-incubation programme. The initiative was **launched by IT and Industries Minister KT Rama Rao**. The partnership is expected to assist female entrepreneurs, so that, they can excel through their start-ups and set a new benchmark across sectors.
- **WE Hub** was **announced in November 2017**. Looking back in the last two years, Rama Rao said, “WE Hub has changed the narrative of democratising entrepreneurship by pushing the boundaries for women entrepreneurs that exist in the industry through its work.

**Telangana is a state in India** situated on the **south-central stretch of the Indian peninsula on the high Deccan Plateau**. On **2 June 2014**, the area was separated from the northwestern part of Andhra Pradesh as the newly formed state with **Hyderabad as its capital**. It is a **land locked state** in India. **Kalvakuntla Chandrashekhar Rao** has been serving as the **first and current Chief Minister of Telangana** since 2014. **Tamilisai Soundararajan** is an Indian medical doctor serving as **current Governor of Telangana**.

## India's first pull-push Rajdhani Express to run daily

- **CR's Rajdhani Express** became **India's first train to run on Push-Pull technology** empowering the Government's “**Mission Raftar**” thus achieving another milestone in Railway history. In **Push-Pull mode** i.e. **running the train with one engine at the front and one in the rear** thereby eliminating the need to attach-detach bankers in the ghat section, saving precious time and thereby reducing journey time.

**Indian Railways (IR)** is the **fourth-largest railway network in the world by size**. There are a total of **18 Railway zones**. **South Coast Railway Zone** is the newest and **18<sup>th</sup> railway zone**, headquartered at **Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**. **Piyush Vedprakash Goyal** is currently serving as the **Minister of Railways and Commerce** in the Government of India. He was elected as the **BJP candidate from Maharashtra** for the **Rajya Sabha** on **3 June 2016**. The practice of a separate **Railway Budget** was started by the **British in 1924** under the recommendation of a **10-member Acworth Committee** headed by **British economist William Mitchell Acworth** in **1920-21**. On **21 September 2016**, **Government of India** approved the merger of the **Railway Budget** with the **Union budget of India**, and thus came to end — a **92-year-old practice of separate rail and general budgets**.

## Kochi Airport, World's first to fully run on solar power

- **The Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL)** which created history by becoming the **first airport in the world to run fully on solar energy** has commissioned one of the **biggest floating solar power plants** in the state with a capacity of **452-kilowatt hour (KWh)**.
- According to CIAL, with this, the total installed capacity of the airport has increased to **40 MWp**, helping it produce around **1.6 lakh units of power a day**, against its daily consumption of nearly **1.3 lakh units**. **The floating solar plants were installed in two artificial lakes located in the 130-acre CIAL golf course** and use **French technology** which mounted **1300 photovoltaic panels** for the best cost effective power generation.

## Ladakh tableau participated in Republic Day parade for first time this year

- **A tableau from Union Territory of Ladakh** has participated in the **Republic Day Parade** on **Rajpath** for the first time this year. **Ladakh's tableau** depicts the iconic **Thiksey Monastery** located on top of a hill in **Thikse in Leh district**, and is one of the most-visited tourist sites in the region.
- It also showcases the **Indian Astronomical Observatory, located in Hanle near Leh**, one of the world's highest sites for **optical, infrared and gamma-ray telescopes**. **Ladakh tableau** also highlights the vision for **Ladakh to be carbon-neutral**.

**Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019** re-constituted the erstwhile state of **Jammu and Kashmir** into two union territories, **Jammu and Kashmir** and **Ladakh**, with effect from **31 October 2019**. **Girish Chandra Murmu** is the **first lieutenant governor of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir**. **Manoj Sinha** is the **second and current Lieutenant Governor** of **Jammu and Kashmir**. **Ladakh** is a region administered by India as a **union territory**; **Radha Krishna Mathur** is the **first Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh**.

## Large scale Joint Military exercise – ‘Exercise Kavach’ to be conducted

- A large scale Joint Military exercise - Exercise Kavach involving assets of Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and Indian Coast Guard was conducted under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- The exercise involves synergised application of maritime surveillance assets, coordinated air and maritime strikes, air defence, submarine and landing operations. The joint force has executed multi-domain, high-intensity offensive and defensive manoeuvres in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal. The tri-services exercise aims to fine tune joint war-fighting capabilities and Standard Operating Procedures towards enhancing operational synergy.

## European Train Control System to Be Adapted For First Time in India

- With the country’s premier semi-high speed rapid rail coming up between Delhi and Meerut, India is all set to adopt the European Train Control System (ETCS) in mainline railways for the very first time.
- Recently, multinational rolling stock manufacturer Alstom won a contract worth €106 million to design, supply, and install the train control, signalling, and telecommunication system for the 82 km-long Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut regional rapid transit system (RRTS) corridor. The country’s first regional rapid rail corridor will reduce the travel time between Delhi and Meerut to just 55 minutes.

## Joint exercise of IAF and Air and Space force of France Desert Night-21 commences at Jodhpur Airforce station

- Joint exercise of Indian Air Force and Air and Space force of France Desert Night-21 commenced at Jodhpur Airforce station. On the first day, air commodores of both the forces had courtesy meeting and communicated about the daily schedule to each other.
- French Air Force has come with 4 Rafale fighter jet planes for 5 day long joint exercise. These Rafale aircrafts cooperated with the customised Rafale aircraft handed over to India about war strategy.
- Along with these, Air bus A-330, Multirole tanker transport and A-400 M Tactical transport aircrafts are also participated in the joint exercise from French side. It is the first time that Rafale fighter jets have taken part in any war exercise in India. Through this exercise both the forces are aimed to exchange latest war techniques and strategies.

## Madhya Pradesh becomes first state to get additional funds for capital projects

- Madhya Pradesh has become the first state to get additional funds for capital projects for successfully carrying out reforms in various citizen-centric areas.
- The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance has allocated additional 660 crore rupees to the state for capital expenditure for undertaking the One Nation, One Ration Card Reforms, Ease of Doing Business Reforms, and Urban Local Bodies Reforms. The State has also completed a part of the fourth reform- the Power Sector reform. 50 percent of the approved amount has also been released to the state as 1<sup>st</sup> instalment for the approved projects.
- The scheme of “Special Assistance to States for capital expenditure” was announced by the Finance Minister on 12<sup>th</sup> October last year under the AtmaNirbhar Bharat package. The Scheme is aimed at boosting capital expenditure by the State Governments who are facing a difficult financial environment this year due to a shortfall in tax revenue arising from the COVID 19 pandemic.
- So far, the capital expenditure proposals worth Rs.10,657 crore of 27 States have been approved by the Ministry of Finance. The capital expenditure projects have been approved in diverse sectors of the economy such as water supply, health, power, irrigation, education, urban development, transport etc.

## Prime Minister announces Startup India Seed Fund Scheme of Rs 1000 cr for startups

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that Startups have the potential to change the future of India. Startups during Prarambh: StartUpIndia International Summit through video conferencing, Mr Modi said, the confidence that all Startups have, should never fade away and always remain.



- **The government will launch a Rs 1,000-crore seed fund for startups, called Startup India Seed Fund**, which will help startups with the initial capital for growth and operations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.
- **This century is also called the century of Asia.** The youth and entrepreneurs from BIMSTEC countries are joining this Summit with the experiences that all have, from the fight against Corona to the making of the vaccine.

**Narendra Damodardas Modi is an Indian politician serving as the 14<sup>th</sup> and current Prime Minister of India since 2014. He was the Chief Minister of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014 and is the Member of Parliament for Varanasi. He is the first prime minister outside of the Indian National Congress to win two consecutive terms with a full majority and the second to complete more than five years in office after Atal Bihari Vajpayee.**

## Centre invested Rs 27,000 cr for schemes relating to blue economy

- **Union Minister for Fisheries Dr. Giriraj Singh** has said that the Centre has invested 27 thousand crore rupees for schemes relating to blue economy. Laying the foundation stone for the Aquatic Quarantine facility at Aquatic Animal Quarantine Centre at Padappai, the Minister said that the ornamental fish export amounts to one lakh crore rupees.
- The Minister said that **fishermen could earn one lakh to one a half lakh rupee every month due to the scheme.** He also said that sea-weed production will also be given a boost in the blue economy schemes launched by the government.

**Blue economy is a term in economics relating to the exploitation and preservation of the marine environment. The concept was introduced by Gunter Pauli in his 2010 book- “The Blue Economy: 10 years, 100 innovations, 100 million jobs”. It is the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health. This is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 14), which calls to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.**

## India’s rank slips to 86<sup>th</sup> in corruption perception index 2020

- **India’s rank has slipped six places to 86<sup>th</sup> among 180 countries in corruption perception index (CPI) in 2020.** For 2020, Transparency International (TI)’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI) was released. **India’s rank is 86 out of 180 nations with a score of 40.**
- **“India was ranked at 80<sup>th</sup> position out of 180 countries in 2019.** The CPI score for India is almost constant this year as well as the previous year score,” the index said. In 2019, India’s score was 41.
- **India is still very low on the corruption Index,** the report said, noting that **experts feel the CPI does not reflect the actual corruption level in any country.** The integrity score determines the corruption situation of a country.
- This year, **New Zealand and Denmark were ranked at first position with scores of 88. Somalia and South Sudan were ranked lowest at 179<sup>th</sup> position with scores of 12.**
- **The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption** according to experts and business people, **uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.** A country with a higher score has a higher rank.

**Transparency International (TI) is a German non-governmental organization founded in 1993. Based in Berlin, its nonprofit purpose is to take action to combat global corruption with civil societal anti-corruption measures and to prevent criminal activities arising from corruption. Its most notable publications include the Global Corruption Barometer and the Corruption Perceptions Index.**

## India celebrates 72<sup>nd</sup> Republic Day with zeal and pride

- **Nation is celebrated its 72<sup>nd</sup> Republic Day.** The main function was held at Rajpath in the National Capital where President Ram Nath Kovind took the salute of the parade.
- During the function, **indigenously-developed Main Battle Tank of the Indian Army, T-90 Bhishma, Infantry Combat Vehicle BMP II, Brahmos Weapon System, Pinaka Bridge Laying tanks T-72, Samvijay Electronic Warfare System** were the main attraction in the mechanised columns.

- **Naval Tableau titled Swarnim Vijay Varsh** showcased the **Indian Navy's attack on Karachi harbour in 1971**. A 122-member proud contingent of the Bangladesh armed forces also marched on Rajpath.
- In a display of India's military might, **Rafale fighter jets took part in the Republic Day flypast for the first time** as the armed forces showcased its T-90 tanks, the Samvijay electronic warfare system and Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter jets on the Rajpath.
- **Depicting the nation's rich cultural heritage and economic progress, 17 tableaux from states and union territories and nine from different Union ministries and paramilitary forces took part in the 72<sup>nd</sup> Republic day parade. Indian Navy's tableau had the theme – 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh' and it displayed murals depicting Pakistan Army surrendering and Navy's principal combatant in 1971 Indo-Pak war, INS Vikrant conducting flying operations with Sea Hawk and Alize aircrafts.**
- **The 122-member contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces also took part in India's Republic Day Parade.** The contingent comprised soldiers of the Bangladesh Army, sailors of the Bangladesh Navy and Air Warriors of the Bangladesh Air Force.
- Among other tableaux, the tableau of the **Department of Biotechnology with the theme of 'Aatma-Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan: COVID'** depicted the process of COVID-19 Vaccine development through various processes.
- The display of cultural tableaux had begun at the parade with Ladakh leading. **Ladakh's tableau showcasing culture and communal harmony, festivals, art & architecture, music customs and languages was the first-ever tableau of the UT in the parade.**
- **The tableau of Uttar Pradesh was designed on the theme 'Ayodhya: Cultural Heritage of Uttar Pradesh' and it showcased Ayodhya and Ram mandir for the first-ever time.** The forepart of the middle tableau showed Deepotsava of Ayodhya, in which millions of earthen lamps are lit.
- **The Punjab tableau showcased the glory of 9<sup>th</sup> Sikh Guru, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur.** The tableau was designed with the theme **'400<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur'**.

**Republic Day honours the date on which the Constitution of India came into effect on 26 January 1950 replacing the Government of India Act (1935) as the governing document of India and thus, turning the nation into a newly formed republic. The Constitution was adopted by the Indian Constituent Assembly on 26 November 1949 and came into effect on 26 January 1950 with a democratic government system, completing the country's transition towards becoming an independent republic. 26 January was chosen as the date for Republic day because it was on this day in 1929 when the Declaration of Indian Independence (Purna Swaraj) was proclaimed by the Indian National Congress as opposed to the Dominion status offered by the British Regime.**

### **In a first, the Maharashtra government started 'jail tourism' from Pune's Yerawada prison**

- Making the announcement state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said that **Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar inaugurated the initiative at Yerawada Central Jail on the Republic Day.**
- Through this initiative, the state government **aims to facilitate people to visit and see the historical prisons in the state as memories of many freedom fighters imprisoned there have been preserved. This is the first of its kind initiative in the country.**
- **"Under the British rule, several freedom fighters, including Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarojini Naidu, Subhas Chandra Bose had been imprisoned in Yerawada jail and their memories have been preserved there".**

**Maharashtra is India's second-most populous state and third-largest state by area. Nagpur is Maharashtra's second capital and hosts the winter session of the state legislature. Pune is its cultural capital. Shri Bhagat Singh Koshyari is currently serving as Governor of the state of Maharashtra. Uddhav Bal Thackeray is the current Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He is the president of Shiv Sena.**

## Goa nod to amend Lokayukta law to make high court ex-judges eligible

- Goa state Cabinet cleared the Goa Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill to make retired High Court Judges also eligible for Lokayukta's post. As per the Lokayukta law, only a retired Supreme Court Judge or a retired Chief Justice of a High Court are presently eligible for Lokayukta's post.

The Lokayukta is an anti-corruption ombudsman organization in the Indian states. Once appointed, Lokayukta cannot be dismissed nor transferred by the government, and can only be removed by passing an impeachment motion by the state assembly. The Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) headed by Morarji Desai submitted a special interim report on "Problems of Redressal of Citizen's Grievances" in 1966. In this report, the ARC recommended the setting up of two special authorities designated as 'Lokpal' and 'Lokayukta' for the redressal of citizens' grievances. Maharashtra was the first state to introduce the institution of Lokayukta through The Lokayukta and Upa-Lokayuktas Act in 1971.

The Annexation of Goa was the process in which the Republic of India annexed the former Portuguese Indian territories of Goa, Daman and Diu, starting with the armed action carried out by the Indian Armed Forces in December 1961. In India, this action is referred to as the "Liberation of Goa". In Portugal, it is referred to as the "Invasion of Goa". The "armed action" was code named Operation Vijay (meaning "Victory") by the Indian Armed Forces. It involved air, sea and land strikes for over 36 hours, and was a decisive victory for India, ending 451 years of rule by Portugal over its remaining exclaves in India. Following the end of Portuguese rule in 1961, Goa was placed under military administration headed by Kunhiraman Palat Candeth as Lieutenant Governor.

## MoU signed between Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, IIT Roorkee

- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Roorkee signed an MoU in New Delhi for continuation of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways Professorial Chair focusing on research and development, teaching and training in the area of Development of Highway Infrastructure.
- This collaboration of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways with IIT-Roorkee will strengthen Research and Development activities in Road Sector and the Chair professor is expected to provide leadership in conducting and coordinating research, development and teaching in the area of Development of Highway Infrastructure.

## Election Commission launched e-EPIC

- Electors are able to download electronic versions of the Electors Photo Identity Cards (e-EPICs) from January 25 as the Election Commission (EC) has launched the programme during its National Voters Day celebrations.
- The EC said in a statement on January 24 that the event was included Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad launching the programme by handing out e-EPICs to five new voters.
- The digital version of EPICs would be available for download from the Voter Helpline app, voterportal.eci.gov.in and nvsp.in. The e-EPIC would be a non-editable PDF of the EPIC that can be downloaded on the phone and stored on the DigiLocker app or self-printed from a computer.

Election Commission of India operates under the authority of Constitution per Article 324. The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, state Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country. Chief Election Commissioner of India is usually a member of the Indian Civil Service and mostly from the Indian Administrative Service. It is very difficult to remove the authority of the Chief Election Commissioner once appointed by the president, as two-thirds of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha need to vote against him for disorderly conduct or improper actions. Sukumar Sen was the first Chief Election Commissioner of India, serving from 21 March 1950 to 19 December 1958. Sunil Arora is the current and 23<sup>rd</sup> Chief Election Commissioner of India. He is also the chairman for Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB).



## UP becomes first state to have 2 airstrips on expressways for landing, take-off of fighter planes

- With the completion of the construction of the 3,300-metre-long airstrip near Kurebhar on Purvanchal Expressway, Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in the country with two airstrips on expressways. One airstrip is on Lucknow-Agra Expressway while the other is on Purvanchal Expressway. Airstrips on expressways are designed to facilitate emergency landing and take-off of fighter planes.
- “The construction of Purvanchal Expressway being completed rapidly. The construction of the 3,300-metre-long airstrip near Kurebhar on the expressway has been completed. All categories of aircraft can land on this airstrip. The Indian Air Force is likely to test the airstrip soon.”

Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India as well as the most populous country subdivision in the world. It was created on 1 April 1937 as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh during British rule, and was renamed Uttar Pradesh in 1950, giving the acronym UP. The state is divided into 18 divisions and 75 districts with the capital being Lucknow. On 9 November 2000, a new state, Uttarakhand, was carved out from the state's Himalayan hill region. The two major rivers of the state, the Ganges and Yamuna, join at Allahabad and flow further east as Ganges. The state contributes 80 seats to the lower house of the Indian Parliament, Lok Sabha and 31 seats to the upper house of the Indian Parliament, Rajya Sabha.

## India's first and Asia's largest snow igloo café comes up at Gulmarg

- India's first snow igloo cafe has come up at Gulmarg, one of the Asia's premier ski resorts situated in the Pir Panjal Range of the Himalayas at an altitude of 2,650 m (8,694 ft) and about 56 km from capital Srinagar.
- Set up by a local group of hotels on the lawns of its property in the cup-shaped valley, the igloo is 22 feet wide and 12.5 feet high from inside and can accommodate 16 people at any given time for lunch or dinner or just to have coffee or tea. The owners claim the café can make to the Limca book of records for it being Asia's biggest igloo. An igloo, also known as a snow house or snow hut, is a type of shelter built of 'suitable' snow.

## LS Speaker Om Birla inaugurates Bharat Parv-2021

- Bharat Parv 2021, a festival to celebrate the spirit of India has concluded at Red Fort ground in New Delhi. The mega event envisages generating patriotic fervour and showcases the rich and varied cultural diversity of the country. The Ministry of Tourism organizes Bharat Parv every year since 2016 in front of the ramparts of the Red Fort on the occasion of Republic Day Celebrations.
- Themed pavilions of multiple States and Union Territories have showcased their tourism destinations, cuisine, handicraft and other features. The festival is held annually at the end of January. The mega event envisages generating patriotic fervor and showcases the rich and varied cultural diversity of the country. The Bharat Parv celebrates the “Essence of India”.
- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla inaugurated the Bharat Parv-2021 in the presence of Culture and Tourism Minister Prahlaad Singh Patel. This event provided an opportunity to know and understand the art, culture, food, clothing and traditions of the 28 states and eight Union territories of the country.

Om Birla is the 17<sup>th</sup> and current Speaker of the Lok Sabha. He serves a Member of Parliament for the Kota-Bundi constituency in Rajasthan. Prior to parliament, he was elected thrice to the assembly of Rajasthan. Prahlaad Singh Patel the current Minister of State for Culture, Tourism of India. He is a Member of Parliament from Damoh Loksabha Constituency in Madhya Pradesh.

## India's first 'Gender Park' In Kerala's Kozhikode; An Initiative towards Gender Equality

- The Kerala government launched Rs 300 crore three-tower 'Gender Park' in Kozhikode that is functional from February 2021. This initiative is first of its kind in the country and also a step towards gender equality in the state.
- Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the February 11-13 IGCE-II and the Gender Park. He also laid the foundation of the International Women's Trade and Research Centre (IWTRC) on the opening day. In order to envisage a secure and sustained ecosystem for women entrepreneurs and create a space for them to market their products. Along with the Gender Park, a Gender Museum, Gender Library, Convention Centre and an Amphitheatre are also be launched at the event.

Kerala is a state on the southwestern, Malabar Coast of India. It was formed on 1 November 1956 following the States Reorganisation Act by combining Malayalam-speaking regions. Kerala has the highest literacy rate 93.91% in the 2011 census; the highest life expectancy, 77 years; and the highest sex ratio, 1,084 women per 1,000 men. Arif Mohammad Khan is the current Governor of Kerala. Kerala is known as “God’s own country” and is one of the popular tourist destinations in India. Pinarayi Vijayan is the current Chief Minister of Kerala, in office since 25 May 2016. As per the census 2011, Haryana has the lowest child sex ratio i.e.834 per thousand males.

## Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad to launch virtual intelligence tool Tejas

- Ravi Shankar Prasad, Union IT and Communications Minister launched Tejas Virtual Intelligence tool and Work from Anywhere portal at NICS I event on January 28<sup>th</sup> 2021. NICS I is a public sector enterprise that stands for National Informatics Centre Services Inc under National Informatics Centre (NIC). The enterprise celebrated their 25 years at the event where the major launches were done.
- The chief guest, Union IT minister launched Tejas that can extract critical information from the volume of data and convert it into meaningful representations for improving efficiency and policy decisions in government services and citizen delivery. e-Auction India was also launched during the event to Carter to reverse auction requirements and electronic forwarding of government organizations serving 24x7 online.

Ravi Shankar Prasad is the current Union Minister holding the Law and Justice, Electronics and Information Technology and Communications portfolios. He represents the Patna Sahib constituency. During the NDA Government under Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s prime ministership, Prasad was appointed Minister of Coal and Mines, Minister of Law and Justice, and Minister of Information and Broadcasting.

## India signs framework for Strategic Partnership with International Energy Agency members to enhance global energy security

- India and International Energy Agency members have signed the framework for Strategic Partnership to strengthen mutual trust and cooperation and enhance global energy security, stability and sustainability. This partnership will lead to an extensive exchange of knowledge and would be a stepping stone towards India becoming a full member of the International Energy Agency (IEA).
- The Ministry of Power in a statement said that contents of the Strategic partnership will be jointly decided by IEA members and India. The International Energy Agency Secretariat will be responsible for implementation of the cooperative activities in India and for facilitating discussion between IEA Members and India to further develop the Strategic Partnership.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) is a Paris-based autonomous intergovernmental organisation established in the framework of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1974 in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis. Fatih Birol is a Turkish economist and energy expert, who has been the Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA) since 1 September 2015.

## Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually addressed WEF’s Davos Dialogue

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the World Economic Forum’s Davos Dialogue through video conferencing. More than 400 top industry leaders from across the globe will attend the session, wherein the Prime Minister will be speaking on the Fourth Industrial Revolution - using technology for the good of humanity.
- The Davos Dialogues agenda marks the launch of the World Economic Forum’s Great Reset Initiative in the post COVID world.
- “India has been successful in saving so many lives, we saved the entire humanity from a big tragedy. India launched the world’s biggest vaccination programme and has inoculated more than 2.3 million healthcare workers in the last 12 days,” PM Modi said in his address on a global forum.
- “India has made rapid strides in four pillars of Industry 4.0 (or Fourth Industrial Revolution-using technology): Connectivity, automation, Artificial intelligence and real-time data,” PM Modi said.

- More than 400 top industry leaders from across the globe are attending the session. **Top global leaders including Chinese President Xi Jinping, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Emmanuel Macron and Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu** have marked their presence on the **WEF platform** by talking on a range of issues concerning these nations.

The World Economic Forum (WEF), based in **Cologne, Geneva Canton, Switzerland**, is an **international NGO, founded in 1971**. The WEF's mission is stated as **"committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas"**. The WEF **hosts an annual meeting at the end of January in Davos, a mountain resort in Graubunden, in the eastern Alps region of Switzerland. The WEF was founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab.**

## India's first boat library launched in Kolkata along River Hooghly

- **For the first time in India**, the West Bengal Transport Corporation has introduced a boat library on Hooghly River in association with a heritage book store.
- **The moving library is called The Young Readers' Boat Library** which has over 500 collections of books of different genres in three languages namely English, Hindi, and Bengali. The boat library will take visitors on a three-hour trip along the river from Millenium Park to Belur Math and back to its original site. **India's first floating post office located on the Dal Lake in Srinagar.**

West Bengal is a state in the eastern region of India along the Bay of Bengal. Part of the Bengal region of the Indian subcontinent, it borders Bangladesh in the east, and Nepal and Bhutan in the north. **The state capital is Kolkata. Under the East India Company rule and later under the British Raj, Calcutta served as the capital of British-held territories in India until 1911, when its perceived geographical disadvantages, combined with growing nationalism in Bengal, led to a shift of the capital to New Delhi. Mamata Banerjee is serving as the current Chief Minister of West Bengal since 2011, the first woman to hold the office. Jagdeep Dhankhar is serving as the current Governor of West Bengal.**

## Uttar Pradesh worst in delivering justice to people, Maharashtra best: IJR findings

- **Uttar Pradesh came at the bottom among the large and mid-sized states when it came to overall delivery of justice**, according to the **India Justice Report (IJR) 2020**. The northern state scored 3.15 out of 10 while **Maharashtra fared the best among the 18 states with a score of 5.77 out of 10.**
- **These rankings were based on 53 indicators** which included prison staff, police and police officers, among others. The overall overcrowding had increased and 69 per cent of the prison population still comprise people awaiting investigation and trial.
- **The IJR is an initiative of Tata Trusts** in collaboration with the Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, DAKSH, TISS-Prayas, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and How India Lives. The maiden IJR was announced in 2019.

## Uttar Pradesh government to set up India's first leather park in Kanpur

- **Uttar Pradesh government will establish the first leather park of the country in Kanpur district.** The park is expected to provide employment to 50 thousand people directly and more than 1 lakh 50 thousand people indirectly. Additional chief secretary MSME Dr Navneet Sehgal said that the project will be established in 268 area of land in **Ramaipur village of Kanpur district** and is expected to attract an investment of more than 5850 crores.
- **The leather park will also have an effluent treatment plant of 20 million litre per day capacity so that it will not pollute the Ganga river.** With the establishment of Leather Park, Kanpur City will be able to strengthen its position among the 10 big leather manufacturing states of the country.

**The Leather industry in India accounts for around 12.9% of the world's leather production of hides/skins and handles a robust annual production of about 3 bn sq. ft. of leather. The country accounts for 9% of the world's footwear production. India is the second largest producer of footwear and leather garments in the world.**



## India, World Bank sign 500 million dollar Programme to improve quality of school education in India

- The Government of India and the World Bank signed a 500-million US dollar Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Programme (STARS) to improve the quality and governance of school education in six Indian states.
- These include Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan. Some 250 million students (between the age of six and 17) in 1.5 million schools and over 10 million teachers will benefit from the programme.
- The STARS programme builds on the long partnership between India and the World Bank (since 1994), for strengthening public school education and to support the country's goal of providing Education for All. Prior to STARS, the Bank had provided a total assistance of more than three billion US dollars towards this goal.

The STARS project would be implemented as a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education (MoE). It is aligned with the objectives of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of Quality Based Learning Outcomes. It is strengthening the government-managed school education system that primarily caters to the educational needs of girls and students from marginalised groups. It focus on initiatives of PM e-Vidya, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission and National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

## First Indo-US combat drill of Biden era in Rajasthan

- India and the US are kicked off a major combat exercise in Rajasthan in the first such bilateral wargame after the Biden administration took charge in Washington and reiterated India's role as a key partner in the Indo-Pacific as well as the need to strengthen the "Quad".
- The 'Yudh Abhyas' exercise, which will be held at the Mahajan Field Firing ranges from February 8 to 21, will once again underscore the continuing upward trajectory in defence cooperation with the US, which enjoys bipartisan support among the Democrats and Republicans. "The aim is to further enhance interoperability in counter-terrorist operations in a semi-urban, semi-desert terrain, along with attack helicopters and infantry combat vehicles".

Yudh Abhyas is a joint military exercise, bilaterally occurring between India and the US. It started in 2002 and is undertaken by the armies of both countries to promote defence cooperation. The Yudh Abhyas exercise took place from 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019 to 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at Joint Base Lewis McChord in Washington, USA. India and the US participate in the following joint exercises apart from Yudh Abhyas: 1. Cope-India (Air Force), 2. Vajra Prahar (Special Forces) and A few multilateral exercises that India and the US participate in are: MALABAR, RED FLAG and RIMPAC.

## Aero India 2021 — world's first 'hybrid' air show takes flight in Bengaluru

- The world's first 'hybrid' air show – Aero India – is organised in Bengaluru from 3 to 5 February. "This is the first-of-its-kind hybrid air show. This means that while people can attend the show in person, those who can't make it due to Covid restrictions in their countries can attend it digitally".
- Aero India will see the participation of top aviation firms, while India showcased its indigenous defence capability, with an eye on Africa and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) for the export of fighter jets, helicopters and missiles.

Aero India is a biennial air show and aviation exhibition held in Bengaluru, India at the Yelahanka Air Force Station. It is organised by the Defence Exhibition Organisation, Ministry of Defence.

## India's first Member of Parliament to have been disqualified from the Lok Sabha has now been disqualified as an MLA in Mizoram

- India's first Member of Parliament to have been disqualified from the Lok Sabha has now been disqualified as an MLA in Mizoram. Mizoram Assembly Speaker disqualifies Zoram People's Movement MLA Lalduhoma.



- The disqualification was on the ground that Mr. Laldhuma had declared himself as a representative of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) despite being elected as an independent candidate from the Serchhip Assembly constituency. The Tenth Schedule was inserted in the Constitution in 1985 by the 52<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Act.

The Anti-Defection Law was passed in 1985 through the 52<sup>nd</sup> amendment to the Constitution. It added the Tenth Schedule to the Indian Constitution. The main intent of the law was to combat "the evil of political defections". According to it, a member of a House belonging to any political party becomes disqualified for being a member of the House, if: He voluntarily gives up his membership of such political party; or He votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party without obtaining prior permission of such party and such act has not been condoned by the party within 15 days. Any question regarding disqualification arising out of defection is to be decided by the presiding officer of the House.

## Finance Ministry approved the creation of the first ever national database of migrant labour

- Union Finance Ministry has given its go-ahead for the creation of the first ever national database of migrant labour to provide a platform for workers and employers, and for the government to implement specific programmes for such labourers.
- The National Informatics Centre (NIC) is developing the portal, according to the report and estimates that it will be completed in six months. The database will also have details of gig and platform workers and other unorganised sector workers, which will be added separately.

The National Informatics Centre (NIC) is an attached office under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) in the Indian government. The NIC provides infrastructure to help support the delivery of government IT services and the delivery of some of the initiatives of Digital India.

## Chandigarh University becomes first Indian varsity to sign MoUs with world's top 306 universities

- Chandigarh University has become the first Indian University to have signed Memorandum-of-Understanding (MoUs) with World's Top 306 Universities under its International Academic Alliance (IAA) flagship program.
- Besides getting the benefit of global exposure, the students & faculty of Chandigarh University are entitled for Student Exchange, Faculty Exchange, Semester Exchange, being a part of Joint Research Initiatives, become members of international student & faculty research groups, present papers at international conferences.

## India ranks 86 of 98 countries in Covid response index, New Zealand, Vietnam, Taiwan in top 3

- India has ranked 86<sup>th</sup> in a coronavirus performance index out of 98 countries, while New Zealand, Vietnam and Taiwan have been ranked the top three spots, respectively.
- The index was conducted by the Australia-based Lowy Institute and was published. The institute is an independent international policy think tank, located in Sydney.
- The lowest score was given to Brazil at 4.3. Mexico, Colombia, Iran and the United States too featured among the bottom five countries in terms of performance. India received a score of 24.3.
- Publicly available and comparable data on Covid-19 response was used for this index. China was excluded from the list due to lack of publicly available data. Countries were sorted into broad categories on the basis of regions, political systems, population size, and economic development. This was done to determine the variations that may have existed in the way different nations handled the pandemic.

## Union Cabinet approved Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for 10 key sectors

- The Union Cabinet approved Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme worth up to Rs 1.46 lakh crore for 10 key sectors in a bid to boost India's manufacturing capabilities and enhancing exports. The scheme will make Indian manufacturers globally competitive, attract investment and enhance exports.

- The Cabinet decision was announced by Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Briefing the press after the Cabinet meeting, Javadekar said that the **production-linked incentives will be offered for the sectors such as white goods manufacturing, pharmaceutical, specialised steel, automobiles, telecom, textile, food products, solar photovoltaic and cell battery.**
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi also hailed the Union Cabinet’s approval to the **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, saying it is an important step towards improving India’s competitiveness and realising an ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’.**

### National Jal Jeevan Mission launched an innovation challenge to develop portable devices for water testing

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- **The National Jal Jeevan Mission has launched an innovation challenge in partnership with Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade to develop portable devices for water testing.** The main objective of the exercise is to bring an innovative, modular, and cost-effective solution to develop portable devices that can be used at the household level to test the drinking water quality instantly, easily and accurately.
- **Water quality testing is one of the priority areas under Jal Jeevan Mission,** the flagship programme of Union Government. Since announcement of the Jal Jeevan Mission, till 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2020, so far 2.90 Crore households have been provided tap water connections, thus increasing the tap water supply from 3.23 Crore (17%) in August, 2019 to 6.13 Crore (32%) rural households of the country.

### Uttarakhand sets up first arboretum for Shivalik range with 210 species of trees

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- **A first of its kind arboretum conserving over 210 species of trees found in the Shivalik range of Himalayas was inaugurated in Uttarakhand’s Nainital district.**
- **Shivalik range or Outer Himalayas spreads across states and union territories like Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and seven states in the country’s northeast.** “The range has an **altitude ranging between 500m and 2500m above sea level,** and owing to high rainfall, varying gradient and abundant sunshine, these mountains have rich floral and faunal biodiversity.

## International



### Hours before the Brexit transition period ended on New Year's Eve, Spain announced it had struck a deal with the UK to maintain free movement to and from Gibraltar

- Hours before the Brexit transition period ended on New Year's Eve, Spain announced it had struck a deal with the UK to maintain free movement to and from Gibraltar – a small portion of land on the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula that Britain controls but Spain claims as its own. Officially remaining a British Overseas Territory, Gibraltar will now be part of the Schengen zone and follow EU rules, thus ensuring that a hard border does not separate it from the rest of Europe.
- Gibraltar, with an area of just 6.8 sq km and a population of around 34,000 people, has been the subject of intense dispute between Spain and Britain for centuries. This is mainly because of its strategic location. The territory, which is connected to Spain by a small strip of land and surrounded by sea on three sides, serves as the only opening from the Atlantic Ocean into the Mediterranean Sea, making it a key location on the shortest sea route between Europe and Asia via the Suez Canal.
- Due to its strategic importance, Gibraltar came to be highly fortified by Britain since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, thus earning its commonly known name– “the Rock”. Gibraltar fell into British hands after a war in 1713, and has since remained with Britain despite several attempts by Spain to retake it.
- However, free movement will now continue thanks to the Spain-UK deal, as Gibraltar is being placed in the Schengen area, with Spain acting as a guarantor. The Schengen passport-free zone includes 22 countries from the EU, and four others –Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The UK has never been a part of this zone.

The Schengen Area is an area that has officially abolished all passport and all other types of border control at their mutual borders. The area mostly functions as a single jurisdiction for international travel purposes, with a common visa policy. The area is named after the 1985 Schengen Agreement signed in Schengen, Luxembourg. Of the 27 EU member states, 22 participate in the Schengen Area. Of the five EU members that are not part of the Schengen Area, four – Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, and Romania – are legally obliged to join the area in the future; Ireland maintains an opt-out. At present, Schengen passport-free zone comprised of 26 countries which includes 22 countries from the EU, and four others –Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The UK has never been a part of this zone.

### Thailand to host first-ever trail and mountain running worlds in 2021

- Thailand's northern city of Chiang Mai will host the inaugural world mountain and trail championships in 2021. The championship, which will be staged from Nov. 11-14, will feature vertical uphill mountain races, short and long trail races for senior athletes and the classic mountain races for both seniors and under-20s.
- The new biennial event was first announced in 2018 when the World Mountain Running Association (WMRA), the International Association of Ultrarunners (IAU) and the International Trail Running Association (ITRA) combined forces with World Athletics.

Thailand formerly known as Siam is a country in Southeast Asia. The capital and largest city is Bangkok. Maha Vajiralongkorn is King of Thailand since 2016. The baht is the official currency of Thailand. Prayut Chan-o-cha is currently serving as Prime Minister of Thailand.

## World's largest radio telescope in China

- **The world's largest radio telescope, the Five-hundred-metre Aperture Spherical Telescope or FAST** has been installed in Pingtang in China's Guizhou province.
- **FAST started full operations in January 2020** and is about to open its doors for foreign astronomers. Work on FAST began in 2011. It cost 1.1 billion yuan to build. **FAST boasts of a 500-metre giant satellite dish, the size of which can cover the area of 30 football pitches.** This is also the world's largest.
- **FAST is surrounded by a five-kilometre "radio silence" zone** where mobile phones and computers are not allowed. Thousands of villagers were displaced to make room for this telescope.

**China is a country in East Asia and the world's most populous country, with a population of around 1.404 billion. Beijing is the capital of the People's Republic of China. Xi Jinping is serving as president of the People's Republic of China. National People's Congress is the national legislature of the People's Republic of China. With 2,980 members in 2018, it is the largest parliamentary body in the world. China's currency yuan joins the International Monetary Fund's basket of reserve currencies.**

## Ethiopia crisis

- **Ethnic strife is once again threatening to tear apart Ethiopia**, an African nation with a vast and multi-ethnic population, **after fresh war erupted between the federal government and the powerful regional government of Tigray.**
- **Since the fighting began on November 4, Ethiopia is facing a slew of crises like never before:** refugees are streaming out by the hundreds of thousands into neighbouring Sudan, the country is struggling under a second COVID-19 surge, and the worst locust outbreak in decades has destroyed crops and threatened food insecurity.
- Ethiopia has multiple regional federations. **Minority Tigray, governed by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), had a disproportionate say in the workings of the federal government based in the Addis Ababa capital.** The Tigray government, which also has multiple militia forces and a powerful army, was often condemned as "repressive and regressive".
- Ethiopia's federal government and the Tigray regional forces regard each other as illegal **after a falling-out when Nobel Peace Prize-winning Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali came to power in 2018, sidelining the once-dominant Tigray leaders amid sweeping political reforms.** Abiy Ahmed Ali broke apart the powerful ruling coalition led by the TPLF and brought in a new Prosperity Party, which the Tigray region saw as a power grab and a ploy to weaken the federation.

**Ethiopia is a landlocked country in the Horn of Africa. It shares borders with Eritrea to the north, Djibouti and Somaliland to the northeast, Somalia to the east, Kenya to the south, South Sudan to the west and Sudan to the northwest. The Horn of Africa (HoA) is a peninsula and the easternmost projection of the African continent. It lies along the southern side of the Red Sea and extends hundreds of kilometers into the Gulf of Aden, Somali Sea and Guardafui Channel. The Horn of Africa consists of the countries of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The birr is the unit of currency in Ethiopia.**

## Argentina becomes first big country in Latin America to legalize abortion

- **Argentina's Senate voted to legalize abortion, a first for a big country in Latin America and a triumph for women's rights campaigners** achieved over the visceral objection of the Catholic Church.
- Abortion is extremely rare in a region where the Church has held cultural and political sway for centuries. Previously, it was **allowed on-demand only in Communist Cuba, tiny Uruguay and parts of Mexico. Until now, Argentine law has only allowed abortion when there is a serious risk to the health of the mother or in cases of rape.**

**Argentina is a country located mostly in the southern half of South America. Buenos Aires is the capital and largest city of Argentina. Alberto Fernandez is serving as the current president of Argentina since 2019. The peso (established as the peso convertible) is the currency of Argentina.**



## Algerian president signs new constitution into law

- Algeria's president signed the country's new constitution into law, his office said, after the document was approved in a November referendum on record low turnout as its leader received treatment abroad for Covid-19.
- The Hirak first launched vast street demonstrations in early 2019 to oppose then-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term in office. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, who returned to Algeria this week after two months in Germany, had promoted the new constitution as the "cornerstone of the new Algeria", as he sought to turn the page on the long-running Hirak mass protest movement.

Algeria is a country in the Maghreb region of North Africa. The capital and most populous city is Algiers. The dinar is the monetary currency of Algeria. Algeria is Africa's largest country by area, and Nigeria is its largest by population. Africa is often called Dark Continent in the world.

## India begins its two-year tenure as a Non-Permanent Member of the UNSC

- India, which has been at the forefront of the years-long efforts to reform the UN Security Council, on 1 January 2021, began its two-year tenure as a non-permanent member of the powerful organ of the world body.
- India will sit in the 15-nation United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2021-22 term as a non-permanent member - the eighth time that the country has had a seat on the powerful horseshoe table.
- In 2021, India, Norway, Kenya, Ireland and Mexico join non-permanent members Estonia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Vietnam and the five permanent members China, France, Russia, UK and the US in the Council. India will be UNSC President in August 2021 and will preside over the Council again for a month in 2022. The presidency of the Council is held by each of the members in turn for one month, following the English alphabetical order of the Member States names.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. Under the Charter, the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 Members, and each Member has one vote. Under the Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions. The permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (also known as the Permanent Five, Big Five, or P5) are China (formerly the Republic of China), Russia (formerly the Soviet Union), France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Antonio Guterres is a Portuguese politician and diplomat who is serving as the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations. Previously, he was the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees between 2005 and 2015.

## India to open missions in Estonia, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic

- The government announced that it would open three missions in Estonia, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic in 2021, after a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared the proposal from the Ministry of External Affairs.

## Australia changes word in anthem to honour indigenous people

- Australia has changed one word in its national anthem to reflect what the Prime Minister called "the spirit of unity" and the country's indigenous population.
- Prime Minister Scott Morrison on New Year's Eve announced that the second line of the anthem, Advance Australia Fair, has been changed from "For we are young and free" to "For we are one and free." The change took effect January 1.

Australia is the largest country in Oceania and the world's sixth-largest country by total area. Australia's capital is Canberra, and its largest city is Sydney. Scott Morrison is serving as the current Prime Minister of Australia. Elizabeth II is the Head of the Commonwealth and queen regnant of seven independent Commonwealth countries: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan, and Ceylon. The country's other major metropolitan areas are Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, and Adelaide. Australia is a highly developed country, with the world's fourteenth-largest economy.

## 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment is designed to address constitutional, not character, flaws in USA

- The amendment, ratified in 1967, created a legal mechanism for designating a head of state when the president is disabled or dead. It also formalized the historical practice for the vice president to permanently take over if the president dies or resigns, and gives the president and Congress shared power to replace a vice president.
- Gerald Ford followed the first two sections of the amendment when becoming Richard Nixon's vice president after Spiro Agnew resigned and when he became president after Nixon's resignation.
- The amendment's third section, which allows for a president to temporarily cede power and duties to a vice president, was used once after Ronald Reagan underwent surgery in 1985 and similarly when George W. Bush was under anesthesia in 2002 and 2007.
- The fourth section, a process for removing a president when others believe he is "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office," has never been used.

United States of America (USA) is a federal republic composed of 50 states and capital is Washington, D.C., Donald John Trump is the 45<sup>th</sup> and current President of the United States. He became the oldest and wealthiest person ever to assume the presidency, the first without prior military or government service, and the fifth to have won the election while losing the popular vote.

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## Five new countries join polarized U.N. Security Council

- Five new countries — India, Mexico, Norway, Ireland and Kenya — formally joined the U.N. Security Council at a time of growing polarization in the body charged with keeping world peace and security.
- They took part in a first meeting aimed at approving an agenda proposed by the current chair of the council, Tunisia. The new countries will hold non-permanent seats on the 15-member council for two years. The permanent members — the United States, Russia, China, France, and Britain — hold veto power.

## Faroe Islands become home to world's first undersea traffic circle

- "Giant underwater 'jellyfish' roundabout becomes latest Faroe Islands tourist attraction," a headline in The Guardian read. "Already a hit on social-media, an infrastructure project linking the two largest islands is set to become a big draw for foreign visitors," the article's subhead said.
- The bottom surface of North Atlantic Ocean has a series of sub-aquatic tunnels, linking the uneven islands that feature the Faroe Islands archipelago.
- According to the latest reports, the newly built undersea Eysturoy tunnel has got noted for its striking new underwater traffic circle which is well-lit, turquoise-blue colour and other-worldly design make this tunnel look unique.

- **The Faroe Islands, a series of 18 islets in the North Atlantic located** halfway between Iceland and Norway, constitute an autonomous region of Denmark.

**The Faroe or Faeroe Islands are a North Atlantic archipelago** located 320 kilometres (200 mi) north-northwest of Scotland, and about **halfway between Norway and Iceland**. **Torshavn is the capital** and largest city of the Faroe Islands. **Lene Moyell Johansen** has been the **High Commissioner of the Faroe Islands** since 15 May 2017. **The krona is the currency** of the Faroe Islands.

## Indian-American named to Houston Board of Dallas Federal Reserve Bank

- **Bhavesh V Patel**, an Indian-American top executive of a multinational chemical company, has been **appointed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas to its Houston branch’s board of directors**.
- **Patel, is the chief executive officer and chairman of the management board of LyondellBasell Industries**, one of the largest plastics, chemicals and refining companies in the world.
- **The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas appointed Patel to its Houston branch’s board of directors for a term ending December 31, 2023.**

## Democrat Raphael Warnock wins first run-off election from Georgia; Control of US Senate hangs in balance

- **In Georgia, Democrat Raphael Warnock has defeated Republican Kelly Loeffler in one of two Georgia Senate runoffs.** Senior Pastor at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Warnock will be Georgia’s first Black Senator.
- **The other US Senate runoff between Republican Party Senator David Perdue and Democrat Jon Ossoff is still too early to call.** The experts said, if Democrats win both runoffs, the Senate will be **divided evenly between 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans, leaving Vice President Harris as the tie-breaker and giving Democrats the majority.** If Perdue wins re-election in the other Georgia runoff, the Senate will remain in Republican hands.

**The United States Congress or U.S. Congress is the bicameral legislature of the federal government of the United States and consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Congress meets in the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. Both senators and representatives are chosen through direct election, though vacancies in the Senate may be filled by a governor’s appointment. Congress has 535 voting members: 100 senators and 435 representatives, the latter defined by the Reapportionment Act of 1929. In addition, the House of Representatives has six non-voting members, bringing the total membership of the Congress to 541 or fewer in the case of vacancies.**

## Twitter permanently suspends US President Donald Trump’s account

- **US President Donald Trump has been permanently suspended from social network app Twitter due to the risk of further incitement of violence.** In a statement Twitter said the decision was made after close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account. **At the time of permanent suspension, Trump had 88.7 million followers and followed 51 people.**
- **The San Francisco-based company announced the ban two days after Trump was initially suspended for posting a series of tweets that misled users about the presidential election results, and appeared to encourage violent rioters who had mobbed the US Capitol.** One included a video message of Trump expressing love for the insurgents and calling the election “fraudulent.”
- **Hundreds of Trump supporters entered the US Capitol as the US Congress attempted to certify Joe Biden’s victory in the presidential election.** The ensuing violence led to the death of four civilians and a police officer. Twitter had warned then that it would ban Mr Trump permanently if he breached the platform’s rules again.
- **Soon after a mob of President Donald Trump’s supporters stormed the US Capitol, his social media accounts were suspended by Big Tech companies like Twitter and Facebook for his alleged role in inciting violence and spreading misinformation.** The incident spurred a renewed debate about **Section 230 of the US’ Communications Decency Act** — the controversial piece of internet legislation that permitted these tech companies to flex their powers and ban the president in the first place.

- **Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act was passed in 1996** and provides legal immunity to internet companies for content that is shared on their websites. The act was first introduced to regulate pornography online. **Section 230 is an amendment to the act, which holds users responsible for their comments and posts online.**
- Trump posted two tweets. **“The 75,000,000 great American Patriots who voted for me, AMERICA FIRST, and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN, will have a GIANT VOICE long into the future. They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!”**
- Twitter said that Trump’s tweet that he would not be attending Biden’s inauguration was being received by a number of his supporters as further confirmation that the Nov. 3 election that he lost was not legitimate.

**Twitter is an American microblogging and social networking service on which users post and interact with messages known as “tweets”.** Registered users can post, like and retweet tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Users access Twitter through its website interface or its mobile-device application software (“app”), though the service could also be accessed via SMS before April 2020. **Twitter, Inc. is based in San Francisco, California. Twitter was created by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams in March 2006 and launched in July of that year.**

## Israel appoints Honorary Consul in Northeast India

- **The Embassy of Israel in India has appointed Joyshree Das Verma as Honorary Consul** in the region with jurisdiction over the States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim. As part of efforts to increase its presence and collaborations in India’s Northeast, Israel has appointed an Honorary Consul in the region who will be based in Assam.
- During the visit, the Ambassador had laid the **foundation stone of a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Vegetables in Khetri, Assam. The region’s first Indo-Israeli Centre of Excellence was inaugurated in Mizoram in 2018.**

**Israel is a country in the Middle East, Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities in the world, and is considered holy to the three major Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority claim Jerusalem as their capital, however, neither claim is widely recognized internationally. Knesset is the unicameral national legislature of Israel. Israeli new shekel is the currency of Israel. Benjamin Netanyahu is serving as the 9<sup>th</sup> and current Prime Minister of Israel since 2009. Reuven Rivlin is serving as the 10<sup>th</sup> and current President of Israel since 2014.**

## British Indian minister Alok Sharma given sole charge of UN climate summit

- **Alok Sharma, one of the Indian-origin ministers in U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Cabinet, relinquished his role as Business Secretary in a mini-reshuffle to take sole charge as President of COP26 – the United Nations climate summit scheduled for Glasgow, Scotland, in November.**
- **The Agra-born minister, who was until now in charge of dual roles, will focus entirely on what has been dubbed as the largest summit the U.K. has ever hosted, bringing together representatives from nearly 200 countries, including India.**

## Bangladesh is country of focus at 51<sup>st</sup> International Film Festival of India

- **Bangladesh is the country of focus at the 51<sup>st</sup> International Film Festival of India (IFFI) starting at Goa on January 16. The festival will conclude on 24<sup>th</sup> January. It is being organised in a hybrid format considering the Corona pandemic.**
- **Four films from Bangladesh have been included in this section to recognise the cinematic excellence and contribution of the country.** The country of focus section included Jibandhuli directed by Tanvir Mokammel, Meghmallar directed by Zahidur Rahman Anjan, Under Construction by Rubaiyat Hossain and Sincerely Yours, Dhaka by Nuhash Humanyun, Syed Ahmed Shawki and 9 other individual directors.

## Trump administration labels Cuba as ‘state sponsor of terrorism’

- **The United States has designated Cuba as a “state sponsor of terrorism”,** US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced, the latest move in the final days of the Trump administration that **observers say will complicate President-elect Joe Biden’s foreign policy plans.**



- The US recently added a Cuban bank to its restricted entities list, alleging that the financial institution had ties to the Cuban military and its profits helped fund the country's "interference" in Venezuela.

Cuba is located in the northern Caribbean where the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean meet. Havana is the capital city, largest city, and leading commercial center of Cuba. The convertible peso is one of two official currencies in Cuba, the other being the Cuban peso. Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermudez is serving as the 19<sup>th</sup> and current President of Cuba. He was previously First Vice President from 2013 to 2018.

### Donald Trump becomes first US President to be impeached twice

- Donald Trump has become the first US president to be impeached twice. **The House of Representatives voted to charge him with inciting last week's mob attack on US Congress.** Trump was impeached by 232 - 197 vote by the US House on a single charge of incitement of insurrection that left five dead and **the Capitol ransacked.**
- **Impeachment refers only to the House, the lower chamber of Congress, bringing charges, or Articles of Impeachment.** The next major step is for the Senate, the upper chamber, to have a trial to determine Trump's guilt. **A two-third majority is needed to convict Trump.** If all 100 senators are present for the vote, at least 17 Republicans need to join the Democrats to convict Trump.
- The House approved a single article of impeachment — a formal charge — accusing Trump of "incitement of insurrection," focused on a speech he delivered to **thousands of supporters shortly before the pro-Trump mob rampaged through the Capitol.** **Trump is likely to argue at trial that his remarks were free speech protected by the Constitution's First Amendment** and that, while he told supporters to "fight," he did not intend it as a literal call to violence.

For the first time on December 18, 2019, Donald Trump was impeached for conditioning military aid and a White House meeting for Ukraine on the announcement of a pair of investigations: one into his potential rival for the White House in the 2020 election, Joe Biden, and son Hunter; and a second into a conspiracy theory that Ukraine, instead of Russia, was behind foreign tampering in the 2016 US election. **According to Article 61 of the Constitution of India, when a President is to be impeached for violation of the Constitution, the charge shall be preferred by either House of Parliament.**

### World's oldest known cave painting found in Indonesia

- Archaeologists have discovered the world's oldest known cave art — a life-sized picture of a wild pig that was painted at least 45,500 years ago in Indonesia. **The cave painting uncovered in South Sulawesi** consists of a figurative depiction of a warty pig, a wild boar that is endemic to this Indonesian island.
- The researchers noted that the Sulawesi warty pig painting, **dated to at least 45,500 years ago, is part of a rock art panel located above a high ledge along the rear wall of Leang Tedongnge.**

Indonesia is a sovereign state in Southeast Asia, between the Indian and Pacific oceans. It is the world's largest island country, with more than thirteen thousand islands. **With over 261 million people, it is the world's 4<sup>th</sup> most populous country** as well as the most populous Muslim-majority country. **Java is the world's most populous island.** Jakarta is the country's capital. The rupiah (Rp) is the official currency of Indonesia. **Joko Widodo also known as Jokowi is the seventh and current President of Indonesia.**

### 19<sup>th</sup> Dhaka International Film Festival to pay tribute to Satyajit Ray

- **The 19<sup>th</sup> Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF) was inaugurated on 16<sup>th</sup> January.** The film festival this year is dedicated to the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- The festival Director Ahmed Muztaba Zamal said that **225 films from 73 countries are being screened during the 9 day long festival between 16-24 January.** The festival will have 10 categories including Cinema of the world, Children's Film, Women Film Maker's section, Spiritual Films, Bangladesh Panorama, Tribute and Retrospective among others.
- A special category on the leaders who changed the world has been introduced in the festival. It will show films relating to **the life of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Mahatma Gandhi, Lenin, Yaser Arafat, Fidel Castro and**

**others during the festival.** Spring Blossom, a film from France, directed by Suzanne Lindon will be the opening film of the festival.

- The tribute section of the festival will be **dedicated to the legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray to commemorate his birth centenary.** The section will showcase **Pather Panchali, Aparajito, Jalsaghar, Sonar Kella and Hirok Rajar Deshe** directed by Satyajit Ray.

## North Korea unveils new submarine-launched ballistic missile

- **North Korea has unveiled a new submarine-launched ballistic missile described as the world's most powerful weapon.** Pyongyang unveiled the missile during a military parade. The event did not showcase North Korea's largest intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which was unveiled at a much larger military parade in October.
- **That colossal weapon** is believed to be able to **deliver a nuclear warhead to anywhere in the US**, and its size had surprised even seasoned analysts when it was put on show last year.

North Korea is a country in East Asia constituting the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. The country is bordered to the north by China and by Russia and to the south by South Korea, with the heavily fortified Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two. Pyongyang is the capital and largest city of North Korea. Kim Jong-un is currently serving as Supreme Leader of North Korea since 2011. The North Korean won is the official currency of North Korea.

## At 18 million, India has the world's largest diaspora population

- **India has the largest diaspora population in the world with 18 million people from the country living outside their homeland in 2020**, according to a report by the United Nations, which says the UAE, the US and Saudi Arabia host the largest number of migrants from India.
- **The report 'International Migration 2020 Highlights'**, by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) released, said the **spatial distribution of transnational populations varies greatly and India's diaspora, the largest in the world**, is distributed across a number of major countries of destination.
- Other countries with a large diaspora included Mexico and Russia (11 million each), China (10 million) and Syria (8 million). The US remained by far the largest country of destination of international migrants with **51 million migrants in 2020, equal to 18 per cent of the world's total.** Germany hosted the second largest number of migrants worldwide at around 16 million, followed by Saudi Arabia (13 million), Russia (12 million) and the UK (9 million).
- The report said according to World Bank projections, **the Covid-19 pandemic may reduce the volume of remittances sent to low-and middle-income countries from USD 548 billion in 2019 to USD 470 billion in 2021**, a decline of 14 per cent. **India is the main country of recipient of remittances worldwide and in 2019 received USD 83 billion in remittances from its diaspora.** The World Bank projects that in 2020, the amount will decline by around 9 per cent to about USD 76 billion.

## UN Human Rights Council picks Fiji in first-ever presidential vote

- **The UN Human Rights Council elected Fiji's ambassador as its president in 2021**, following an unprecedented secret ballot after a diplomatic stand-off blocked the usual consensus decision.
- **Fiji's ambassador in Geneva, Nazhat Shameem Khan, who served as the council's vice president in 2020** and is considered a rights champion, won with 29 out of 47 votes.
- The council's presidency rotates each year between the regions and the candidate is typically agreed upon by consensus within each regional group. That meant the council, which **for the first time in its 15-year history began the year with no president**, was forced to hold unprecedented vote among all 47 members.

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world. The UNHRC has 47 members elected for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis. The headquarters of UNHRC is in Geneva, Switzerland. Nazhat Shameem is a Fijian judge and diplomat serving as the President of the United Nations Human Rights Council since 2021.

## Maldives' first foreign funded project of 2021 backed by India inaugurated

- The first foreign funded project in Maldives in 2021 that was backed by India was inaugurated. Ekuveni synthetic running track in Male' was inaugurated by the President of Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.
- It is the 1<sup>st</sup> India-funded grant project to be inaugurated in 2021 and overall, the 8<sup>th</sup> Indian grant project in the Maldives to be completed in the last six months.

Maldives is a South Asian country, located in the Indian Ocean, situated in the Arabian Sea. Male is the capital and most populated city, traditionally called the "King's Island" for its central location. Maldivian rufiyaa is the currency of the Maldives. Ibrahim Mohamed Solih is the current President of the Maldives.

## Museveni wins 6<sup>th</sup> term amid allegations of rigged election

- Uganda's Yoweri Museveni has won a sixth term in office, extending his 35-year rule after an election which took place under heavy security and an Internet blackout, and which his main rival said was marred by fraud and violence.
- The 76-year-old leader, who took power in 1986, is one of Africa's longest serving Presidents, and was accused of crushing the opposition and media ahead of one of the most violent election campaigns in recent years.
- Mr. Museveni won with 58.6% of votes, seeing off a stiff battle from the former ragga singer Bobi Wine, 38, whose turn to politics fired up a youthful population where three quarters are under 30 years old.

Uganda is a landlocked country in East-Central Africa. Kampala is the capital and largest city of Uganda. Uganda's current president is Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, who took power in January 1986 after a protracted six-year guerrilla war. The shilling is the currency of Uganda.

## Most powerful passports 2021: Japan tops list, India ranks 85; Pakistan continues to be in worst

- Japan tops the list of being the most powerful passport in the world for the year 2021, according to the latest report by the Henley Passport Index. India ranks 85<sup>th</sup> in the most powerful passport report with a visa-free score of 58.
- While, Pakistan (rank 107) and Nepal (rank 104) continue to be in the 'worst passports to hold' category as reported by CNN with Pakistan having a visa-free score of 32 countries and Nepal having a score of 38 destinations. Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan continue to be the countries with the worst passport to hold with a passport score of 29, 28 and 26 respectively.
- According to the report released on January 5, Japanese citizens can travel to as many as 191 countries visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 191 destinations around the world. Singapore is in second place (with a score of 190) and South Korea ties with Germany in third place (with a score of 189).
- Countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Switzerland are tied at the seventh position with regard to the most powerful passports in the world with a visa-free score of 185. Australia stands at the 8<sup>th</sup> position with a visa score of 184.
- Dr. Christian H. Kaelin, Chairman of leading residence and citizenship advisory firm Henley & Partners and the inventor of the passport index concept, says that the latest ranking provides an opportunity to reflect on the extraordinary upheaval that characterised 2020.

## Adani Group to invest in Colombo Port terminal

- In his government's first admission yet of Indian involvement in developing a container terminal at the strategically coveted Colombo Port, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said 49% of the investment will come from the "Adani Group and other stakeholders".
- In May 2019, the predecessor government led by Maithripala Sirisena and Ranil Wickremesinghe signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with India and Japan for the project.
- The three countries agreed that the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) would retain 100% ownership, while a jointly-owned Terminal Operations Company 51% stake with Sri Lanka, and 49% with India and Japan would run the terminal.



**Adani Group is an Indian multinational conglomerate company headquartered in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. It was founded by Gautam Adani in 1988 as a commodity trading business, with the flagship company Adani Enterprises Limited (previously Adani Exports Limited). Gautam Adani is the chairman.**

## Britain to host first G7 summit of Biden era in June

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has been **invited by the United Kingdom to attend the G7 summit** to be held in the country's Cornwall region in June. The group that includes the world's seven leading democratic economies – **UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the USA – and the European Union**, will discuss global issues like the coronavirus pandemic, climate change and open trade.
- **UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson**, who had **cancelled his India visit for this year's Republic Day event because of the detection of the mutant strain of the virus in Britain**, is likely to visit the country "ahead of the G7", a press statement read. Apart from India, Australia and South Korea have also been invited to the summit.
- **Britain will host a G7 summit** in June announcing what will be **the first face-to-face meeting of the group** since the start of Joe Biden's US presidency. **Outgoing US President Donald Trump was forced to cancel last year's meeting of the G7 – the world's most advanced economies – due to the coronavirus pandemic.**
- **Britain, which holds the rotating presidency of the G7 in 2021, has invited leaders from Australia, India and South Korea to attend as guest countries.**

**The Group of Eight (G8) was an inter-governmental political forum from 1997 until 2014. It had formed from incorporating the country of Russia into the Group of Seven, or G7, and returned to its previous name after Russia was disinvited in 2014. The forum originated with a 1975 summit hosted by France that brought together representatives of six governments: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, thus leading to the name Group of Six or G6. The summit came to be known as the Group of Seven, in 1976 with the addition of Canada. Russia was added to the political forum from 1997, which the following year became known as the G8. In March 2014, Russia was suspended indefinitely following the annexation of Crimea, whereupon the political forum name reverted to G7. The Group of Seven (G7) is an intergovernmental organization consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. The heads of government of the member states, as well as the representatives of the European Union, meet at the annual G7 Summit.**

## Saudi Arabia ranked first in Arab world for road hazards technology

- **Saudi Arabia provides the best technology-driven hazard alert system in the Arab world**, according to the road warning hazards index.
- **According to the report, measured as part of the GCC developmental index**, the Saudi Transport Ministry has **covered more than 58 km of the country with road warning hazards technology**. This produces warning sounds when a driver loses concentration due to tiredness, using a mobile phone or suffering poor vision because of bad weather or road conditions.

**Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab state in Western Asia. Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East. Riyadh is the capital and most populous city of Saudi Arabia. Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has been King of Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques since 23 January 2015. Mohammad bin Salman is the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, also serving as First Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs and Minister of Defense—the world's youngest office holder at the time. Saudi riyal is the currency of Saudi Arabia.**

## Covid-19: Jordan becomes first country in the world to vaccinate refugees

- **Jordan has become the first country in the world to administer the coronavirus vaccine to refugees**, the United Nations has reported. **"The country has included refugees in every aspect of the public health response to the pandemic**, including the national vaccination campaign, proving how it should be done if we are to keep everyone safe."



- **Jordan plans to inoculate at least 20 to 25 percent of its population with the coronavirus vaccine**, including refugees and asylum seekers, who are entitled to receive the shot free of charge.

**Jordan is an Arab country** in the Levant region of Western Asia, on the East Bank of the Jordan River. **Jordan is bordered by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Israel and Palestine (West Bank)**. **Amman is the capital and largest city** of Jordan. **The Jordanian dinar has been the currency of Jordan since 1950**. **Bisher Al Khasawneh is a Jordanian politician and diplomat who has been serving as Prime Minister of Jordan**.

## The Flint Water Indictments

- **The Flint water crisis is an ongoing public health crisis that began in 2014 when the City of Flint in Michigan**—which has a population of roughly 100,000—**changed its water supply from Lake Huron to the Flint River**. This switch caused the water distribution pipes to corrode, as a result of which lead and other contaminants were leached into the municipal drinking water.
- **This led to an outbreak of Legionnaires’ disease, a serious type of pneumonia caused by the Legionella bacteria** and other health complications in thousands of its residents. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **people can get sick from this if they breathe in mist or accidentally swallow bacteria-containing water into the lungs**.
- While the water supply was switched back in 2015, the damage was long-lasting and many residents of the city continued to suffer. **In January 2016, the state of Michigan declared a state of emergency and in October the same year; residents of the city were advised not to drink the municipal tap water unless it was filtered**.

## India and Japan sign MoC to promote movement of skilled workers from India to Japan

- **India and Japan signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC), a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to Specified Skilled Worker (SSW)**.
- The MoC was signed by Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and Ambassador of Japan to India Suzuki Satoshi. **The MoC will help to promote the movement of skilled workers from India to Japan**.
- **The MoC covers 14 categories of specified skills under which skilled workers from India** who meet the skills requirement and Japanese language tests would be eligible for employment in Japan on a contractual basis.

**Naruhito is the Emperor of Japan**. He acceded to the Chrysanthemum Throne on 1 May 2019, beginning the **Reiwa era**, following the abdication of his father, Emperor Akihito, on 30 April 2019. He is the **126<sup>th</sup> monarch according to Japan’s traditional order of succession**. **Yoshihide Suga is serving as Prime Minister of Japan**. He was the **chief cabinet secretary under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe** from 2012 to 2020. **Tokyo is the capital city of Japan** and **yen is the official currency of Japan** and it is the **third most traded currency in the foreign exchange market after the United States dollar and the euro**.

## Qatar Airways Awarded World’s First 5-Star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating by Skytrax

- **Qatar Airways has become the first global airline in the world to achieve the prestigious 5-Star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating** by international air transport rating organisation, Skytrax.
- **The announcement follows a audit, carried out by the Skytrax team in December 2020**, which assessed how effectively and consistently the **airline’s stringent COVID-19 hygiene and safety standards and procedures** are adhered to, from flight check-in to on-board aircraft.
- This included a full review of procedural efficiency checks, visual observation of hygiene and safety levels at all stages of the passenger journey, and **on-board Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) sampling tests to measure the potential level of contamination of contact surfaces**.

## Joe Biden takes the oath of office as the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

- **Joe Biden became the 46<sup>th</sup> president of the United States** with a call to unity, vowing to bridge deep divides and defeat domestic extremism two weeks after a mob attack tried to undo his election victory. **At 78, Biden is the oldest president in US history and only the second Roman Catholic president**.

- On a frigid but sunny day at the very Capitol building that was assaulted on January 6, Biden swore the oath of office moments after Kamala Harris, who became America's first woman vice president, turning the page on Donald Trump's tumultuous four years. Biden, who was vice president under Barack Obama and first ran for president in 1987, plans to kick off his tenure with a flurry of 17 orders.

Joseph Robinette Biden served as the 47<sup>th</sup> vice president of the United States from 2009 to 2017. In January 2017, Barak Obama awarded Biden the Presidential Medal of Freedom with distinction.

## Kamala Harris sworn in as America's first woman Vice President

- Indian-origin Kamala Harris was sworn in as America's first woman Vice President during a historic inauguration at the West Front of the Capitol. Harris the 49<sup>th</sup> US Vice President, will serve as the deputy of President Joe Biden, who also took the oath of office, becoming the 46<sup>th</sup> US President. Harris took over the office of the US Vice President from Mike Pence. Biden succeeded President Donald Trump.

Kamala Devi Harris has served as the junior United States senator from California since 2017. Born in Oakland, California, Harris began her career in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office, before being recruited to the San Francisco District Attorney's Office and later the City Attorney of San Francisco's office. In 2003, she was elected district attorney of San Francisco. She was elected attorney general of California in 2010, and re-elected in 2014. She defeated Loretta Sanchez in the 2016 Senate election to become the second African-American woman and the first South Asian American to serve in the United States Senate.

## Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons

- The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by the Conference (by a vote of 122 States in favour, with one vote against and one abstention) at the United Nations on 7 July 2017, and opened for signature by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20 September 2017.
- Following the deposit with the Secretary-General of the 50<sup>th</sup> instrument of ratification or accession of the Treaty on 24 October 2020, it enter into force on 22 January 2021 in accordance with its article 15 (1). The treaty is the first legally binding international agreement that aim to eliminate nuclear weapons completely.
- The nuclear-weapon states (NWS) are the five states—China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States—officially recognized as possessing nuclear weapons by the NPT. India, Israel, and Pakistan never joined the NPT and are known to possess nuclear weapons.

India does not support the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. India is committed to the policy of "No First Use" against nuclear weapon states and non-use against non-nuclear weapon states. India is also committed to negotiations regarding the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. FMCT is a proposed international agreement. The agreement prohibits production of enriched Uranium and Plutonium. India has also not signed Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

## Mongolian Prime Minister submits resignation after Covid-19 protests

- Mongolia's Prime Minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa submitted his resignation to parliament after protests in the capital Ulaanbaatar over the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Mongolia's deputy prime minister and health minister also tendered their resignations.

Mongolia is a landlocked country in East Asia. Ulaanbaatar is the capital and largest city of Mongolia. Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene has been the Prime Minister of Mongolia since 27 January 2021. The togrog or tugrik is the official currency of Mongolia.

## Kuwait emir reappoints Prime Minister to form new cabinet

- Kuwait's emir has reappointed Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah as Prime Minister, after the cabinet resigned last week in a standoff with parliament over its vote to question the premier. The Prime Minister and the cabinet had been acting in a caretaker role since the resignation. The emir tasked the prime minister with nominating a new cabinet.

- **Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah last week accepted the government’s resignation, led by Sheikh Sabah.** The resignation came “due to the current developments in the relationship between the National Assembly (parliament) and the government”.
- **The prime minister said the relationship between the government and the National Assembly has been drawn up by Article 50 of the constitution regarding the separation of powers.**

**Kuwait is a country in Western Asia.** Situated in the northern edge of Eastern Arabia at the tip of the Persian Gulf, it borders Iraq to the north and Saudi Arabia to the south. **As of 2016, Kuwait has a population of 4.5 million people: 1.3 million are Kuwaitis and 3.2 million are expatriates. Expatriates account for approximately 70% of the population. Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is the Crown Prince of Kuwait.** Aged 80 years, he is the **oldest Crown Prince in the world.** The **Kuwaiti dinar is the currency of Kuwait.**

## **Saudi Arabia has unveiled plans for THE LINE, a 170 kilometer (106 mile) belt of communities connected without the need for cars or roads**

- **Saudi Arabia has unveiled plans for THE LINE, a 170 kilometer (106 mile) belt of communities connected without the need for cars or roads. Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman unveiled his newest vision to diversify the country’s economy beyond oil: ‘A city with no cars, roads or carbon emissions’ under mega-city project NEOM.**
- **The vision of 170 km long city with no cars, roads or carbon emissions called ‘The Line’ will be part of the \$500 billion projects called ‘NEOM’.** THE LINE will be completely free of cars and streets, with residents given access to nature and all of their daily needs within a walking distance of five minutes.

**Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab state in Western Asia. Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East. Riyadh is the capital and most populous city of Saudi Arabia. Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has been King of Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques since 23 January 2015. Mohammad bin Salman is the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, also serving as First Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs and Minister of Defense—the world’s youngest office holder at the time. Saudi riyal is the currency of Saudi Arabia.**

## **Italy Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigns**

- **Giuseppe Conte resigned as Italian Prime Minister, hoping to be granted a fresh mandate by the head of state to form a new government** after a coalition rupture left him **without a majority** in the Senate.
- **President Sergio Mattarella is expected to hold two days of formal consultations with all the parties this week before deciding what to do next. Parties are divided over spending in the coronavirus crisis,** in which more than 85,000 Italians have died.

**Italy is located in Southern Europe and is also considered part of Western Europe. A unitary parliamentary republic with Rome as its capital. Sergio Mattarella is serving as the current President of the Italian Republic, since February 2015. Euro is the official currency of it.**

## **Singapore becomes first country to use facial recognition to pay taxes**

- **In Singapore, online government services can now be accessed by facial recognition — a world first.** This technology is being **rolled out to the city-state’s SingPass digital identity scheme,** offering access to no less than 400 online services, including tax declarations and public housing applications. **Facial recognition is also increasingly being used to access other online services, such as banking.**
- **This new function, dubbed SingPass Face Verification,** lets users connect securely to government websites, as well as online services on private websites. The function is designed to work via home computers, tablets and cell phones, as well as at public kiosks.

**Singapore is a sovereign city-state and island country in Southeast Asia. Singapore dollar is the official currency of Singapore. Lee Hsien Loong is the current Prime Minister of Singapore. Halimah binti Yacob is the current President of Singapore. She is the first female president in the country’s history.**



## Ageing dams in India, U.S. other nations pose growing threat: UN report

- **Over a thousand large dams in India will be roughly 50-years-old in 2025** and such aging structures across the world pose a growing threat, according to a United Nations (UN) report which notes that by 2050, most people on Earth will live downstream of tens of thousands of dams built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- **The report, titled ‘Ageing water infrastructure: An emerging global risk’ and compiled by United Nations University’s Canadian-based Institute for Water, Environment and Health, says most of the 58,700 large dams worldwide were constructed between 1930 and 1970 with a design life of 50 to 100 years.**
- According to the report, the world is unlikely to witness another large dam-building revolution as in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, but dams constructed then will inevitably be showing their age. **The report said that 32,716 large dams (55% of the world’s total) are found in just four Asian countries: China, India, Japan, and South Korea - a majority of which will reach the 50-year threshold relatively soon.**

## World’s first hydrogen-powered double decker buses go into service in Aberdeen

- **The world’s first fleet of double-decker hydrogen buses has officially been launched into service in Aberdeen, Scotland. Built by UK firm Wrightbus, the new 60-seat double-deckers save one kilogram of CO2 with each kilometer they drive as the zero-emission fleet emits nothing more than water. The buses will also tackle more than just air pollution, as they are virtually silent when they run.**
- **While prototype hydrogen buses have been designed and used previously, these double-deckers are the first of their kind to go into operation** and welcome customers on board. Run by First Bus – one of Scotland’s largest bus operators – in a project led by Aberdeen City Council, the hydrogen buses represent a major step forward in reducing climate change in cities across the world.

## Estonia’s PM resigns over corruption scandal in his party

- **Estonia’s Prime Minister has handed in his resignation to the Baltic country’s president after a corruption scandal investigated by the police and prosecutors in his Center Party.** The move automatically prompts the resignation of Estonia’s three-party coalition government.
- **Estonian Prime Minister Juri Ratas said on his Facebook page that he would step down as “the suspicion expressed by the Public Prosecutor’s Office... does not mean that someone is definitely guilty but they will inevitably cast a serious shadow over all those involved.”**

Estonia is a country on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea in Northern Europe. Tallinn is the capital city. Kersti Kaljulaid is the current President of Estonia. Euro is the official currency of it.

## Estonia: Government led by nation’s first woman PM sworn in

- **A new two-party coalition government was sworn in Estonia, led by the first woman Prime Minister since the Baltic nation regained independence in 1991. The 15-member Cabinet of Prime Minister Kaja Kallas took office after lawmakers in Estonia’s parliament approved the government appointed by President Kersti Kaljulaid.**
- **Kallas, is a lawyer and former European Parliament member.** The center-right Reform Party that she chairs and the left-leaning Center Party, which are Estonia’s two biggest political parties, reached a deal on to form a government. **Estonia, a nation of 1.3 million,** is now one of the few countries where both the head of state and the head of government are women.

## Kawasaki Heavy completes world’s first liquefied hydrogen receiving terminal

- **Japan’s Kawasaki Heavy Industries has announced the completion of the Kobe LH2 Terminal, the world’s first liquefied hydrogen receiving terminal. The terminal is built for Hydrogen Energy Supply-chain Technology Research Association (HySTRA) for a demonstration project of transporting liquefied hydrogen from Australia to Japan.**

Naruhito is the Emperor of Japan. He acceded to the Chrysanthemum Throne on 1 May 2019, beginning the Reiwa era, following the abdication of his father, Emperor Akihito, on 30 April 2019. He is the 126<sup>th</sup> monarch according to Japan’s traditional order of succession. Yoshihide Suga is serving as Prime Minister of Japan. He was the chief cabinet secretary under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe from 2012 to 2020. Tokyo is the capital city of



Japan and yen is the official currency of Japan and it is the third most traded currency in the foreign exchange market after the United States dollar and the euro.

## Pakistan gets Geographical Indicator tag for its Basmati rice

- **Pakistan has received the Geographical Indicator (GI) tag for its Basmati**, paving the way for creating a local registry for the particular strain of rice and making a case in the international market, as the country fights a case in the EU against India's move to get Basmati rice registered as its product.
- **"Before 1947, we were one. Both countries share the Basmati rice-growing zone. In India, we grow Basmati in seven states and Union Territories.** Pakistan has its own Basmati-growing area," Ashok Kumar Singh, deputy director general (Agricultural Extension), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, said. Singh added that New Delhi had never contested Islamabad's right to file a GI for its Basmati.
- **"A GI tag can be filed in international fora only when one has GI laws in their country. So far, Pakistan did not have them. But now, it has enacted an Act and can thus follow India's path. We had a GI Act in place in 2001 and filed an application in 2008.**
- **A GI is a tag on products** that have a specific geographical origin and possess certain qualities due to that origin and are safeguarded by legalities such as by the World Intellectual Property Organisation.
- **India's Basmati zone includes Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and (western) Uttar Pradesh. Punjab and Haryana accounted for 40 per cent each of India's Basmati exports** while the remaining 20 per cent came from other states.

Basmati is a variety of long, slender-grained aromatic rice which is traditionally grown in India and Pakistan. According to the Indian Government agency APEDA, a rice variety is eligible to be called Basmati if it has a minimum average precooked milled rice length of 6.61 mm and average precooked milled rice breadth of up to 2 mm, among other parameters.

## Japan to join 'Five Eyes' to check China's clampdown on Uyghurs

- Amid calls within the Japanese government to join the 'Five Eyes' intelligence-sharing alliance, it provided key inputs to the US and the UK regarding Chinese clampdown on Uyghurs.
- **Five Eyes is a network of five nations – Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the US** who collaborated to better respond to increasing threats by North Korea and China. Japan is on its way to become the 'sixth eye'.
- **The US as well as the UK stepped up their criticism against the Chinese severe crackdown on Uyghurs in the Xinjiang autonomous region.** Based on the information gathered from Japan, the US administration placed a series of sanctions on Beijing for human rights violations against Uyghurs, such as visa restriction on Chinese officials, heightening bilateral tensions.

The Uyghurs are a Turkic ethnic group originating from and culturally affiliated with the general region of Central and East Asia. The Uyghurs are recognized as native to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in Northwest China. They are considered to be one of China's 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities. In January 2021, British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said that China's treatment of Uyghurs amounts to torture. That same month, the U.S. government declared it a genocide.

## World's largest survey of public opinion on climate change: a majority of people call for wide-ranging action

- **The results of the Peoples' Climate Vote, the world's biggest ever survey of public opinion on climate change** are published. Covering 50 countries with over half of the world's population, the survey includes over half a million people under the age of 18, a key constituency on climate change that is typically unable to vote yet in regular elections.
- Detailed results broken down by age, gender, and education level will be shared with governments around the world by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which organized the innovative poll with the University of Oxford.

- In many participating countries, **it is the first time that large-scale polling of public opinion** has ever been conducted on the topic of climate change. 2021 is a pivotal year for countries' climate action commitments, with a key round of negotiations set to take place at the UN Climate Summit in November in Glasgow, UK.
- In the survey, respondents were asked if climate change was a global emergency and whether they supported **eighteen key climate policies across six action areas: economy, energy, transport, food & farms, nature and protecting people**. Results show that people often want broad climate policies beyond the current state of play.
- For example, in eight of the ten survey countries with **the highest emissions from the power sector, majorities backed more renewable energy**. In four out of the five countries with the highest emissions from land-use change and enough data on policy preferences, there was majority support for conserving forests and land.
- **Nine out of ten of the countries** with the most urbanized populations backed more use of clean electric cars and buses, or bicycles.

## Uzbekistan signs loan and guarantee agreements for its first solar plant

- The Uzbek government signed loan and guarantee agreements with three development banks to finance construction of the Central Asian nation's first solar photovoltaic power plant. The World Bank's International Finance Corporation and ADB will lend up to \$60 million for the plant that will be built in the central Navoi region by Abu Dhabi Future Energy, the World Bank said.
- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will provide an equity bridge loan of up to \$60 million to Masdar for the construction and operation of the plant. The World Bank will also provide a \$5.1 million payment guarantee for the Uzbek government to backstop payment obligations of the project.

Uzbekistan is a country in Central Asia. It is surrounded by five landlocked countries: Kazakhstan to the north; Kyrgyzstan to the northeast; Tajikistan to the southeast; Afghanistan to the south and Turkmenistan to the southwest. Along with Liechtenstein, it is one of two doubly landlocked countries. Tashkent is the capital city. The sou'm is the currency of Uzbekistan.

## State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, other leaders of Myanmar ruling party arrested

- State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other senior leaders from the ruling party of Myanmar National League for Democracy (NLD) have been detained. Aung San Suu Kyi took over as the head of the civilian government in 2015 after a long period of military rule in Myanmar.
- The National Elections held on Nov.8 2020 saw a massive victory for NLD with the military supported Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) performing poorly. However, USDP challenged the outcome alleging mismanagement and lack of transparency. It called for re-election.
- The military ouster of Aung San Suu Kyi's government in Myanmar was "inevitable", army Chief General Min Aung Hlaing said, as Washington formally designated the takeover as a coup. In Washington, the State Department said it had assessed that "Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of (Myanmar's) ruling party, and Win Myint, the duly elected head of government, were deposed in a military coup." The designation means the US cannot assist the Myanmar government, though any impact will be mainly symbolic as almost all assistance goes to non-governmental entities. The military was already under US sanctions over its brutal campaign against the Rohingya minority.

Aung San Suu Kyi is a Myanmar politician, diplomat, author, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1991). She is the leader of the National League for Democracy and the first and served as State Counsellor of Myanmar (equivalent to a prime minister) and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2016 to 2021. She is also the first woman to serve as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Myanmar's capital city is Naypyidaw and kyat is the currency of Myanmar. Myint Swe is currently serving as the acting president of Myanmar. Sittwe Port is a deep-water port constructed by India in 2016 at Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State in Myanmar, on the Bay of Bengal. Situated at the mouth of the Kaladan River, the USD 120 Million port is being financed by India as a part of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, collaboration between India and Myanmar. Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project is a project that will connect the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata with Sittwe seaport in Rakhine State, Myanmar by sea.

## ECONOMY AND FINANCE



### Economy News

#### Goods and Services Tax collections for December 2020 rose to Rs 1.15 lakh crore, the highest ever since the implementation of the nationwide tax

- Goods and Services Tax collections for December rose to Rs 1.15 lakh crore, the highest ever since the implementation of the nationwide tax from 1 July 2017, the Finance Ministry said in a statement on January 1, 2021. The GST Compensation Act, 2017 guaranteed states that they would be compensated for any loss of revenue in the first five years of GST implementation, until 2022, using a cess levied on sin and luxury goods.
- The GST revenues during December 2020 have been the highest since the introduction of GST and it is the first time that it has crossed Rs. 1.15 lakh crore. The highest GST collection till now was Rs. 1,13,866 crore in the month of April 2019. The December 2020 revenues are significantly higher than last month's revenues of Rs. 1,04,963 crore. This is the highest growth in monthly revenues since last 21 months. This has been due to combined effect of the rapid economic recovery post pandemic and the nation-wide drive against GST evaders and fake bills along with many systemic changes introduced recently, which have led to improved compliance.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) is an indirect tax (or consumption tax) used in India on the supply of goods and services. It is a **comprehensive, multistage, destination-based tax**: comprehensive because it has **subsumed almost all the indirect taxes** except a few state taxes. Goods and services are **divided into five different tax slabs** for collection of tax - 0%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%. However, petroleum products, alcoholic drinks, and electricity are not taxed under GST and instead are taxed separately by the individual state governments, as per the previous tax system. The tax came into effect from 1 July 2017 through the implementation of the One Hundred and First Amendment of the Constitution of India by the Indian government. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is governed by the GST Council. Article 279 (1) of the amended Indian Constitution states that the GST Council has to be constituted by the President within 60 days of the commencement of the Article 279A. The Chairman of the GST council is Union Finance Minister.

#### UNDP and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation to co-create India's first Social Impact Bond

- Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) recently signed an MoU with UNDP India to co-create India's first Social Impact Bond (SIB).
- "As part of this unique investment tool, the PCMC administration will **only have to bear the costs of a public welfare project associated with the bond if the pre-defined project targets are fulfilled**".
- **This type of bond lays down outcome-based targets to be achieved at the start of the contract.** This feature allows for tracking the progress of the outcomes, thus ensuring transparency for investors. This mechanism also ensures that funds are used effectively and efficiently towards the project. **This SIB will support the PCMC in improving healthcare services for its citizens, especially with respect to the pandemic while incurring minimum investment risks**".



- **This is the first time that a government body will act as the ‘outcome funder’ in a bond**, whereas traditionally most government-funded public projects require large and early investments by the government with a substantial gestation period of outcomes and involve various kinds of risks, officials said.

## IFSCA becomes member of International Organization of Securities Commissions

- **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) has become an associate member of the International Organization of Securities Commissions.** The International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) works closely with the G20 and the Financial Stability Board in setting up the standards for strengthening the securities markets.
- **The first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in the country has been set up at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) in Gandhinagar.** To regulate such institutions, the government established IFSCA on April 27 last year with its head office in Gandhinagar.

**Gujarat International Finance Tec (GIFT) City located on the banks of the Sabarmati River and is around 12 km (7.5 mi) from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport and is India’s first operational smart city and international financial services centre.** It was promoted by the Government of Gujarat as a Greenfield project. The city is designed for walk to work concept and includes commercial and residential complexes. The city is connected through 4-6 lane State and National Highways. **A double corridor metro system is being constructed to connect GIFT City to the nearby airport and various parts of Ahmedabad.**

## United Nations’ FAO names 4 Asian tea cultivation sites as Globally Important Agri Heritage Systems

- **The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations has recognised four tea producing sites spanning across three countries as the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS).**
- **All the four sites chosen by the FAO are in the Asian continent and include two tea production sites from China- the world’s largest producer- and one each from Korea and Japan,** according to the information provided on the FAO website.
- **However, India which is the second largest producer of the beverage and one of the biggest exporters of tea to several countries could not find a place in the chosen GIAHS sites.**
- **The FAO while selecting the sites of tea production put into consideration the idea of sustainability and past traditions as prime factors and hence some of the oldest sites of tea production in the tea producing countries found the mention on the list.**

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security. Its Latin motto, fiat panis, translates to “let there be bread”. It was founded in October 1945. The FAO is headquartered in Rome, Italy and maintains regional and field offices around the world, operating in over 130 countries. The Director-General, currently Qu Dongyu of China, serves as the chief administrative officer.**

## World’s negative-yield debt pile at \$18 trillion for first time

- **The world’s stockpile of negative-yielding debt has swelled to a fresh record in a sign that demand for havens is just as intense as that for riskier assets.** The market value of the **Bloomberg Barclays Global Negative Yielding Debt Index rose to \$18.04 trillion the highest level ever recorded.** Spanish 10-year bonds were the latest to join the club, with rates sliding below 0% for the first time.
- **About \$1 trillion of bonds have seen their yields turn negative this week, meaning 27% of the world’s investment-grade debt is now sub-zero.** Thanks to the slew of global issuance in 2020 as governments and companies wrestle with the impact of the coronavirus, that remains below the 30% peak reached last year.

## Union Minister Nitin Gadkari says, 22 Green Express Highways under construction

- **Union Minister for Road Transport, Highways and MSMEs Nitin Gadkari has said that the government is fully committed towards development in the field of infrastructure. Construction of 22 Green Express**



**Highways which is in progress** will prove to be a game changer in the field of transportation and traveling. Mr. Gadkari also spoke about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and **making India a number one global economy**.

## Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar inaugurates Virtual Agri-hackathon 2020 in New Delhi

- Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar **inaugurated the Virtual Agri-hackathon 2020 in New Delhi. The Agri India Hackathon is being organised.**
- The Minister said, **agriculture is the backbone of the country** and plans are afoot to strengthen this backbone with youth engagement, employment generation, technology and digitization. **The two month long event is the first of its kind and the largest virtual event in the history of Indian agriculture.**
- It will bring together the most important stakeholders from industry and government alongside India's young **bright minds, creative startups and smart innovators who will build new, fast and frugal solutions to tackle the big questions the country is facing.**
- With the launch, the application of the hackathon was made live on MyGov.in and will remain open till 20 January next year. **The hackathon will happen in three elimination rounds and the final 24 winners will get a cash prize of Rs one lakh** along with incubation support, tech and business mentoring and various other benefits. T

**The agriculture contribution in India's GDP in 2019 is 15.96 percent.** According to latest report, **agriculture is primary source of livelihood for 58% population in India.** The Primary sector of the economy includes any industry involved in the extraction and production of raw materials, such as farming, logging, hunting, fishing, and mining. India is a global agricultural powerhouse. It is the world's largest producer of milk, pulses, and spices, and has the world's largest cattle herd (buffaloes), as well as the largest area under wheat, rice and cotton. It is the second largest producer of rice, wheat, cotton, sugarcane, farmed fish, sheep & goat meat, fruit, vegetables and tea.

## Suneet Sharma takes over the charge of new Chairman & CEO of Railway Board

- **Suneet Sharma has been appointed as the new Chairman & Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Railway Board (Ministry of Railways) and ex-officio Principal Secretary to Government of India.**
- **The appointments committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Suneet Sharma as Chairman & CEO of Railway Board.** Prior to this, Suneet Sharma worked as General Manager, Eastern Railway.

## Jeff Bezos's \$10 bn donation to fight climate change tops list of richest charitable gifts in 2020

- **The world's richest person made the single-largest charitable contribution in 2020,** according to The Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual list of top donations, **a \$10 billion gift that is intended to help fight climate change.**
- **Amazon's founder and CEO, Jeff Bezos, whose "real-time" worth Forbes magazine estimates at roughly \$188 billion,** used the contribution to launch his Bezos Earth Fund. **The fund, which supports non-profits involved in the climate crisis, has paid out \$790 million to 16 groups so far.**

## Panel to fix rates for exporters' duty refund scheme to submit report

- **A committee set up under the chairmanship of former union secretary G K Pillai to fix ceiling rates under a duty refund scheme - RoDTEP - for exporters is expected to submit the complete report in the next few weeks.**
- **"The G K Pillai committee has given a part report. Now the remaining report is expected within the next few weeks and as soon as the report comes, we will be able to notify RoDTEP rates. But those rates will be effective from January 1, 2021".**

## Shivalik Bank gets license as Small Finance Bank

- **Shivalik Small Finance Bank (SSFB) has become the first Urban Cooperative Bank (UCB) in India to transition to a Small Finance Bank under the voluntary transition scheme.** In a statement, the bank announced the receipt of a license from Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

- The bank had received an in-principle **approval from RBI for transitioning to a Small Finance Bank in January 2020** and was given an 18 month timeline to commence business as a Small Finance Bank.

**A co-operative bank, which started small in the district Saharanpur, has now emerged to become the first and largest multi-state Urban Co-operative Bank in Uttar Pradesh.** Shivalik Bank is not just focused on being completely technology driven but has dedicated itself to become an approachable solution to all the banking needs of the modern Indian user.

## The global economic outlook in five charts

- **The global economy is expected to recover slowly from the collapse caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.** Output is expected to expand 4% in 2021 but will **remain more than 5% below pre-pandemic projections.**
- The pandemic likely caused lasting damage to potential growth. In particular, the shock to investment and human capital is eroding growth prospects in **emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) and setting back key development goals.** The global economic outlook report is released by world bank.

## MFIs pitch for issuance of tax free social bonds by NABARD, SIDBI

- Micro-finance institutions have made a pitch for **issuance of tax-free social bonds for five years by SIDBI/NABARD to exclusively provide debt to the sector operating in semi urban, rural areas or aspirational districts.**
- In a pre-Budget memorandum to the Finance Ministry, **Sa-Dhan, the association of microfinance sector,** also made a case for **introduction of credit guarantee scheme and refinance facility for MFIs through the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Small industrial Development Bank of India (SIDBI) or MUDRA.**

**National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** is an apex development finance institution fully owned by Government of India. The bank has been entrusted with “matters concerning policy, planning, and operations in the field of credit for agriculture and other economic activities in rural areas in India”. NABARD is active in developing & implementing Financial Inclusion. **NABARD was established on the recommendations of B.Sivaraman Committee (by Act 61, 1981 of Parliament) on 12 July 1982** to implement the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act 1981. **Shri G R Chintala is the Chairman of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).** It is headquartered in Mumbai.

## Indian economy heading towards V-shaped recovery in 2021: Assocham

- **India’s economy is showing decisive signs of a ‘V-shaped’ recovery in 2021** with the return of consumer confidence, robust financial markets, an uptick in manufacturing and exporters braving it out in the global market with never-say-die spirit, Assocham said.
- The industry chamber said it expects **immense accruals of economic benefits from the COVID-19 vaccination programme about to be rolled out.** “The high-frequency data is a strong pointer to a V-shaped recovery in 2021 with the seeds bursting into green shoots over the last two months of 2020 itself.”
- **India’s GDP is estimated to contract by a record 7.7 per cent during 2020-21 as the COVID-19 pandemic severely hit** the key manufacturing and services segments, as per government projections released.

**The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM)** is a non-governmental trade association and advocacy group based in New Delhi, India. The organisation represents the interests of trade and commerce in India, and acts as an interface between issues and initiatives. **The goal of this organisation is to promote both domestic and international trade, and reduce trade barriers** while fostering conducive environment for the growth of trade and industry of India.

## India’s foreign exchange reserves rose by \$758 million to reach a record high of \$586.082 billion

- **India’s foreign exchange reserves rose by \$758 million to reach a record high of \$586.082 billion** in the week ended January 8, 2021, data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed. In the previous week ended January 1, the reserves had increased by \$4.483 billion to \$585.324 billion. In the reporting week, **foreign currency assets (FCAs), a major component of the overall reserves, rose by \$150 million to \$541.791 billion.**

- After remaining unchanged during the week ended January 8, 2021, the **special drawing rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) increased by \$5 million to \$1.515 billion**. The country's reserve position with the IMF rose by \$35 million to \$5.181 billion in the week, according to data from the banking regulator.
- **The Reserve Bank functions as the custodian and manager of forex reserves**, and operates within the overall policy framework agreed upon with the government. The RBI allocates the dollars for specific purposes. The RBI also uses its forex kitty for the orderly movement of the rupee. **The rising reserves have also helped the rupee to strengthen against the dollar.**

**The foreign exchange reserves to GDP ratio is around 15 per cent. Reserves will provide a level of confidence to markets that a country can meet its external obligations, demonstrate the backing of domestic currency by external assets, assist the government in meeting its foreign exchange needs and external debt obligations and maintain a reserve for national disasters or emergencies. The major reason for the rise in forex reserves is the rise in investment in foreign portfolio investors in Indian stocks and foreign direct investments (FDIs).**

## New Foreign Trade Policy to come into effect from April 1

- The meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry was held on the subject “**New Foreign Trade Policy 2021-26**”. **The new Foreign Trade Policy-FTP will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 for a period of five years.**
- **The policy will strive to make India a leader in the area of international trade and channelize the synergies gained through merchandise and services exports for growth and employment with a goal to make India a 5 trillion dollar economy. The FTP 2015-20 came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and the same was extended by one year till 31 March this year due to Covid-19 pandemic.**

**Foreign trade refers to the trade between different economies of the world. It usually includes the trade of goods and services between the residents of different nations. The Indian foreign trade policy is regulated by the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992.**

## India's first toy cluster to come up in Bhanapur village of Koppal district

- **Bhanapur, a remote village in Koppal district, is poised to attain star status with the Karnataka government the laying foundation stone for the country's first toy manufacturing cluster in the village.**
- The manufacturing campus is being **promoted by Aequs SEZ Pvt Ltd in partnership with Karnataka**. Bhanapur village in Koppal district, which has a population of less than 2,000 people, is located 365 km from Bengaluru.

## Digital Evolution Scorecard 2020: India ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in ‘Break Out Economies’

- **Rapidly digitalising India was ranked highly among “Break Out Economies”** in the third edition of the Digital Evolution Scorecard developed by Tufts University's Fletcher School in partnership with Mastercard.
- **Third rank Indonesia, and India**, which ranks number four in momentum, have displayed increasing digital momentum suggesting the potential to **rapidly digitalise for both post-COVID economic recovery and longer-term transformation.**
- **China which leads the countries in the “Break Out Economies” group is more evolved digitally** due mainly to its combination of rapidly growing demand and innovation.

## 11 Indian cos in top-500 globally by value, country ranked 10<sup>th</sup>

- **Total 11 private Indian firms have made it to the list of 500 most valuable companies across the world, and the country is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> on the chart, as per a report. The total value of these 11 companies grew 14 per cent and has been pegged at USD 805 billion or nearly a third of the Indian GDP.**
- All these companies in the list of non-state enterprises have gained in value during 2020, which was **hit by the pandemic, barring tobacco major ITC and second largest private sector lender ICICI Bank, as per the ‘Hurun Global 500’ report.**
- **Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries leads among the local enterprises with a 20.5 per cent jump in valuation to USD 168.8 billion as of December 1 and is ranked 54<sup>th</sup> globally, as per the list. Tata Consultancy**



Services' value grew by nearly 30 per cent during the year to take its value to USD 139 billion, ranking it 73<sup>rd</sup> globally and making it the second most valuable Indian firm.

- Of the 11 most valuable companies, seven have their headquarters in the financial capital (Mumbai), followed by one each in Pune, Bengaluru, Kolkata and New Delhi, it said.
- The list of 500 is led by consumer technology major Apple with a valuation of USD 2.1 trillion and is followed by Microsoft and Amazon at USD 1.6 trillion. The US accounted for nearly half of the enterprises with 242 of the 500 entries, followed by China at 51 and Japan at 30 companies.

### Milind Pant, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and Edward Knight join USIBC Board as vice chairs

- Three top corporate leaders, including Milind Pant, CEO of Amway and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, executive chairperson, Biocon, have joined the 2021 Global Board of Directors of US India Business Council (USIBC) as vice chairs.
- Besides Pant and Mazumdar-Shaw, Edward Knight, vice chair, Nasdaq has also been inducted in the leadership team of the leading business advocacy organisation. The induction of three top corporate leaders strengthens the USIBC's leadership team as the Council engages a new US administration and advocates for stronger US-India commercial ties in an increasingly complex world.

The U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) was formed in 1975 as a business advocacy organization to enlighten and encourage the private sectors of both India and United States to enhance investment flows. The organization serves as a direct link between business and Government leaders, resulting in increased trade and investment to strengthen ties between the two nations. Former United States Department of State official Nisha Desai Biswal serves as the current chairman of USIBC. She is assisted by a board of directors.

### India's m-cap to GDP ratio crosses 100% for first time in over a decade

- The combined market capitalisation of all listed companies in India has crossed the country's GDP for the first time in more than 10 years. This happened last in September 2010, when the market capitalisation to GDP ratio was 100.7 per cent.
- The current ratio is, however, much lower than the all-time high of 149.4 per cent in December 2007. In the past 15 years, the ratio has seen a low of around 52 per cent in March 2005, with a median value of 78.6 per cent. The m-cap to GDP ratio on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) reached Rs 197.7 trillion on January 14, against India's nominal GDP of around Rs 190 trillion during the year ended December 2020.
- The GDP number is based on the advance estimates for FY21 released by the National Statistical Office (NSO). According to the NSO's estimate, the nominal size of India's gross domestic product (GDP) in the current year would be around Rs 195 trillion, lower than the current market capitalisation of the companies listed on BSE.

BSE Limited, formerly known as the Bombay Stock Exchange Ltd., is an Indian stock exchange located at Dalal Street, Mumbai. Established in 1875, the BSE Ltd., the oldest stock exchange in Asia. It is the world's 10<sup>th</sup> largest stock exchange. Ashishkumar Chauhan (Ashish Chauhan) is the current managing director and chief executive officer of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE).

### IRFC IPO Set To Be First Government-owned NBFC to Go Public

- Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC), valued at Rs 4,633 crore, is set to hit the market with its initial public offer (IPO). The IPO's price band will be of Rs 25-26 per equity share.
- IRFC is the finance arm of Indian Railways. It raises financial resources for expansion through capital markets and other borrowings. At the upper end of the price band, IRFC hopes to raise Rs 4,633 crore, and at the lower end, Rs 4,455 crore.
- The anchor book opened allocating up to 50 per cent of the portion reserved for qualified institutional buyers (QIBs), to build investor confidence on the IPO. This is the first time that a PSU is using the anchor-investor route to raise funds.



## International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected an 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected an 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021, making the country the only major economy of the world to register double-digit growth this year amidst the coronavirus pandemic. The International Monetary Fund's growth projections for India in its latest **World Economic Outlook Update** released reflected a strong rebound in the economy, which is estimated to have contracted by eight per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic.
- China is next with 8.1 per cent growth in 2021 followed by Spain (5.9 per cent) and France (5.5 per cent). Revising its figures, the IMF said that in 2020, the Indian economy is estimated to have contracted by eight per cent. China is the only major country which registered a positive growth rate of 2.3 per cent in 2020. India's economy, the IMF said, is projected to grow by 6.8 per cent in 2022 and that of China by 5.6 per cent. With the latest projections, India regains the tag of the fastest developing economies of the world.

Andorra has joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to become its 190<sup>th</sup> member. Andorra is a microstate situated between France and Spain. However, it is the largest microstate in Europe. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an organization of 190 countries, working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world. Created in 1945, the IMF is governed by and accountable to the 190 countries that make up its near-global membership. Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, from Bulgaria, is Managing Director and Chairman of the Executive Board of International Monetary Fund (IMF) from October 1, 2019. Prominent Indian-American economist Gita Gopinath has joined as the chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, becoming the first woman to occupy the top post at the global lender. The latest currency that was added to the basket of currencies by the International Monetary Fund to determine the value of XDR is the Chinese renminbi in 2016. The other international currencies in the basket of currencies are British Pound, Japanese Yen, US Dollar, and Euro. XDR is the currency code of Special Drawing Rights.

## Western Spain set to get Europe's largest solar power plant

- Spain's largest utility Iberdrola SA and the French food giant Danone SA sealed an accord to build 590 MW-capacity photo-voltaic plant, the largest in Europe. The 300 million-euro (\$364 million) project will be located in the western province of Caceres. The utility will provide power to Danone's 29 supply points for 10 years, starting from April 2022 under a power purchase agreement.
- The plant will avoid the emission of 245,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide. Spain is by far Europe's busiest subsidy-free photo-voltaic market, and leads the sector's booming growth in the region.

Spain is a country in Southwestern Europe with some pockets of territory across the Strait of Gibraltar and the Atlantic Ocean. Madrid is the capital and most-populous city of Spain. Pedro Sanchez has been Prime Minister of Spain since June 2018. The euro is the official currency of it.

## Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurates first small-scale LNG supply infrastructure of Shell Energy India at Hazira, Gujarat

- Union Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated the first small-scale LNG supply infrastructure of Shell Energy India at its LNG terminal at Hazira in Gujarat. This will now augment Shell's natural gas supply offerings in India to include supply of LNG via trucks.
- This infrastructure will also help support in the development of LNG as a clean transportation fuel. The Government of India is promoting natural gas through various policy and regulatory reforms towards making India- a gas-based economy by increasing the share of gas in India's primary energy mix to 15 per cent.

## Petroleum & Natural Gas Ministry launches SAKSHAM campaign to spread awareness about green energy

- The Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry launched month-long mass awareness campaign 'SAKSHAM' to spread awareness about green and clean energy. The pan-India campaign will focus on adoption of cleaner fuels.

- The Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Tarun Kapoor launched the campaign in New Delhi. The campaign will **spread awareness about seven key drivers that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had recently mentioned**. They include moving towards a gas-based economy, cleaner use of fossil fuels, greater reliance on domestic sources to drive bio-fuels and increased use of electric vehicles.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between PCRA and EESL for promotion of Energy Efficient PNG Stove on the occasion.

Dharmendra Debendra Pradhan is currently serving as the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Minister of Steel in the Second Modi Ministry. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha in March 2018 from Madhya Pradesh.

### World Economic Forum releases the Global Risks Report 2021

- Each year the World Economic Forum publishes a report looking ahead to the **short term and long term risks facing organizations around the world**. The **2021 Global Risks Report** has now been published, alongside a call for the world to ‘wake up to long term risks’.
- The report says that in **2020, the world saw the catastrophic effects of ignoring long-term risks**. While the pandemic has shown the reality of such risks, the emergence of vaccines provides an exit. With other **long term risks, such as environmental concerns, there will be no way out**. Instead, understanding and acting on the threat in advance provides the only chance of reducing the impacts.
- **For the first time, the Global Risks Report rates risks** according to when respondents perceive they will **pose a critical threat to the world**. **Clear and present dangers (0-2 years) reveal concern about lives and livelihoods – among them infectious diseases, employment crises, digital inequality and youth disillusionment**.
- **In the medium-term (3-5 years)**, respondents believe the world will be **threatened by knock-on economic and technological risks**, which may take several years to materialize – such as asset bubble bursts, IT infrastructure breakdown, price instability and debt crises.
- **Existential threats (5-10 years) – weapons of mass destruction, state collapse, biodiversity loss and adverse technological advances – dominate long-term concerns**.

The World Economic Forum (WEF), based in **Cologne, Geneva Canton, Switzerland**, is an **international NGO, founded in 1971**. The WEF’s mission is stated as “**committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas**”. The WEF **hosts an annual meeting at the end of January in Davos, a mountain resort in Graubunden, in the eastern Alps region of Switzerland**. The WEF was founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab.

### India debuts largest domestically-built nuclear reactor with more planned

- **India’s success in connecting its largest domestically-built nuclear reactor** to the grid is a boost for plans to deploy the technology to **help the world’s third-biggest polluter limit emissions**, according to the official overseeing the plans.
- **The 700-megawatt pressurized heavy water reactor of the Kakrapar Atomic Power Station in Gujarat is the first of 16 planned units** that will help balance the grid against growing intermittent renewable generation. **India is counting on its nuclear program to help meet its Paris climate commitments to reduce the emissions intensity of its economy by a third from 2005 levels by 2030**.
- **Nuclear Power Corp. of India Ltd., also known as NPCIL**, which connected the reactor to the grid, expects to start five more units through March 2027, and is **placing orders for another ten to be commissioned by 2031**. **The combined cost of the fleet is estimated at about 1.5 trillion rupees (\$20.4 billion)**.

The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited is an **Indian public sector undertaking based in Mumbai, Maharashtra**. It is **wholly owned by the Government of India and is responsible for the generation of nuclear power for electricity**. NPCIL is administered by the Department of Atomic Energy. NPCIL was created in **September 1987** under the Companies Act 1956.

## Cabinet approves investment of over Rs 5200 crore for 850 MegaWatt Hydro Power Project in J&K

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the investment of over Rs 5200 crore for 850 megawatt Ratle Hydro Electric (HE) Project located on Chenab river in Kishtwar in Jammu and Kashmir.
- This will be a new Joint Venture Company (JVC) of National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and Jammu with equity contribution of 51 per cent and Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Ltd (JKSPDC) with 49 per cent.
- The Government is also supporting the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir by providing a grant of Rs 776.44 crore for Equity contribution of JKSPDC in the JVC to be set up for construction of Ratle HE Project. The Ratle Hydro Electric Project shall be commissioned within 60 months. The Power generated from the Project will help in providing balancing of Grid and will improve the power supply position.

## India's largest multi-modal logistic park to come up at Virochan Nagar in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

- India's largest multi-modal logistic park will come up at Virochan Nagar near Sanand in Ahmedabad district of Gujarat. A Memorandum of Understanding-MoU was signed between the Gujarat Government and Adani Port and SEZ Ltd. in the presence of Chief Minister Vijay Rupani in Gandhinagar.
- According to the details shared by the State Government, the proposed 1,450-acre park will also have a dedicated air cargo complex with 4.6-kilometre long runway to handle even large sized cargo aircraft.
- It will provide direct air, rail and road connectivity. The park will have provision of direct rail connectivity with a dedicated freight corridor which is part of the Delhi-Mumbai industrial corridor.
- The multi-modal logistic park will be set up with an estimated investment of Rs 50,000 crore. It will have potential to generate direct and indirect employment for 25,000 persons. The project will be completed in phased manner in next three years. Works on this project will be started within six months after various clearances and permissions.

## FM launches Union Budget mobile app, Halwa Ceremony conducted

- Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the Union Budget mobile app even as final stages of FY 2021-22 Budget preparations began with the Halwa ceremony.
- The customary halwa ceremony was held in North Block and is performed every year before the "lock-in" process of Budget preparation begins. The mobile app will provide easy and quick access to Union Budget information to all stakeholders, as the Budget will be delivered in paperless form for the first time.
- The mobile App facilitates complete access to 14 Union Budget documents, including the Annual Financial Statement (commonly known as Budget), Demand for Grants (DG), Finance Bill etc. as prescribed by the Constitution.

The Union Budget of India also referred to as the Annual Financial Statement in the Article 112 of the Constitution of India, is the annual budget of the Republic of India. The Government presents it on the first day of February so that it could be materialised before the beginning of new financial year in April. Until 2016 it was presented on the last working day of February by the Finance Minister in Parliament. The budget, which is presented by means of the Finance bill and the Appropriation bill has to be passed by Lok Sabha before it can come into effect on 1 April, the start of India's financial year. As of January 2021, Morarji Desai has presented 10 budgets which is the highest count followed by P Chidambaram's 9 and Pranab Mukherjee's 8. Yashwant Sinha, Yashwantrao Chavan and C.D. Deshmukh have presented 7 budgets each while Manmohan Singh and T.T. Krishnamachari have presented 6 budgets.

## UK applying to join Asia-Pacific free trade pact CPTPP

- The UK is applying to join a free trade area made up of 11 Asia and Pacific nations, under its post-Brexit plans. The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership - or CPTPP - covers a market of around 500 million people. In total, CPTPP nations accounted for 8.4% of UK exports in 2019, roughly the same proportion as Germany alone.



- The trade agreement formed in 2018 which includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. In total, it covers a market of around 500 million people, generating more than 13% of the world's income.
- The US was originally in talks to be part of the CPTPP, but former President Donald Trump pulled out when he took office. If the new administration in Washington were to reconsider the CPTPP, that would make membership much more attractive to the UK. It could allow a much closer UK-US trading relationship, without waiting for a bilateral trade deal to be negotiated.
- The UK is the first non-founding country to apply to join the CPTPP and, if successful, would be its second biggest economy after Japan. The free trade block aims to reduce trade tariffs - a form of border tax - between member countries. It includes a promise to eliminate or reduce 95% of import charges- although some of these charges are kept to protect some home-made products, for example Japan's rice and Canada's dairy industry.

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), also known as TPP11 or TPP-11 is a trade agreement between Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam. It evolved from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which never entered into force due to the withdrawal of the United States. The sixth nation to ratify the deal was Australia on 31 October, and the agreement came into force for the initial six ratifying countries on 30 December 2018.

### Mukesh Ambani earned Rs 90 crore per hour during pandemic: Oxfam report

- A recently released Oxfam report on income inequality indicated that it would take an unskilled worker at least three years to earn what RIL chief Mukesh Ambani earned in a second during the coronavirus pandemic.
- It would have taken 10,000 years for an unskilled worker to make what Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) chairman Mukesh Ambani made in an hour during the coronavirus pandemic, according to a recent Oxfam report.
- The report, titled 'Inequality Virus', added that it would take an unskilled worker at least three years to earn what the RIL boss earned in a second during the pandemic. According to the Oxfam report, Ambani earned Rs 90 crore per hour during the coronavirus pandemic.
- In comparison, around 24 per cent of people in the country were earning Rs 3,000 per month during the pandemic. It also suggested that the wealth of Ambani alone would be enough to keep 40 crore informal workers out of poverty for at least five months.

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) is an Indian conglomerate holding company headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. On 18 October 2007, Reliance Industries became the first Indian company to breach \$100 billion market capitalization. On 10 September 2020, Reliance Industries became the first Indian company to cross \$200 billion in market capitalisation. It is also the highest income tax payer in the private sector in India. Dhirubhai Ambani founded Reliance Industries in Bombay with his cousin. Mukesh Dhirubhai Ambani is the current chairman, managing director, and largest shareholder of Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL).

### Mukesh Ambani is world's 11<sup>th</sup> richest billionaire

- Reliance Industries Ltd chairman Mukesh Ambani has moved up two spots to become the 11<sup>th</sup> richest person in the world, according to Bloomberg Billionaires Index.
- With a total net worth of \$79.2 billion (nearly Rs 5.78 lakh crore), Ambani is the only Indian to feature in the top 36 richest billionaires in the world.

Here are the top 10 billionaires of the world, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index:

1. Elon R Musk \$202 billion
2. Jeff Bezos \$192 billion
3. Bill Gates \$133 billion



4. Bernard Arnault \$112 billion
5. Mark Zuckerberg \$104 billion
6. Zhong Shanshan \$88.9 billion
7. Warren Buffett \$88.4 billion
8. Larry Page \$88.4 billion
9. Sergey Brin \$85.5 billion
10. Steve Ballmer \$81.6 billion

## International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected an 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021

- **The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected an 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021**, making the country the only major economy of the world to register double-digit growth this year amidst the coronavirus pandemic. The International Monetary Fund's growth projections for India in its **latest World Economic Outlook Update released reflected a strong rebound in the economy**, which is estimated to have contracted by eight per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic.
- **China is next with 8.1 per cent growth in 2021 followed by Spain (5.9 per cent) and France (5.5 per cent). Revising its figures**, the IMF said that in 2020, the Indian economy is estimated to have contracted by eight per cent. China is the only major country which registered a positive growth rate of 2.3 per cent in 2020. India's economy, the IMF said, is projected to grow by 6.8 per cent in 2022 and that of China by 5.6 per cent. With the latest projections, India regains the tag of the fastest developing economies of the world.

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## Govt notifies Startup India Seed Fund Scheme, Releases Eligibility Criteria

- **The Rs 945 crore Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) will be operational from April 1, 2021, to 2025** as the government looks to boost the ecosystem, providing the crucial capital for young companies. The scheme will be implemented by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- **The Startup India Seed Fund was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January 2021 to mark the fifth anniversary of the Startup India initiative.** The funding will be provided for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry and commercialisation.
- **Only startups registered and recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the implementation agency for SISFS, will be eligible for the funding.** As of this month, there are **42,813 Indian startups recognised by DPIIT.** Startups also need to be incorporated not more than two years ago at the time of application.
- **“Startups should not have received more than INR 10 Lakh of monetary support under any other government scheme. Only startups which have at least 51% shareholding by Indian promoters at the time of their application to a startup incubator for the scheme, will be eligible for a financial award.**

## Textiles Committee of Ministry of Textiles signs MoU with Nissenken Quality Evaluation Centre, Japan

- The Textiles Committee of the Ministry of Textiles has signed a Memorandum of Understanding- MoU with Nissenken Quality Evaluation Centre, Japan to boost export of Textile and Apparel to Japanese market. The MoU signing ceremony was held through video conferencing which was presided over by Minister of Textiles Smriti Irani and State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan Yasumasa Nagasaka.
- The main objective of the MoU is to provide required support to textile's trade and industry for ensuring quality as per the requirement of Japanese buyers. It is expected that the MoU will strengthen the bilateral trade by enhancing India's export of Textile and Apparels to Japan, which is the **third largest export destination of the world.**

Smriti Zubin Irani is serving as the Union Minister of Textiles and was given additional charge as Minister of Women and Child Development in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cabinet of Modi since May 2019. She is a Member of Parliament in the Lok Sabha, representing Amethi.

## FDI into India up 37 percent to USD 43.85 billion during April-November 2020

- Foreign direct investment (FDI) into India increased by 37 per cent to USD 43.85 billion during April-November 2020, according to data by the commerce and industry ministry. Total FDI inflows during the eight-month period of the current fiscal grew by 22 per cent to USD 58.37 billion. FDI is a major driver of economic growth and an important source of non-debt finance for the economic development of India.
- “The phenomenal increase in investment inflows into the country reiterates the government's firm commitment to initiate investor-friendly FDI policy reforms, obliterate policy bottlenecks and position India as a global investment hub for foreign investors”.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is an investment in a business by an investor from another country for which the foreign investor has control over the company purchased. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) are those institutional investors which invest in the assets belonging to a different country other than that where these organizations are based. FDI is an investment that a parent company makes in a foreign country. On the contrary, FII is an investment made by an investor in the markets of a foreign nation. The FDI flows into the primary market, while the FII flows into secondary market. While FIIs are short-term investments, the FDI's are long term investment. FII can enter the stock market easily and also withdraw from it easily. But FDI cannot enter and exit that easily. The Foreign Direct Investment is considered to be more stable than Foreign Institutional Investor.

## Green Tax approved for old vehicles; to cost up to 50% of road tax

- Green Tax has been proposed to dissuade people from using vehicles that damage the environment, motivate them to switch to newer, less polluting vehicles and to reduce overall pollution level and make the polluter pay for it
- Green Tax proposed on transport vehicles older than 8 years, to be charged at the time of renewal of fitness certificate, at the rate of 10-25% of road tax. Personal vehicles to be charged Green Tax at the time of renewal of Registration Certification after 15 years.

## Facing regulatory backlash worldwide, the Libra Association, which manages Facebook's cryptocurrency project, has decided to change its name to Diem Association

- Facing regulatory backlash worldwide, the Libra Association, which manages Facebook's cryptocurrency project, has decided to change its name to Diem Association in a bid to reinforce its organisational independence.
- The Diem Association (diem means day in Latin) will have its subsidiary called Diem Networks to serve as the payment system operator. In making the name change, the organisation said its goal is still to build a safe, secure, and compliant payment system.

## Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh become first states to complete One Nation One Ration Card reforms

- **Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh** have become the first group of states to complete three out of the four citizen-centric reforms stipulated by the Ministry of Finance.
- **The two states have completed the One Nation, One Ration Card Reforms, Ease of Doing Business Reforms and Urban Local Bodies Reforms.** Consequent upon completion of reforms in the three sectors, the Finance Ministry has decided to provide additional financial assistance amounting to 1,004 crore rupees to these states under the newly launched Scheme of Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure.
- **Andhra Pradesh will get an additional amount of 344 crore rupees while Madhya Pradesh has become entitled to receive 660 crore rupees.** This scheme was announced by the Central government in October last year as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat package. The additional financial assistance for the capital expenditure is in addition to the permission of 14,694 crore rupees issued to the two states for extra borrowings for completing the reforms.

## Economic Survey: India to become Fastest Growing Economy in next 2-years as per IMF

- **India's real GDP to record a growth of 11 per cent in 2021-22 and nominal GDP by 15.4 per cent-the highest since independence.** The V-shaped economic recovery is supported by the initiation of a mega vaccination drive with hopes of a robust recovery in the services sector and prospects for robust growth in consumption and investment.
- **The Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Smt Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Economic Survey 2020-21 in Parliament,** which states that the rebound will be led by the low base and continued normalization in economic activities as the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines gathers traction. The fundamentals of the economy remain strong as gradual scaling back of lockdowns along with the astute support of Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission have placed the economy firmly on the path of revival. **This path would entail a growth in real GDP by 2.4 percent over the absolute level of 2019-20-implying that the economy would take two years to reach and go past the pre-pandemic level.** These projections are in line with IMF estimate of real GDP growth of 11.5 per cent in 2021-22 for India and 6.8 per cent in 2022-23.
- The Economic Survey said, **India is to become the Fastest Growing Economy in next two years as per the International Monetary Fund (IMF).** India is to have a Current Account Surplus of two per cent of GDP in financial year 2021, a historic high after 17 years.

The Economic Survey of India is an annual document of the Ministry of Finance. The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance presents the Survey in the Parliament every year, just before the Union Budget. It is prepared under the guidance of the Chief Economic Adviser of India. This document is presented to both Houses of Parliament during the Budget Session. The first Economic Survey of India was presented in 1950-51 as part of the Union Budget. Krishnamurthy Venkata Subramanian is the current Chief Economic Adviser.

## Banks in News

### Bank of Baroda unveils digital lending platform for retail customers

- **Bank of Baroda (BoB) has unveiled a digital lending platform to enable prospective retail clients to get loans digitally through a paperless process.**
- **Pre-approved micro personal loan is offered to existing selected customers to shop anything through offline / online partner channels and pay later in easy EMIs.**
- **Customers can also avail the amount into their Savings bank account and convert it to EMIs from 3 to 18 months through m-Connect+ (Bank's mobile banking app) in 60 seconds.**

**Bank of Baroda (BOB) is an Indian multinational, public sector banking and financial services company. It is the third largest public sector bank in India. The government of India announced the merger of Bank of Baroda, Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank on September 17, 2018, to create the country's third largest lender. The amalgamation is the first-ever three-way consolidation of banks in the country. The Maharaja of Baroda, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, founded the bank on 20 July 1908 in the Princely State of Baroda, in Gujarat.**

### World's First Physical Cryptocurrency Bank Opens in India

- **The cryptocurrency market is flourishing in India despite the regulatory uncertainty. Unicas, a joint venture between the financial services companies Cahsaa and United Multistate Credit Cooperative Society, announced the launch of the world's first physical branch of a cryptocurrency bank in the Indian city of Jaipur.**
- **Cashaa mentioned that Unicas is the first crypto bank in the world to open a physical branch. Unicas users will be able to execute transactions in cryptocurrencies and local currency (INR) through the same account.**
- **The newly launched crypto bank provides the same services as a traditional bank, including buying and selling of cryptocurrency assets and issuance of loans against digital assets.**

**A blockchain originally block chain, is a growing list of records, called blocks that are linked using cryptography. Each block contains a cryptographic hash of the previous block, a timestamp, and transaction data (generally represented as a Merkle tree). The blockchain was invented by a person (or group of people) using the name Satoshi Nakamoto in 2008 to serve as the public transaction ledger of the cryptocurrency bitcoin.**

### IDBI Bank sells 23% stake in its life insurance arm to Ageas for Rs 507 cr

- **Private lender IDBI Bank has concluded the sale of 23 per cent stake in IDBI Federal Life Insurance Company Ltd (IFLI) to Ageas Insurance International NV for a consideration of Rs 507 crore. With this, Ageas will hold 49 per cent stake in insurance venture, which is now being rebranded as Ageas Federal Life Insurance Company.**

### Former Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu Chakraborty to be next HDFC Bank chairperson

- **India's largest private sector lender HDFC Bank is set to appoint former economic affairs secretary Atanu Chakraborty as the next chairman of the bank.**
- **The tenure of current chairman Shyamala Gopinath will end on January 1, 2021. Gopinath, a former RBI deputy governor, has been serving in the position since January 2, 2015.**

**HDFC Bank Limited is an Indian banking and financial services company headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra. HDFC Bank is India's largest private sector lender by assets. In 1994 HDFC Bank was incorporated, with its registered office in Mumbai, India. Sashidhar Jagdishan is the MD of HDFC Bank.**

### HDFC Bank top among 100 BFSI firms; Google Pay No.1 in UPI payments

- **HDFC Bank has emerged as the top player among the 100 Banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) companies in the country. The country's largest private lender topped because of its customer service, monetary management, and innovative offerings amid the coronavirus pandemic.**



- According to BFSI Movers and Shakers 2020 report by Wizikey, HDFC Bank's involvement in various ventures such as launching 'summer treats', offering no-cost EMI options and no down payment for large appliances, etc, became the key factors for the bank to become the winner in BFSI segment.
- Apart from HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and State Bank of India (SBI) ranked second and third, respectively, for showing a quick transformation to serve the citizens through the arterial reach.
- Neo Banks was another category that received a lot of buzzes this year, thanks to digitization. YONO emerged as number one and was followed by Niyo and Kotak 811 at ranks 2 and 3 respectively in the same category. In the payments bank category, the Airtel Payments Bank was ranked no. 1, followed by Paytm Payments Bank and Jio Payments Bank.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is an instant real-time payment system developed by National Payments Corporation of India facilitating inter-bank transactions. The interface is regulated by the Reserve Bank of India and works by instantly transferring funds between two bank accounts on a mobile platform.

### RBI's Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India in FY20

- The financial and asset quality profile of urban co-operative banks (USBs) deteriorated in the financial year 2019-20 (FY20), with the sector reporting net loss, an uptick in bad loans, and a fall in the provision coverage ratio.
- Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) rose from 7.3 per cent in 2018-19 to 10.8 per cent in FY20. In absolute terms, NPAs worth Rs 10,900 crore were added, taking the tally to Rs 33,010 crore by March 2020.
- The rise in NPAs may partly be attributable to stagnant growth in loans and advances and weak balance sheets, according to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) Trends and Progress of Banking in India report.

The Reserve Bank of India was founded on 1 April 1935 to respond to economic troubles after the First World War. RBI was conceptualised as per the guidelines, working style and outlook presented by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his book titled "The Problem of the Rupee – Its origin and its solution" and presented to the Hilton Young Commission. The bank was set up based on the recommendations of the 1926 Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance, also known as the Hilton-Young Commission. In 1969, the Indira Gandhi-headed government nationalised 14 major commercial banks. Upon Indira Gandhi's return to power in 1980, a further six banks were nationalised. The first Governor of the RBI was British banker Osborn Smith and C.D. Deshmukh was the first Indian Governor of RBI. Shashikant Das is the current Governor of RBI.

### Reserve Bank unveils digital payment index

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constructed a composite Digital Payments Index (DPI) to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country. The RBI-DPI has been constructed with March 2018 as the base period. The DPI for March 2019 and March 2020 work out to 153.47 and 207.84 respectively, indicating appreciable growth.
- "The RBI-DPI comprises five broad parameters, that enable the measurement of deepening and expansion of digital payments in the country over different time periods. "These parameters are including Payment Enablers (weight 25%), Payment Infrastructure – Demand-side factors and (10%), Payment Infrastructure – Supply-side factors (15%), Payment Performance (45%) and Consumer Centricity (5%)," the banking regulator said. Each of these parameters has sub-parameters which, in turn, consist of various measurable indicators.

### RuPay partners with RBL Bank to launch 'RuPay PoS'

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) announced that RuPay has partnered with RBL Bank to launch an innovative payment solution for Indian merchants – RuPay PoS in association with PayNearby.
- The RuPay PoS will transform smartphones into merchant Point of Sale (PoS) terminals for the retailers. Merchants will now be able to accept contactless payments of up to Rs. 5,000 through a simple tap and pay mechanism on his NFC enabled mobile phones.
- Customers using RuPay cards or have tokenized their RuPay Cards, can carry out contactless payments for their regular purchases. RuPay PoS will provide cost effective acceptance infrastructure to retailers at no additional capital cost. With RuPay PoS, nearby local stores even in the remotest areas will now be able to process contactless payments on their smartphone.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India. Founded in 2008, the NPCI is a not-for-profit organisation registered under section 8 of the Companies Act 2013, established by Reserve Bank of India & IBA. It is headquartered in Mumbai.

## Bank of Baroda launches WhatsApp banking services

- State-run Bank of Baroda announced the launch of banking services on messaging platform Whatsapp. The lender is offering services such as balance enquiry, mini statement, cheque status enquiry, cheque book request, blocking debit card and information on products and services, among others via WhatsApp.
- The banking services via the messaging platform is available 24x7, with no additional requirement of application download.

Bank of Baroda (BOB) is an Indian multinational, public sector banking and financial services company. It is the third largest public sector bank in India. The government of India announced the merger of Bank of Baroda, Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank on September 17, 2018, to create the country's third largest lender. The amalgamation is the first-ever three-way consolidation of banks in the country. The Maharaja of Baroda, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, founded the bank on 20 July 1908 in the Princely State of Baroda, in Gujarat.

## RBI Financial Stability Report: Banks gross NPA may rise to 13.5% by September 2021

- Banks' gross non-performing assets may rise to 13.5% by September 2021, from 7.5% in September 2020 under the baseline scenario, according to Financial Stability Report (FSR) released by the Reserve Bank of India.
- If the macroeconomic environment worsens into a severe stress scenario, the GNPA ratio may escalate to 14.8%, the report said. "The stress tests indicate that the GNPA ratio of all scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) may increase from 7.5% in September 2020 to 13.5% by September 2021 under the baseline scenario," the FSR report added.
- State-run banks are seen being the worst-affected among bank groups with their GNPA ratio expected to increase to 16.2 per cent by September 2021 under the baseline scenario from 9.7 per cent in September 2020. And to a high of 17.6 per cent in a severe stress scenario.

A non-performing asset (NPA) is a loan or advance for which the principal or interest payment remained overdue for a period of 90 days. Banks are required to classify NPAs further into Substandard, Doubtful and Loss assets. 1. Substandard assets: Assets which has remained NPA for a period less than or equal to 12 months. 2. Doubtful assets: An asset would be classified as doubtful if it has remained in the substandard category for a period of 12 months. 3. Loss assets: As per RBI, "Loss asset is considered uncollectible and of such little value that its continuance as a bankable asset is not warranted, although there may be some salvage or recovery value."

## SBI, Indian Oil Contactless RuPay Debit card launched

- India's largest fuel retailer Indian Oil has now teamed up with SBI, India's largest lender, to launch the SBI-Indian Oil Co-branded RuPay Debit Card.
- The SBI-Indian Oil Co-branded RuPay Debit Card was launched in a virtual ceremony on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021 in Mumbai. The SBI Indian Oil Debit Card has been launched across India.

On April 1, 2017, the State Bank of India, which was India's largest bank, merged with five of its associate banks (State Bank of Bikaner & Jaipur, State Bank of Hyderabad, State Bank of Mysore, State Bank of Patiala and State Bank of Travancore), and with the Bharatiya Mahila Bank. Dinesh Kumar Khara is the current chairman of the State Bank of India (SBI). Imperial Bank of India was the oldest and the largest commercial bank of the Indian subcontinent, and was subsequently transformed into State Bank of India in 1955.

## PNB in alliance with IIT-Kanpur, FIRST to set up fintech innovation centre

- Punjab National Bank (PNB), the country's second largest public sector bank, has announced an alliance with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur and FIRST (Foundation for Innovation & Research in Science & Technology), to jointly establish the Punjab National Bank - IIT Kanpur Innovation Centre at the IIT campus. Under this partnership, PNB and IIT-Kanpur will set up a "Fintech Innovation Centre (FIC)" as a vehicle to research and develop technological solutions to explore opportunities in the BFSI space.

## FSS and India Post Payments Bank join hands to promote financial inclusion

- **FSS (Financial Software and Systems), a leading payment processor and provider of integrated payment products, has partnered with India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) to promote financial inclusion among underserved and unbanked segments.**
- **As part of the collaboration, IPPB will use FSS' Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS) to deliver interoperable and affordable doorstep banking services to customers across India. FSS' AePS solution combines the low-cost structure of a branchless business model, digital distribution, and micro-targeting that lowers acquisition costs and improves reach.**

**Financial software or financial system software is special application software that records all the financial activity within a business organization.** Basic features of this system not only includes all the modules of accounting software like accounts payable, accounts receivable, ledger, reporting modules and payroll but also to explore alternative investment choices and calculate statistical relationships.

## RBI to introduce LEI for large-value transactions in RTGS/NEFT from April

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to introduce the Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) system for all payment transactions of value Rs 50 crore and above undertaken by entities (non-individuals) using the Reserve Bank-run Centralised Payment Systems with effect from April 1, 2021.**
- **LEI is a 20-digit number used to uniquely identify parties to financial transactions worldwide. It was conceived as a key measure to improve the quality and accuracy of financial data systems for better risk management post the global financial crisis. RBI introduced LEI in a phased manner for participants in the over-the-counter (OTC) derivative and non-derivative markets as also for large corporate borrowers.**

**The Reserve Bank of India was founded on 1 April 1935 to respond to economic troubles after the First World War. RBI was conceptualised as per the guidelines, working style and outlook presented by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his book titled "The Problem of the Rupee – Its origin and its solution" and presented to the Hilton Young Commission. The bank was set up based on the recommendations of the 1926 Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance, also known as the Hilton–Young Commission. In 1969, the Indira Gandhi-headed government nationalised 14 major commercial banks. Upon Indira Gandhi's return to power in 1980, a further six banks were nationalised. The first Governor of the RBI was British banker Osborn Smith and C.D. Deshmukh was the first Indian Governor of RBI. Shashikant Das is the current Governor of RBI.**

## Yes Bank launches wellness themed credit card

- **Yes Bank has announced its partnership with Aditya Birla Wellness Private Limited to launch the 'YES BANK Wellness' and 'YES BANK Wellness Plus' Credit Cards – aimed at the holistic health, self-care and wellness of consumers.**
- **As consumers face new realities of home-schooling of children, working from home and lack of physical contact with loved ones and colleagues, this is an innovative step to encourage and promote self-care, mental and physical well-being. Consumers can now enjoy the bouquet of complimentary health benefits by simply registering on the Aditya Birla Multiply App.**

**Yes Bank Limited is an Indian private sector bank headquartered in Mumbai, India and was founded by Rana Kapoor and Ashok Kapur in 2004. On 5 March 2020 in an attempt to avoid the collapse of the bank, which had an excessive amount of bad loans, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) took control of it. RBI later reconstructed the board and named Prashant Kumar, former Chief financial officer of SBI, as new MD & CEO at Yes Bank. Yes Bank is owned by State Bank of India who has a 30% stake in the company as of 28 July 2020.**

## IDFC First Bank enters credit card business

- **A credit card allowing cash withdrawal – and interest free – sounds too good to be true. But IDFC First Bank is offering one, claiming another industry first prerequisite by way of the lowest finance charges that would be synchronized with customer ratings.**



- The lender is set to levy **finance charges at an annual rate of 9% for the best rated customer, climbing up to 36% for lower rated customers**. Generally, the annual percentage rate or the APR for other banks ranges 34-40%. Customers can also use **interest-free cash withdrawal facilities at ATMs of up to 48 days**.
- They will have to **pay a nominal fee of Rs 250 per transaction against Rs 500 charged and interest charges levied by other major lenders**.

**IDFC First Bank (formerly IDFC Bank) is an Indian banking company with headquarters in Mumbai that forms part of IDFC, an integrated infrastructure finance company. The bank started operations on 1 October 2015. IDFC FIRST Bank was founded as a new entity by the merger of Erstwhile IDFC Bank and Erstwhile Capital First on December 18 2018. On 11 March 2020, the bank announced that it has signed Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, as its first brand ambassador. The bank IDFC Bank is the first in India to launch Aadhaar-linked cashless merchant solution. V. Vaidyanathan is MD and CEO of IDFC First Bank Ltd.**

### RBI forms working group on digital lending

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a working group on digital lending — including online platforms and mobile apps** — to study all aspects of digital lending activities in the regulated financial sector as well as by unregulated players.
- “Digital lending has the potential to make access to financial products and services more fair, efficient and inclusive. From a peripheral supporting role a few years ago, **FinTech-led innovation is now at the core of the design, pricing and delivery of financial products and services**.”
- The working group consists of both internal and external members. **The internal members include Jayant Kumar Dash, Executive Director, RBI (Chairman); Ajay Kumar Choudhary, Chief General Manager in-charge, Department of Supervision, RBI; S.P. Vasudevan, Chief General Manager, Department of Payment and Settlement Systems, RBI; and Manoranjan Mishra, Chief General Manager, Department of Regulation, RBI (Member Secretary). The external members are Vikram Mehta, co-founder, Monexo Fintech; and Rahul Sasi, cyber security expert and founder of CloudSEK.**

### HDFC Bank, CSC partner to launch EMI collection service for business correspondents

- **HDFC Bank and CSC e-Governance Services, announced the launch of EMI Collection Services for CSC-HDFC Bank’s business correspondents across the country.** “This will make payments convenient for customers, who can now visit their nearest CSC, to deposit overdues. The CSC-HDFC bank correspondent or village level entrepreneur (VLE) will match the loan account with the customers’ registered phone number to cross check the amount payable on the system”.

### Reserve Bank forms academic advisory council for supervisory college

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up an academic advisory council with former deputy governor N S Vishwanathan as the chairperson** to advise the full-time director of the central bank’s College of Supervisors (CoS).
- Members of the council include Arijit Basu, former managing director of State Bank of India (SBI); Paresh Sukthankar, former deputy MD at HDFC Bank; S Raghunath, professor at IIM-Bangalore; Tathagata Bandyopadhyay, professor at IIM-Ahmedabad; and Subrata Sarkar professor at Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai. **Rabi Narayan Mishra, former executive director of the RBI, has been named as the director of the body.**

### Kotak Mahindra AMC signs up with Climate Action 100+

- **Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company has become a signatory to Climate Action 100+**, which drives focus on clean energy transition and helps achieve the Paris Agreement’s goals.
- In April 2018, **KMAMC became the first domestic asset management company to sign up with the Principles for Responsible Investment supported by the United Nations.**
- **Climate Action 100+ is an investor-led initiative to ensure the world’s largest corporate greenhouse gas emitters take necessary action on climate change.** Five investor networks, including the PRI, jointly support the



initiative. The underlying sustainability agenda is that the Indian corporate sector, individually and collectively, reduces greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the Paris Agreement's goals.

**Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company Limited (KMAMC), a wholly owned subsidiary of Kotak Mahindra bank Limited (KMBL), is the Asset Manager for Kotak Mahindra Mutual Fund (KMMF). KMAMC started operations in December 1998 in Mumbai. Mr. Nilesh Shah is the Managing Director of it.**

## ICICI Bank ties up with Niyo to issue prepaid cards to MSMEs

- **ICICI Bank has tied up with Niyo, a new age fintech, to issue prepaid cards to workers of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).**
- **MSMEs will now be able to get 'ICICI Bank Niyo Bharat Payroll Card' powered by Visa, for their blue-collar workers, who are mostly under-banked. With this, MSMEs can upload the salaries of their workers on the card, which the workers can then utilise as per their need in a seamless manner.**
- **The 'ICICI Bank Niyo Bharat Payroll Card' allows an individual to receive funds up to Rs.1 lakh into the card account. It offers convenience and safety of digital banking to the blue-collar workforce while providing a state-of-the-art salary disbursement solution to the employers.**

## ICICI Bank launches 'InstaFX' mobile app

- **ICICI Bank announced the launch of a new mobile application for authorised money changers to help customers of any bank get 'ICICI Bank Forex Prepaid Card' swiftly. Called 'InstaFX', the app enables the authorised money changers, who are partners of the Bank, to complete the KYC verification and validation of customers digitally and on a real-time basis.**
- **This facility significantly improves customer convenience as the 'ICICI Bank Forex Prepaid Card' gets activated swiftly within a few hours, as against the industry practice of up to two-days.**
- **ICICI Bank is the first bank in the country to offer such facility to money changers. "InstaFX mobile app enhances the convenience of customers, even if they are not customers of our bank, as it facilitates swift activation of the 'ICICI Bank Forex Prepaid Card'.**

**ICICI Bank Limited is an Indian multinational banking and financial services company headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra with its registered office in Vadodara, Gujarat. ICICI Bank was established by the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI), an Indian financial institution, as a wholly-owned subsidiary in 1994. ICICI Bank is one of the Big Four banks of India others banks are SBI, Bank of Baroda and HDFC. Sandeep Bakhshi is the current MD & CEO, ICICI Bank since October 2018.**

## ADB to provide USD 231-mn loan to enhance power generation capacity in Assam

- **The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide a USD 231-million loan to augment electricity generation capacity in Assam through construction of a 120-megawatt (MW) hydroelectric power plant. ADB and the Government of India signed the loan agreement.**
- **The proposed hydroelectric project is run-of-the-river project over Kopili river which will help increase electricity supplied from clean energy by 469 gigawatt-hour (GWh) by 2025 and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 3.6 lakh tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.**

**Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank established on 19 December 1966, which is headquartered in the Ortigas Center located in the city of Mandaluyong, Metro Manila, Philippines. Masatsugu Asakawa, by career a Japanese civil servant, is the president of the Asian Development Bank. Asakawa, who took office on 17 January 2020, is the 10<sup>th</sup> president of ADB.**

## India soon going to have new Central Bank Digital Currency as RBI explores possibility

- **The statement from RBI comes as a number of private digital currencies, virtual currencies and cryptocurrencies are gaining popularity in recent years. However, the regulators and governments have been sceptical about these currencies and are apprehensive about the associated risks.**

- According to RBI, the **Central Bank Digital Currency or CBDC is a legal tender and a central bank liability in digital form denominated in a sovereign currency and appearing on the central bank's balance sheet. It is in the form of electronic currency which can be converted or exchanged at par with similarly denominated cash and traditional central bank deposits.**
- The RBI said that the **innovations are changing the payments space rapidly** and this has made central banks around the world **to examine whether they could leverage on technology and issue fiat money in digital form.**

**The phrase “central bank digital currency” (CBDC) has been used to refer to various proposals involving digital currency issued by a central bank. A report by the Bank for International Settlements states that, although the term “central bank digital currency” is not well-defined, “it is envisioned by most to be a new form of central bank money that is different from balances in traditional reserve or settlement accounts.” Central bank digital currencies also called digital fiat currencies or digital base money. The present concept of CBDCs was directly inspired by Bitcoin, but CBDC is different from virtual currency and cryptocurrency, which are not issued by the state and lack the legal tender status declared by the government.**



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Career  
Launcher

## Firms in News

### Indian Oil Corporation launches India's first 100 Octane petrol

- **Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)** launched India's first 100 Octane petrol, helping India join a select league of nations globally that have such superior quality fuel.
- **Launching the fuel**, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel **Dharmendra Pradhan** said **XP100 premium petrol will initially be available at select outlet of IOC in 10 cities** – Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, Agra, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad.
- **The fuel is manufactured at IOC's Mathura refinery in Uttar Pradesh** and supplied at select petrol pumps. Octane ratings are measures of fuel stability. **It is a measure of a fuel's ability to avoid knock.**
- **Knock occurs when fuel is prematurely ignited in the engine's cylinder**, which degrades efficiency and can be damaging to the engine. **The higher the octane number, the more resistant the petrol mixture is to knock.**
- **Worldwide, 100 Octane petrol has a niche market for luxury vehicles** that demand high performance and is available only in six countries of USA, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Malaysia and Israel.
- **Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL)** had recently launched Octane 99 and now IOC has come to the market with XP100. Previously, the nation leapfrogged from BS-IV (Euro-IV) emission compliant fuel to BS-VI from April 1 this year.

An octane rating, or octane number, is a standard measure of the performance of an engine or aviation gasoline. The higher the octane number, the more compression the fuel can withstand before detonating. In broad terms, fuels with a higher octane rating are used in high-performance gasoline engines that require higher compression ratios. In contrast, fuels with lower octane numbers (but higher cetane numbers) are ideal for diesel engines, because diesel engines (also referred to as compression-ignition engines) do not compress the fuel, but rather compress only air and then inject fuel into the air which was heated by compression.

**Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)** is an Indian state owned oil and Gas Company with registered office at Mumbai and primarily headquartered in New Delhi. It is the largest commercial enterprise in the country.

### No charges on transaction through UPI: NPCI

- **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** said transaction through **Unified Payment Interface platform** would continue to be free. Presently, no charges are levied on transaction done through UPI. **Set up in 2008, NPCI is an umbrella organization for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.**
- **UPI is currently the biggest among the NPCI operated systems including NACH, IMPS, AEPS, BBPS, RuPay, etc.** As of October FY21, out of 3.39 billion retail transactions on all NPCI platforms, 2.07 billion transactions were recorded on UPI followed by 340.03 million transactions with respect to NFS inter-bank ATM cash withdrawals.
- Importantly, **the Reserve Bank of India had launched a 'composite Digital Payments Index (DPI)' to measure the extent of digitisation of payments in India based on parameters** including payment enablers, payment infrastructure – demand-side and supply-side factors, payment performance, and consumer centricity, according to the RBI.

**National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** is an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India. **Founded in 2008, the NPCI is a not-for-profit organisation** registered under section 8 of the Companies Act 2013, established by Reserve Bank of India & IBA. It is headquartered in Mumbai.

### Soma Mondal takes over the reins of SAIL as its first woman chairperson

- **Soma Mondal takes over the reins of state-run Steel Authority of India (SAIL) as its first woman chairperson**, will have multiple tasks at hand.

- Paring the company's debt from the **current level of around Rs 50,000 crore, improving operating margin & employee productivity** and setting the journey right for targeted doubling capacity to **50 million tonne per annum (mtpa) in 10 years** are likely to be among her priorities.

**Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)** is an Indian state-owned steel making company based in New Delhi, India. It is a public sector undertaking, owned and operated by the Government of India with an annual turnover of **INR 66,267 Crore** for fiscal year 2018-19. Incorporated on **24 January 1974**, SAIL has **68,742 employees** (as of 01-Jun-2020). With an annual production of **16.30 million metric tons**, **SAIL is the 20<sup>th</sup> largest steel producer in the world and the largest in India.** Smt Soma Mondal is the current Chairman of SAIL.

## NHPC inks pact with IREDA

- State-run NHPC has signed an agreement with the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) for assistance in setting up renewable energy (RE) projects.
- NHPC said the company has undertaken an **ambitious plan to make a significant imprint on the RE landscape of the country through development of 7.5 GW of renewable energy (solar – terrestrial and floating, and wind) projects in the next three years.**
- NHPC further said it has already successfully commissioned **renewable capacity of 102.5 MW (solar – terrestrial and rooftop, and wind) on ownership basis** and has **contracted 2000 MW as intermediary procurer basis (Facilitator Mode)** at one of the most competitive tariffs with planned commissioning by 2021.

**NHPC Limited (erstwhile National Hydroelectric Power Corporation)** is an Indian Hydropower generation company that was incorporated in the year **1975** with an authorised capital of **Rs. 2000 million** and with an objective to plan, promote and organise an integrated and efficient development of hydroelectric power in all aspects. It is headquartered in Hyderabad.

## Tesla CEO Elon Musk now world's wealthiest person

- **Elon Musk**, the outspoken and envelope-pushing chief executive of Tesla, **overtook Amazon boss Jeff Bezos to become the world's wealthiest person with a net worth of more than \$185 billion.**
- **Mr. Musk is a major shareholder of the electric car company** and has benefited from Tesla's surging share price over the last year. **Increase in Tesla's share price pushed Musk past Jeff Bezos, who had been the richest person since 2017 and is currently worth about \$184 billion.**

**Tesla, Inc. (formerly Tesla Motors, Inc.)** is an American electric vehicle and clean energy company based in **Palo Alto, California.** Tesla's current products include electric cars, battery energy storage from home to grid scale, solar panels and solar roof tiles, as well as other related products and services. **Founded in July 2003 as Tesla Motors, the company's name is a tribute to inventor and electrical engineer Nikola Tesla.** **Elon Musk, who contributed most of the funding in the early days, has served as CEO since 2008.**

## Tata Sons increases stake in AirAsia India to 83.67%

- **AirAsia Group Berhad** had executed a share purchase agreement with **Tata Sons Private Ltd** to sell **32.67% equity stake held by AirAsia Investment Ltd (AAIL)** in **AirAsia (India) Ltd (AAI)** for **\$37,660,000.** With this the holding of **Tatas in AirAsia India** has increased from **51% to 83.67%.**
- **AirAsia Berhad** is a **Malaysian low-cost airline** headquartered near **Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.** It is the largest airline in Malaysia by fleet size and destinations.

## PayPal becomes first foreign firm in China with full ownership of payments business

- **PayPal Holding Inc** has become the **first foreign operator with 100% control of a payment platform in China,** according to Chinese government data, as the **U.S. fintech giant eyes a bigger foothold in a booming market** for online payments.
- **PayPal** acquired the **30% stake it doesn't already own in China's GoPay, formally known as Guofubao Information Technology Co.,** on **Dec. 31, 2020,** according to shareholder data from the National Enterprise Credit



Information Publicity System. Financial details weren't disclosed in the data. **The stake purchase came a year after PayPal bought a 70% stake in GoPay for an undisclosed amount then becoming the first foreign company licensed to provide online payment services in China.**

**PayPal Holdings, Inc. is an American company operating an online payments system in the majority of countries that support online money transfers, and serves as an electronic alternative to traditional paper methods like checks and money orders. PayPal was originally established by Max Levchin, Peter Thiel, and Luke Nosek in December 1998 as Confinity, a company that developed security software for handheld devices. Daniel H. Schulman is president and CEO of PayPal.**

### Google removes 30 loan apps from Play store after RBI red flag

- **Google has begun to remove money-lending apps that do not comply with the country's banking regulations from its Android Play Store following directions from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to monitor the glut of fintech applications hosted on the search giant's platform.**
- **"The (banking) regulator has communicated its unhappiness over the proliferation of unregulated fintech apps on Google Play Store and advised them to take such applications down,".**
- **Apps such as Cashguru, 10MinuteLoan, Rupeeclck, Finance Buddha among others have also been removed in the last few days as per a list curated by policy researcher Srikanth L of Cashless Collective.**

**Alphabet Inc. is an American multinational conglomerate headquartered in Mountain View, California. It was created through a restructuring of Google on October 2, 2015, and became the parent company of Google and several former Google subsidiaries. Larry Page and Sergey Brin announced their resignation from their executive posts in December 2019, with the CEO role to be filled by Sundar Pichai, also the CEO of Google. Page and Brin remain co-founders, employees, board members, and controlling shareholders of Alphabet Inc.**

### MeitY collaborates with Amazon to set up India's first quantum computing lab

- **The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has announced a collaboration with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to develop a Quantum Computing Applications Lab in the country.**
- **The lab is meant to provide access to quantum computing development environment for the developer, scientific and academic communities. Amazon will provide hosting with technical and programmatic support for the lab.** As an emerging field in technology, quantum computing has drawn interest from huge companies worldwide.
- **This includes names like Google, IBM, Microsoft and many more.** Countries, like the US and China, have also been interested in gaining a foothold in the race to quantum supremacy. According to reports, **China has invested over \$10 billion in its National Laboratory for Quantum Information Sciences.**

**Amazon.com, Inc. is an American multinational technology company based in Seattle, Washington, which focuses on e-commerce, cloud computing, digital streaming, and artificial intelligence. It is one of the Big Five companies in the U.S. information technology industry, along with Google, Apple, Microsoft, and Facebook. Amazon was founded by Jeff Bezos in Bellevue, Washington, on July 5, 1994. It started as an online marketplace for books but expanded to sell electronics, software, video games, apparel, furniture, food, toys, and jewelry.**

### WIPRO group gears up to act as knowledge partner of Madhya Pradesh govt.

- **In Madhya Pradesh, WIPRO group is all set to act as knowledge partner of the State Government.** Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, while holding a discussion with Mr Azim Premji of WIPRO through video conference informed that the company has taken **initiative for establishment of a university in the State.** For this purpose, the State Government will extend all possible support to the Foundation.
- **The Wipro Group will also set up a Software Development Centre in Bhopal.** The Chief Minister said, such centres will go a long way in providing more opportunities to the youth in the Information Technology sector.

- Azim Premji Foundation has been allotted 50 acres of land for the proposed university in Bhopal. Its First Phase will start soon. The goal is to start the university in the next 18 months. The Chief Minister said, **this university will emerge as an important institution in the field of higher education in the State.**

**Azim Hashim Premji** is an Indian business tycoon, investor, engineer, and philanthropist, who was the **chairman of Wipro Limited**. Premji remains a **non-executive member of the board and founder chairman**. He is informally known as the **Czar of the Indian IT Industry**. Wipro Limited is an Indian multinational corporation that **provides information technology, consulting and business process services**. It is **headquartered in Bangalore, Karnataka**.

## SAIL planning to set up India's first gas-to-ethanol plant in Chandrapur

- SAIL with the help of the Centre is **planning to set up India's first gas to ethanol plant** at its ferro alloy plant in **Chandrapur in Maharashtra**. It would cost around Rs 400 crore for SAIL to set up the plant, of which **20 per cent "viable gas funding" or aid will be provided by the government under the National Policy on BioFuels 2018.**
- SRTMI is a **collaborative research platform formed jointly by the steel ministry and domestic steel players** which facilitates research and development (R&D) in the iron and steel sector by strengthening association among industry, academia and research bodies. "This would be the **fourth such plant in the world in the steel sector, and overall the first in India**. As of now the **bio-ethanol fuel generation technology is being used at two plants in China and one at Arcelor Mittal's plant in Belgium**".

**Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)** is an **Indian state-owned steel making company based in New Delhi**. It is a **public sector undertaking**, owned and operated by the Government of India. SAIL is the **20<sup>th</sup> largest steel producer in the world and the largest in India**. Smt Soma Mondal is the current Chairman of SAIL.

## TCS third most valued IT services brand globally: Brand Finance

- **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)** has been ranked **third most-valued IT services brand globally, after Accenture and IBM**, according to a report by Brand Finance. **Four Indian IT services companies – TCS, Infosys, HCL and Wipro – secured spots in the top-10 global tally.**
- **Accenture retained the title of worlds most valuable and strongest IT services brand** with record brand value of **\$26 billion**, while IBM continued at the second place with brand value of \$16.1 billion.

## IFFCO ranks first among top 300 cooperatives of the world

- **The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO)** has stepped up to **65<sup>th</sup> position in overall turnover ranking from 125<sup>th</sup> position in last financial year and now is at the top spot among 300 leading cooperatives in the world.**
- The ranking is **based on the ratio of turnover over the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita**. IFFCO with more than 36,000 member cooperatives and a group turnover of nearly 7 billion dollars, it is amongst the biggest cooperative institutions in the world.

**Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited, also known as IFFCO** is a **Multi-state cooperative society engaged in the business of manufacturing and marketing of fertilisers headquartered in New Delhi, India**. Started in 1967 with 57 member cooperatives it is today the **biggest co-op in the world by turnover on GDP per capita** with around 35,000 member cooperatives reaching over 50 million Indian farmers.

## Adani Green bags 600 mw wind-solar hybrid power unit project

- **Adani Green Energy's subsidiary has received the contract to build a 600 megawatts (mw) wind-solar hybrid power project**, taking the company's total project portfolio to 14,795 mw. "The **LOA of 600 mw wind-solar hybrid power project is in line with our ambition to achieve renewable power capacity of 25 gigawatts by 2025 and becoming the world's largest renewable power company by 2030.**
- With the new award, **Adani Green has built a renewable energy portfolio of 14,795 MW, of which 2,950 MW of operational capacity and 11,845 MW of projects under implementation**. The Indian firm has set a goal of having 25 GW of renewables capacity in operation by 2025.

## Tesla opens world's largest Supercharger station in China's Shanghai

- **Tesla is adding more and more electric vehicles to the roads and to support its ecosystem**, the EV maker has also been quickly expanding its Supercharger network. The company has now **opened the world's largest Supercharger station in China's Shanghai with 72 charging stalls.**
- **With the new charging station, Tesla beat its own record of single-point EV super-charging station with 56 stalls opened in California. The station is located at the Jing'an International Center in Shanghai**, as per Electrek. Few images of the EV charging station have been shared on Twitter by a Tesla owner in Shanghai.

**Tesla, Inc. (formerly Tesla Motors, Inc.) is an American electric vehicle and clean energy company based in Palo Alto, California.** Tesla's current products include electric cars, battery energy storage from home to grid scale, solar panels and solar roof tiles, as well as other related products and services. **Founded in July 2003 as Tesla Motors, the company's name is a tribute to inventor and electrical engineer Nikola Tesla. Elon Musk, who contributed most of the funding in the early days, has served as CEO since 2008.**

## L&T completes India's first 3D printed building in Chennai

- **L&T Construction, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Larsen & Toubro conglomerate, announced the completion of India's first 3D printed two-storey building**, as claimed by the company.
- The news is an achievement for the company, **for it validates the use of 3D printing in a multi-floor building. The announcement is also proof that the 3D printing technology can be used for construction purposes as well. The 3D printing technology in terms of construction can potentially meet the Indian standards of construction code, and regulatory requirements as well as provide operational benefits to the companies.**

**Larsen & Toubro Limited, commonly known as L&T, is an Indian technology, engineering, construction, manufacturing and financial services conglomerate, with global operations, headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. It was founded by two Danish engineers taking refuge in India. The company has business interests in basic and heavy engineering, construction, realty, manufacturing of capital goods, information technology, and financial services. Anil Manibhai Naik is the Group Chairman of Larsen & Toubro Limited.**

## Airtel Announces 5G ready network; successfully demonstrates LIVE 5G service

- In a major landmark, Telecom major **Bharti Airtel announced that it has become the India's first telecom operator to successfully demonstrate and orchestrate LIVE 5G service over a commercial network in Hyderabad city.**
- **Using a first of its kind, dynamic spectrum sharing, Airtel seamlessly operated 5G and 4G concurrently within the same spectrum block. This demonstration has emphatically validated the 5G readiness of Airtel's network across all domains - Radio, Core and Transport.**
- **5G or fifth generation is the latest upgrade in the long-term evolution (LTE) mobile broadband networks. 5G mainly works in 3 bands, namely low, mid and high frequency spectrum — all of which have their own uses as well as limitations. While the low band spectrum has shown great promise in terms of coverage and speed of internet and data exchange, the maximum speed is limited to 100 Mbps (Megabits per second). This means that while telcos can use and install it for commercial cellphone users who may not have specific demands for very high speed internet, the low band spectrum may not be optimal for specialised needs of the industry.**

**Bharti Airtel Limited, also known as Airtel, is an Indian multinational telecommunications services company based in New Delhi, Delhi NCT. Airtel is a global telecommunications company with operations in 18 countries across South Asia and Africa. The company ranks amongst the top three mobile operators globally and its mobile network covers a population of over two billion people. Airtel is India's largest integrated telecom provider and the second largest mobile operator in Africa. Sunil Bharti Mittal is an Indian billionaire entrepreneur, philanthropist and the founder and chairperson of Bharti Enterprises.**



## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



### ISRO to open Regional Academic Centre for Space at IIT Varanasi

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will establish a Regional Academic Centre for Space at IIT-Varanasi to facilitate short and long term projects at the institute.
- ISRO and the Indian Institute of Technology-Varanasi (BHU) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) and the move can help propel the culture of research and development among students. “Under this agreement, ISRO-IIT (BHU) will open the Regional Academic Center for Space (RAC-S) in the institute.

ISRO is the space agency of India headquartered in the city of Bangalore. ISRO was formed in 1969. ISRO built India’s first satellite, Aryabhata, which was launched by the Soviet Union on 19 April 1975. Dr Kailasavadivoo Sivan is current the chairperson of the ISRO. Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) or Sriharikota Range (SHAR) is a rocket launch centre operated by ISRO. It is located in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.

### Dr Harsh Vardhan releases report - Action Agenda for an Atma Nirbhar Bharat prepared by TIFAC

- Science and Technology Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan released the report – ‘Action Agenda for an Atma Nirbhar Bharat’ prepared by Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) in New Delhi.
- Dr Harsh Vardhan said the ideas contained in the report should be taken forward with the implementing agencies. The ultimate outcome of the report has to be addition to quality of life and how our efforts can contribute to Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- The comprehensive report on Action Agenda for an Atma Nirbhar Bharat is a consequential follow-up of the TIFAC’s White Paper on Focused Interventions for Make in India: post COVID -19 which was released.

### China launches remote sensing satellite

- China has successfully launched a new remote sensing satellite into space. The satellite was launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China.
- The satellite, Yaogan-33, was launched aboard a Long March-4C rocket and entered the planned orbit successfully. It was the 357<sup>th</sup> flight mission of the Long March carrier rocket series.

### India’s first artificial intelligence community center launched in Hyderabad

- Hexagon Capability Center India (HCCI), the largest product development unit of the technology major Hexagon AB has launched the nation’s first Artificial Intelligence Community Centre, HexArt, was launched in Hyderabad.
- The purpose of HexArt is to democratize AI knowledge cum skill to the masses and provide free education on AI to the community. The fundamental and advanced-level courses are designed for students from Class 8 to Class 12 and senior engineering graduates respectively.

### Skyroot Aerospace becomes first Indian company to test-fire solid-fueled rocket engine

- Indian Space startup, Skyroot Aerospace, has proven the crucial propulsion technology of their maiden rocket Vikram-1, with the latest test-firing of an engine. Vikram-1 rocket is powered by four engines - three solid-fuel stages and one Liquid-fuel stage that the firm has designed and developed.



- In August this year, the company had tested its **liquid-fueled engine** and now has **proven the technology of the solid-fueled engine (Kalam-5)**, by successfully test-firing a miniature version. **Solid motors or solid-fueled engines are high thrust, low-cost rocket engines with propellant in solid form.** They are highly reliable as they have very few moving parts.

### DRDO, Indian Navy conduct successful maiden test trial of SAHAYAK-NG

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** along with **Indian Navy** conducted the **successful maiden test trial of SAHAYAK-NG** India's first indigenously designed and developed **Air Dropped Container** from IL 38SD aircraft of Indian Navy off the coast of Goa.
- **The trial was conducted by Indian Navy to enhance its operational logistics capabilities and provide critical engineering stores to ships which are deployed more than 2000 kilometres from the coast.** It reduces the requirement of ships to come close to the coast to collect spares and stores.
- **Two DRDO laboratories, NSTL, Visakhapatnam and ADRDE, Agra** were involved in the development of **SAHAYAK-NG container** along the industry partner M/s Avantel for GPS integration.
- **SAHAYAK-NG is an advanced version of SAHAYAK Mk I.** The newly developed GPS aided air dropped container is having the capability to carry a payload that weighs upto 50 kg and can be dropped from heavy aircraft.

**Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** is an agency of the Republic of India, **charged with the military's research and development, headquartered in New Delhi, India.** It was formed in **1958** by the merger of the **Technical Development Establishment** and the **Directorate of Technical Development and Production** with the Defence Science Organisation. **Dr G. Satheesh Reddy** is the **current Chairman of DRDO.**

### Govt approves export of indigenous Akash missile system

- The government has **approved the export of the indigenous Akash missile system.** **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** has welcomed the move and said it will help **India increase its revenue from defence export.**
- **Mr Singh said, under the AtmaNirbhar Bharat,** India is growing in its capabilities of manufacturing wide variety of Defence platforms and missiles. **The Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister approved the export of Akash Missile System** and a Committee for faster approvals has been created. **Mr Singh said the Akash missile system is an important defence asset for the country with over 96 per cent indigenization.**
- He also noted that the **Akash is a surface-to-air missile with a range of 25 kilometres.** **Developed by DRDO, it is India's first indigenously designed missile system and can target fighter jets, cruise missiles, drones and other aerial assets.** The missile was inducted in **2014 in IAF and in 2015 in Indian Army.**

### Centre launches multi-institutional consortium to track new nCov-2 strain

- **The central government set up a consortium of 10 national research institutions,** which will collaborate for carrying out effective surveillance and monitoring of the genomic variations observed in the **new SARS nCov-2 virus strain, recently identified from the United Kingdom.**
- **Called the Indian SARS CoV2 Genome Sequencing Consortium (INSACOG),** it will be a **platform for scientists, virologists, experts studying diseases and government officials** to interact and track the genomic variations of the novel coronavirus.

### First three sets of DRDO-designed 10-metre-mobile Bridge handed over to Army

- **The first three sets of a 10-metre short-span bridge, designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO),** were handed over to the **Army at the facility of Larsen & Toubro Ltd at Talegaon in Pune,** which is manufacturing these mechanically launched bridges.
- These highly mobile bridges were **developed by DRDO's Pune based facility, the Research and Development Establishment (Engineers),** which is part of the **Pune-headquartered Armament and Combat Engineering technology cluster.**
- This development has been done as per requirement of and **in coordination with the Corps of Engineers of the Indian Army.** Officials said the equipment will meet the important requirement of providing mobility to Indian forces by speedy bridging of gaps during operations.

- The DRDO has also developed five metre and 15 metre variants of the bridge, which have already been inducted into the Army.

### 400 million km within 163 days, China's Mars probe heads for red planet

- China's first Mars exploration mission Tianwen-1 travelled more than 400 million km and is expected to enter Mars orbit next month.
- So far, the Mars probe had flown in space for 163 days. It was about 130 million km from Earth and about 8.3 million km from Mars. **Tianwen-1 probe, weighing about five tonnes, consists of an orbiter, a lander and a rover.** It is designed to complete orbiting, landing and roving in one mission.

### No consensus at WTO on India, South Africa's proposal to waive IP rights on Covid vaccines

- The World Trade Organisation (WTO) at its meeting could not arrive at a consensus on adopting a joint proposal by India and South Africa on temporarily waiving the intellectual property and patent rights on Covid vaccines, medical devices and protective kits, despite a significant push by the developing countries to consider it.
- The TRIPS Council of the Geneva-headquartered WTO took up the proposal that was submitted jointly by India and South Africa in October for discussion between all the 164 member countries, and "deep divisions" emerged on it.
- The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) is an international legal agreement between all the member nations of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It establishes minimum standards for the regulation by national governments of different forms of intellectual property (IP) as applied to nationals of other WTO member nations. **TRIPS was negotiated at the end of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) between 1989 and 1990 and is administered by the WTO.**

Patent system is a contract between the inventor and authority whereby the inventor gets exclusive rights for a period of 20 years in return for disclosing full details of the invention. The first legislation in India relating to patents was the Act VI of 1856. The objective of this legislation was to encourage inventions of new and useful manufactures and to induce inventors to disclose secret of their inventions. The Act VI of 1856 on protection of inventions based on the British Patent Law of 1852. Certain exclusive privileges granted to inventors of new manufacturers for a period of 14 years. **The Patent (amendment) Act 2005 came into force from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005, which brought changes in the previous patent system of India wherein product patent was extended to all subjects of technology consisting of food, drugs, chemicals and microorganisms. Moreover, Section 3(d) introduced in to the said amendment act 2005 and introduces pharmaceutical product patents in India for the first time. The Patent (amendment) Act 2005 defines what invention is and makes it clear that any existing knowledge or thing cannot be patented.** The provision defines that a 'novelty' standard - which, along with 'non-obviousness' or 'inventive step' and industrial applicability, are the three prerequisites for 'patentability'. "Discovery" essentially refers to finding out something which already existed in nature but was unknown or unrecognised. Therefore, discoveries are excluded from patent protection under section 3 of the Indian Patent Act 1970.

### China Deploying "En Masse" Underwater Drones in Indian Ocean

- China has deployed a fleet of underwater drones called Sea Wing (Haiyi) glider in the Indian Ocean, which can operate for months on end and make observations for naval intelligence purposes, according to defence analyst HI Sutton.
- Writing for the Forbes magazine, HI Sutton said that these sea gliders, which the Chinese are deploying "en masse", are a type of Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle (UUV) which were launched in mid-December 2019 and recovered in February after making over 3,400 observations.
- HI Sutton in his report said that these gliders are similar to those deployed by the US Navy, one of which was seized by Beijing in 2016 to ensure "safe navigation of passing ships."

**Indian Ocean** is the **third-largest of the world's oceanic divisions**, covering 70,560,000 km<sup>2</sup> (27,240,000 sq mi) or 19.8% of the water on Earth's surface. It is **bounded by Asia to the north, Africa to the west and Australia to the east**.

## India launches 40<sup>th</sup> Scientific Expedition to Antarctica

- **India launched the 40<sup>th</sup> Scientific Expedition to Antarctica.** This Indian expedition marks four decades of the country's scientific endeavour to the southern white continent. **The 40<sup>th</sup> expedition journey was flagged off from Goa with 43 members onboard.**

## FSSAI reduces trans fat levels in food from 5% to 3%

- The long-pending demand of experts to **reduce the level of trans fats in food items** has been met, with **India's top food regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) reducing it to 3%.** The current permissible limit is 5%.
- "India is committed to the elimination of industrial trans fats in fats/oils, and in foods containing fats/oils in a phased manner. **The trans fat content in fats and oils has already been limited to 5%, and the notification to further reduce it to 3% by 2021, and to 2% by 2022 is under process.**

**Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** is an **autonomous body established under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India.** The FSSAI has been **established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**, which is a consolidating statute related to food safety and regulation in India. FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the regulation and supervision of food safety. The FSSAI has its headquarters at New Delhi.

## China builds world's largest seed bank to boost food security

- **China will complete a new national crop germplasm bank** this year to boost the country's capacity to **develop new crop varieties and enhance food security.**
- The bank has a designed capacity of 1.5 million copies, almost four times the existing one, and will be the world's largest.

## 'Sagar Anveshika': Harsh Vardhan Dedicates New Coastal Research Vessel to Nation

- Union Minister for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, **Dr Harsh Vardhan dedicated the new coastal research vehicle 'Sagar Anveshika' to the nation at Chennai port.**
- **Sagar Anveshika** which is a coastal research vessel for strengthening scientific research about various issues inside the ocean.

## ISRO to adopt 100 Atal Tinkering Labs across country to promote education

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will adopt one hundred (100) Atal Tinkering Labs across the country to promote education in the field of Space Education and Space Technology related innovations for school students.**
- The Department of Space (DOS) and Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog, announced that out of 100 ATLs, Isro adopted 45 in phase 1 on January 11 and the remaining 55 will be adopted soon, to promote education in STEM, space education and space technology related innovation for school students.
- **An Atal Tinkering Lab provides activity-based learning in the identified schools across the country where young minds can give shape to their ideas for societal problems. It also fosters entrepreneurship and innovation, enabling over 3 million students between class VI to class XII to acquire a problem solving, tinkering and innovative mindset.**
- **An Atal Tinkering Lab provides a makerspace where young minds can give shape to their ideas through hands on do-it-yourself mode and learn innovation skills.** To foster entrepreneurship and innovation, Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog has established over seven thousand Atal Tinkering Labs across the country.



ISRO is the space agency of India headquartered in the city of Bangalore. ISRO was formed in 1969. ISRO built India's first satellite, Aryabhata, which was launched by the Soviet Union on 19 April 1975. Dr Kailasavadivoo Sivan is current the chairperson of the ISRO. Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) or Sriharikota Range (SHAR) is a rocket launch centre operated by ISRO. It is located in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.

## Cabinet approves MoU on scientific and technical cooperation between India, UAE

- The Union Cabinet approved a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on scientific and technical cooperation between the Ministry of Earth Sciences and the National Centre of Meteorology of the UAE.
- The MoU provides for sharing of knowledge, data and operational products for meteorological, seismological and oceanic services such as radar, satellite, tide gauges, seismic and meteorological stations.
- The pact will pave the way for deployment of meteorological observation networks on mutual agreement over ocean waters, cooperation in the development of special capacities of tsunami models researches for their faster and more reliable forecasts propagating through the Oman Sea and the Arabian Sea which affect the coastal areas of India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

## Delhi's international airport will get its first genome sequencing laboratory

- A first of its kind genome sequencing laboratory is being launched at the New Delhi international airport for testing samples of all travellers arriving into the country who test positive for Coronavirus disease (Covid-19).
- The positive samples will be genome sequenced to identify and contain the new mutant variant of Sars-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, detected in UK and other countries.
- Dr Vinod Paul, member (health) Niti Aayog and chairman, national expert group on vaccine administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC) inaugurated the laboratory, in the presence of Dr Anurag Agrawal, director, CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, Ajay Singh, chairman and managing director, SpiceJet, and Avani Singh, chief executive officer, SpiceHealth.

## Two Friends to send India's first Private Remote Sensing Satellite on ISRO Rocket

- Pixxel, a private satellite-imaging company, will launch its first remote-sensing satellite on the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) workhorse rocket Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) in early 2021. For this, the Bengaluru-based firm has entered into an agreement with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), a Government of India company under the Department of Space. Earlier, the company's first satellite was scheduled to be launched towards the end of this year on a Russian Soyuz rocket.
- The agreement with NSIL is one of its kind and one of the first since the setting up of IN-SPACe, the authorisation and regulatory body under the Department of Space (DoS) to enable private players undertaking space activities in India.
- Pixxel is a young aerospace start-up from India, started by two BITS Pilani graduates Awais Ahmed and Kshitij Khandelwal in February 2019. It has become Asia's only space start-up to qualify for the 2019 Techstars Starburst Space Accelerator in Los Angeles.

## Indian Army Major indigenously develops world's first universal bulletproof jacket 'Shakti'

- In a significant development, a major-rank Indian Army officer, Anoop Mishra has indigenously developed the world's first universal bulletproof jacket 'Shakti' which can be used by both male and female combatants. The jacket is also the world's first flexible body armour.
- This is not his first such innovation by Major Anoop as the officer of the Indian Army's College of Military Engineering had developed a ballistic helmet in February 2020, which has the ability to stop an AK-47 bullet round fired from a distance of 10 meters. He had also developed a full-body protection bulletproof jacket which can withstand even sniper rifles. Major Anoop got into the development of bulletproof jackets after he had received gunshots on his vintage bulletproof jacket.
- The Indian Army's College of Military Engineering jointly with a private firm had earlier developed India's first and world's cheapest gunshot locator. It can locate the exact location of the bullet from a distance of 400 meters which will help to locate and neutralise terrorists faster.



## India sends 1 million doses of COVID vaccine to Nepal as gift under ‘Vaccine Maitri’ Initiative

- **India sent 1 million doses of a COVID vaccine to Nepal as a gift under the ‘Vaccine Maitri’ Initiative.** Nepal health minister Hridayesh Tripathi said the vaccine gifted by India will be given to health workers and other front-line personnel within a week to 10 days. ‘Vaccine Maitri’ reaffirms the highest priority accorded by India to relations with Bangladesh.
- In a major announcement, **Indian Government said that it will send COVID-19 vaccines to Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles and supplies to Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Mauritius** will commence after confirmation of necessary regulatory clearances.
- **India is one of the world’s biggest drugmakers**, and an increasing number of countries have already approached it for procuring the Coronavirus vaccines.

India’s decision to selectively allow export is a step as **India would be recognised as a globally responsible stakeholder in the fight against the pandemic and reaffirms India’s designation of pharmacy to the world.** India enjoys an important position in the global pharmaceuticals sector, as **India is the largest provider of generic drugs globally.** The **Indian pharmaceutical industry meets over 50% of global demand for various vaccines, 40% of generic demand in the U.S. and 25% of all medicine in the U.K.**

## DRDO hands over Motor Bike Ambulance Rakshita to CRPF

- **Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), Delhi based DRDO laboratory, handed over Rakshita, a bike-based casualty transport emergency vehicle to Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)** in a ceremony held at CRPF HQ in New Delhi.
- **Rakshita is fitted with a customized reclining Casualty Evacuation Seat (CES),** which can be fitted in and taken out as per requirement. Other major features are the **head immobilizer, safety harness jacket, hand and foot straps for safety, adjustable footrest, physiological parameter measuring equipment** with wireless monitoring capability and auto warning system for the driver.

**Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** is an agency of the Republic of India, **charged with the military’s research and development, headquartered in New Delhi, India.** It was **formed in 1958 by the merger of the Technical Development Establishment and the Directorate of Technical Development and Production** with the Defence Science Organisation. **Dr G. Satheesh Reddy is the current Chairman of DRDO.**

## Centre for Networking Intelligence at IISc gets a new state-of-the-art networking lab

- **The Centre for Networked Intelligence at the Indian Institute of Science has got a new state-of-the-art networking lab recently.** The lab, housed in IISc’s Department of Electrical Communication Engineering, was inaugurated by Krishna Sundaresan, vice president, Engineering, Cisco India and SAARC.
- The lab, developed in collaboration with Cisco, has a network test-bed which will **enable researchers and students to develop applications, algorithms, and experiments in emerging areas in communication and computer networking such as software-defined networking, network function virtualisation, and network slicing,** the IISc said.

## Chinese scientists develop gene therapy which could delay ageing

- **Scientists in Beijing have developed a new gene therapy which can reverse some of the effects of ageing in mice and extend their lifespans,** findings which may one day contribute to similar treatment for humans.
- The method, detailed in a paper in the Science Translational Medicine journal earlier this month, **involves inactivating a gene called kat7 which the scientists found to be a key contributor to cellular ageing.** The **specific therapy** they used and the results were a world first, said co-supervisor of the project Professor Qu Jing, 40, a specialist in ageing and regenerative medicine from the Institute of Zoology at the CAS.

## World’s first ammonia fuel-ready vessel being built in China

- **The world’s first ammonia fuel-ready vessel is under construction for Greek shipowner Avin International at a Chinese shipyard.** “Ammonia is a promising zero-carbon fuel that can help meet the IMO’s GHG reduction

target for 2050. It offers **ship-owners and operators a zero-carbon tank-to-wake emissions profile** but is not without challenges, not the least of which is the greater prescriptive requirements for containment and equipment than most of the other alternative fuels under consideration.”

### In a first, Hawk-i aircraft fires smart anti-airfield weapon off Odisha coast

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- **HAL successfully test fired a Smart Anti Airfield Weapon (SAAW) from the Hawk-i aircraft off the coast of Odisha.** The indigenous stand-off weapon developed by Research Centre Imarat (RCI), DRDO is the first smart weapon fired from an Indian Hawk-Mk132.
- **It is the first smart weapon to be fired from an Indian Hawk Mk132 trainer aircraft.** The Hawk-i project seeks to equip the trainer jet with combat capabilities through an internally-funded HAL programme.

### DRDO, Army develop India’s first indigenous machine pistol

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- **India’s first indigenous 9 mm machine pistol** has been jointly developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Army, the Defence Ministry said on January 14.
- It said the **Army’s infantry school in Mhow and the DRDO’s Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) in Pune** have designed and developed the weapon. The weapon has been developed in a record time of four months.
- **“The machine pistol fires the in-service 9 mm ammunition and sports an upper receiver made from aircraft grade aluminium and lower receiver from carbon fibre. 3 dimensional printing process has been used in designing and prototyping of various parts”.**

### DRDO conducts maiden launch of Akash-NG missile from Integrated Test Range off coast of Odisha

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- Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) has **conducted the successful maiden launch of Akash-NG (New Generation) Missile from Integrated Test Range off the coast of Odisha.**
- **Akash-NG is a new generation Surface to Air Missile meant for use by Indian Air Force with an aim of intercepting high maneuvering low RCS aerial threats.** The Ministry of Defence said that the missile intercepted the target with textbook precision. The launch met all the test objectives by performing high maneuvers during the trajectory.
- The performance of the Command and Control system, onboard avionics and aerodynamic configuration of the missile was successfully validated during the trial. The Multi-Function Radar was tested for its capability of integration with the system. The Akash-NG system has been developed with better deployability compared to other similar systems with canisterized launcher and much smaller ground system footprint. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh **congratulated the scientists from DRDO, BEL and a team from Indian Air Force for this achievement. Chairman DRDO, Dr. G Satheesh Reddy congratulated the team for the successful flight trial of Akash NG Missile.**

## Inventions/Discoveries

### NASA finds ‘Lost Galaxy’ shining out of Virgo’s bosom

- **Less-poetic scientists know this galaxy as NGC 4535, one of the largest of the 2,000-or-so galaxies in the Virgo Cluster located about 50 million light-years from Earth. When viewed through NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope, which captured the stunning image above, the haze that clouded Copeland’s Lost Galaxy vanishes to reveal a vibrant sea of stars not so different from the Milky Way.**
- **In fact, its long, elegant arms make it a prime candidate for studying the structure of spiral galaxies. NASA released the image above on Jan. 11 as part of an ongoing survey of 38 spiral galaxies located within 75 million light-years of Earth. You can see some equally stunning images of other nearby spiral galaxies from the survey — known as the Physics at High Angular resolution in Nearby Galaxies (PHANGS) survey.**

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is an independent agency of the executive branch of the United States federal government responsible for the civilian space program, as well as aeronautics and aerospace research. President Dwight D. Eisenhower established NASA in 1958. James Frederick Bridenstine is an American politician and the current administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. He became the first member of Congress to lead NASA.**

### Elon Musk’s SpaceX created a new world record by launching 143 satellites on a single rocket

- **Elon Musk’s SpaceX created a new world record by launching 143 satellites on a single rocket. SpaceX has beaten the Indian space agency ISRO’s record of deploying 104 satellites in a single launch in February 2017. The launch vehicle for the SpaceX record-breaking flight was the Falcon 9 rocket.**
- **The 143 satellites launched last night include commercial and government CubeSats, microsats and 10 Starlink satellites. Onboard was also a spacecraft belonging to Nasa. With these satellites, SpaceX aims to provide near-global broadband internet coverage all over the world by 2021. According to sources, SpaceX offered a very low price of 15,000 dollars per kilogram for each satellite to be delivered to a polar sun-synchronous orbit.**

### DRDO, Army develop India’s first indigenous machine pistol ASMI

- **The Pune-based facility of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Army’s Mhow-based Infantry School have jointly developed India’s first indigenous 9 mm machine pistol named ‘Asmi’. The pistol is likely to have a production cost lower than Rs 50,000 each and has export potential as well.**
- **Machine pistols are primarily self-loading versions of pistols which are either fully automatic or can also fire bursts of bullets. The Asmi machine pistol fires the in-service 9 mm ammunition and has an upper receiver made from aircraft-grade aluminum and lower receiver from carbon fibre. The 3D printing technology has been used in designing and prototyping of various parts, including trigger components which have been made by metal 3D printing.**
- **The announcement of machine pistol development comes nearly a month after a Carbine jointly developed by the ARDE and the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) completed the final phase of user trials by the Army and was ready ready for induction. The Carbine is not just slated to replace the ageing 9 mm carbine currently in use by the armed forces, but also modernise the armoury of the Central Armed Police Forces and state police forces.**

**Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is an agency of the Republic of India, charged with the military’s research and development, headquartered in New Delhi, India. It was formed in 1958 by the merger of the Technical Development Establishment and the Directorate of Technical Development and Production with the Defence Science Organisation. Dr G. Satheesh Reddy is the current Chairman of DRDO.**

## Health/Disease

### Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurates India's first pneumococcal conjugate vaccine

- **Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurated India's first pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, PCV. The vaccine named Pneumosil has been developed by the Serum Institute of India Private Limited (SIPL) in collaboration with partners like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.**
- **Recognizing SIPL as the world's largest manufacturer of vaccines by number of doses** and its contribution to India's economy, Dr. Harsh Vardhan remarked that Serum Institute's Vaccines are used in 170 countries and every third child in the world is immunized with the manufacturer's vaccine.
- He reminded the audience that **SIPL developed and got license of first indigenous Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) from Government of India during COVID-19 pandemic lock-down** in line with Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi ji's vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.
- Dr. Harsh Vardhan said, **"Serum Institute's first Indigenous Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine will be available in the market under brand name "Pneumosil" at an affordable price in single dose (vial and pre-filled syringe) and Multidose (vial) presentations.**

The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** is an Indian government ministry charged with **health policy in India**. It is also responsible for all government programs relating to family planning in India. The Minister of Health and Family Welfare holds cabinet rank as a member of the Council of Ministers. **The current minister is Harsh Vardhan. Rajkumari Bibiji Amrit Kaur** was the **first Health Minister of India in 1947** and remained in office until 1957.

### RS Sharma, former Trai chief, to head empowered panel for Covid-19 vaccine

- **The Union government has appointed RS Sharma, former Trai chief, as the chairperson of an empowered committee for administration of Covid-19 vaccine.** This has come days ahead of the mega vaccination drive is to start in India.
- He has also been **included as a member of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration of Covid-19 that was formed in August 2020** and is **headed by Niti Aayog member, VK Paul.** Sharma was the first person to officially initiate a discussion on vaccination delivery in the government in the summer of 2020 when Covid-19 cases peaked.

**Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)** is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The first case was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. It has since spread worldwide, leading to an ongoing pandemic. **WHO first learned of this new virus on 31 December 2019, following a report of a cluster of cases of 'viral pneumonia' in Wuhan, People's Republic of China. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are, Fever, Dry cough and Fatigue. The standard diagnosis method is by real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) from a nasopharyngeal swab. In India, the first case was reported in Kerala.**

### Kerala declares Bird flu as State disaster

- **Kerala declares Bird flu as a State disaster as thousands of domestic birds were found to be infected by H5N8 virus.** The virus was reported from Alappuzha and Kottayam district.
- Authorities had issued high and **ordered culling of ducks, hens, and other domestic poultry found within one km radius of the affected zones**

**Bird flu, also called avian influenza,** is a viral infection that can infect not only birds, but also humans and other animals. Most forms of the virus are restricted to birds. **H5N1 is the most common form of bird flu.** It's deadly to birds and can easily affect humans and other animals that come in contact with a carrier. According to the World Health Organization, **H5N1 was first discovered in humans in 1997 and has killed nearly 60 percent of those infected. Currently, the virus isn't known to spread via human-to-human contact.** Still, some experts worry that H5N1 may pose a risk of becoming a pandemic threat to humans. **The first infection occurred in Hong Kong in 1997.** The outbreak was linked to handling infected poultry.



## Panel to study NFHS-5 findings

- **The Health and Family Welfare Ministry has set up a technical expert group to examine the adverse findings from the National Family Health Survey-5** and “recommend programmatic and policy interventions to improve” indicators pertaining to malnutrition, stunting, anaemia, and C-section.
- **The committee is chaired by Joint Secretary Preeti Pant** and includes experts from medicine and nutrition. There are also State programme officers from Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. “The technical expert group is to meet regularly and share its recommendations as soon as possible,” reads a government order issued on December 29. However, no date has yet been fixed for the first meeting of the group, it is reliably learnt.

## Study reveals how efficient brain circuitry develops spontaneously

- **A KAIST team’s mathematical modelling has revealed that efficient brain circuitry develops spontaneously** by showing that the topographic tiling of cortical maps originates from bottom-up projections from the periphery.
- **This new finding provides advanced insights into the mechanisms underlying a biological strategy of brain circuitry for the efficient tiling of sensory modules.** Researchers have explained how the regularly structured topographic maps in the visual cortex of the brain could arise spontaneously to efficiently process visual information.
- **This research provides a new framework for understanding functional architectures in the visual cortex during early developmental stages.** A KAIST research team led by Professor Se-Bum Paik from the Department of Bio and Brain Engineering has demonstrated that the orthogonal organization of retinal mosaics in the periphery is mirrored onto the primary visual cortex and initiates the clustered topography of higher visual areas in the brain.

## India joins the World to light up Qutub Minar as sign of Unity to combat Neglected Tropical Diseases

- **India has joined the world to Light Up Qutub Minar as a sign of unity to combat the Neglected Tropical Diseases. The second annual World NTD Day was marked on 30<sup>th</sup> January.** The day highlights the global community’s commitment to end the NTD. The diseases cause immeasurable suffering among the world’s most marginalized communities.
- More than 50 landmarks representing 25 nations across the world were lit up to celebrate how far we have come together in beating the NTD. One in five people around the world are affected by NTDs. Union Health Ministry said, **India is home to the world’s largest absolute burden of at least 11 of these major neglected tropical diseases.** These diseases debilitate, disfigure, and can even be fatal to those affected.

## India ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index

- **India has been ranked 10<sup>th</sup> among 11 Asia Pacific countries in a newly-launched”Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index’ by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).**
- **The index aims to measure the progress of each of the 11 countries** towards adopting personalised healthcare, enabling the right care to be made available to the right person at the right time. **The 11 nations ranked in the index are Australia, China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and New Zealand. Overall, Singapore has topped the index.** It is followed by Taiwan (2<sup>nd</sup>), Japan (3<sup>rd</sup>) and Australia (4<sup>th</sup>).
- **The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is the research and analysis division of Economist Group providing forecasting and advisory services through research and analysis,** such as monthly country reports, five-year country economic forecasts, country risk service reports, and industry reports. Its current Managing Director is Robin Bew.

## ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT



### One Planet Summit: No climate fix without biodiversity

- A UN-backed summit of political leaders and CEOs pledging to reverse the accelerating destruction of the natural world was long on promises and short on cash. The French-led One Planet Summit, backed by the United Nations and the World Bank, saw more than 50 nations support a plan to create protected areas covering 30 percent of global lands and oceans.
- The so-called “30-30” initiative could become the cornerstone of a critical biodiversity meet in Kunming, China, postponed last year due to the coronavirus pandemic. “Until now, we have been destroying our planet, abusing it as if we had a spare one,” UN chief Antonio Guterres told the Paris meeting via a video link from New York. The planet is on the cusp of a mass extinction event – only the sixth in half-a-billion years – in which species are disappearing at 100 to 1,000 times the normal “background” rate, most scientists agree.
- A landmark 2019 UN report warned that one million species, about one-in-eight, are threatened, mostly due to habitat loss and our ever-expanding appetites. So far, during the entire history of the Earth, there have been five mass extinctions. The five mass extinctions that took place in the last 450 million years have led to the destruction of 70-95 per cent of the species of plants, animals and microorganisms that existed earlier.

The term “sixth mass extinction/sixth extinction” is referred to Mankind’s over-exploitation/misuse of natural resources, fragmentation/loss, natural habitats, destruction of ecosystems, pollution and global climate change.

### India home to both species of red panda, says ZSI study

- A couple of recent scientific publications by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have resolved the mystery on the demography and speciation in red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*), one of the most iconic species in terms of its importance relating to global conservation.
- Scientists from the ZSI have concluded that India is home to both the (sub) species — Himalayan red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) and the Chinese red panda (*Ailurus styani*) and the Siang river in Arunachal Pradesh splits the red panda into these two phylogenetic species.
- The red panda was considered a monotypic species till 2020 until the scientists studied its genetic make-up with respect to the geographical distribution and described the occurrence of the two species.

Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), founded on 1 July 1916 by Government of India Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, as premier Indian organisation in zoological research and studies to promote the survey, exploration and research of the fauna in the country.

### Uttarakhand: First tiger translocation

- The Rajaji Tiger Reserve is welcomed the first big cat from Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve in the first such relocation in Uttarakhand aimed at tiger population management.
- A total of five big cats from the Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve — nearly eight years since conceptualisation of the project and four years after clearance from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) — are scheduled to be translocated from Jim Corbett to Rajaji.

## Union Minister of Earth Sciences Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurates country's highest Meteorological Centre at Leh

- Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan, virtually **inaugurated India's highest Meteorological Centre in Leh. After Itanagar Centre in Arunachal Pradesh, Leh Met centre at 3500 meters highest from mean sea level is the highest in the Himalayan region.**
- **With four Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) a Meteorological Department centre for Ladakh region started working. Despite Covid pandemic, within Nine months of time the new centre is established to cater the arid cold desert and geo politically all-important Ladakh weather requirements.**

## Two new species of ginger found from northeast

- **The Mahabharatha epic describes Bhima, the second among the five pandava brothers, going in search of the Kalyanasaugandhika, a flower with a heavenly fragrance, to satisfy Panchali's desire.**
- Scientists have deduced that the **mythological plant described by Vyasa is Hedychium coronarium, also known as white ginger lily.** Now researchers from the Malabar Botanical Garden and Institute of Plant Sciences, Kozhikode, have **discovered a close relative of Hedychium coronarium from the northeastern region.**

## India's first 'mysterious' monolith spotted in Gujarat

- A 'monolith', the likes of which have appeared and vanished in different parts of the world since November, has **now emerged in a garden in Ahmedabad city, Gujarat. This is the first appearance of a monolith, a structure made of shiny steel sheets, in India.**
- However, unlike in other parts of the world, the mystery around the object did not last long as it was disclosed that a private company has installed it. **The triangular prism-shaped structure, around seven feet tall, became a hit among city dwellers** after it was spotted in a garden on SG Highway on Thursday morning.
- **The garden is jointly managed by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and Symphony Ltd. Situated near Gurudwara in Thaltej area; it was one of the attractions inaugurated by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani recently.**

## First hilltop Buddhist monastery found in Bihar's Lakhisarai

- **The first hilltop Buddhist monastery of the Gangetic Valley has been found at Lal Pahari in Lakhisarai district of the Bihar state.**
- Excavated during a joint collaboration of the Bihar Heritage Development Society, **a part of the department of art, culture and youth affairs and the Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal, this finding is believed to be a great centre of Mahayana Buddhism.**
- "Monasteries have been discovered at many locations in this area. But this is the **first set up located at the top of a hill. Seems the Mahayani Buddhists set up the monastery far from the hustle and bustle of the human population to practise Mahayana rituals in isolation**".

## African elephants surveyed using AI

- **A new approach for surveying African elephants using satellite imagery and artificial intelligence (AI) could help in solving some of the present challenges in the conservation of the species.** The survey method was developed by an international team of researchers led by University of Oxford.
- The team detailed their work in a paper titled **'Using very high-resolution satellite imagery and deep learning to detect and count African elephants in heterogeneous landscapes'**, published in the academic journal Remote Sensing in Ecology and Conservation.

## Earth is losing 2% bugs every year. Scientists call it 'insect apocalypse'.

- **World's top bug experts believe that the insect kingdom, which is intrinsic to the functioning of our ecosystems, is quickly dying. Referring to what's happening as "death by a thousand cuts",** bug experts blamed the dwindling populations on climate change, herbicides, invasive species, insecticides, along with changes in how we use land. **Owing to such changes, Earth is losing 1 to 2 per cent of insects ever year.** Scientists need to ascertain whether loss in insect populations is bigger than how it is with other species.



## Adaptation Gap Report 2020

- The UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2020 finds that while nations have advanced in planning, huge gaps remain in finance for developing countries and bringing adaptation projects to the stage where they bring real protection against climate impacts such as droughts, floods and sea-level rise.
- Public and private finance for adaptation must be stepped up urgently, along with faster implementation. Nature-based solutions – locally appropriate actions that address societal challenges, such as climate change, and provide human well-being and biodiversity benefits by protecting, sustainably managing and restoring natural or modified ecosystems – must also become a priority.

## Doppler weather radar installed in Kufri near Shimla

- The accurate weather forecast is not only vital for the farmers to protect their crops from natural calamities; it also helps in tourism development as the tourists can decide about their travel plans according to the climate.
- This was stated by Union Minister for Earth Sciences, Health and Family Welfare and Science and Technology Dr Harsh Vardhan after virtual inauguration of First Doppler Weather Radar (DWR) installed at Kufri, Shimla and at Mukteshwar, Nainital in Uttarakhand on the occasion of 146<sup>th</sup> India Meteorological Department Foundation Day.

## Chilika has 22% of India's sea grass area, says survey

- The Chilika Development Authority (CDA) said scientists and government officials sighted 156 endangered Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilika, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon. Chilika, which boasts of highest single lagoonal population of the aquatic mammal in the world, was surveyed by 20 teams comprising 100 personnel. "The annual survey was conducted by 'Transact Survey Method' followed worldwide for population of aquatic mammals. Each survey team was equipped with binoculars, GPS, range finder and data recording sheets.
- Irrawaddy dolphins are protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. A total of 12,42,000 birds of 105 water bird species, and 26,405 birds of 76 wetland dependent species, were counted from the entire lagoon.

## The world's first coral conservation facility in Australia

- The world's first dedicated coral conservation facility will be located at the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef in Port Douglas, North Queensland, Australia. The Living Coral Biobank aims to secure the long-term future and biodiversity of corals worldwide which are under severe threat due to climate change.
- Designed by Australian architects Contreras Earl Architecture, with leading engineering and sustainability consultants Arup and Werner Sobek for the Great Barrier Reef Legacy, the primary goal of the facility is to keep alive and nurture over 800 species of the world's hard corals. The new building typology – a 'living ark' – will be the only dedicated facility of its kind in the world. Through its innovative design and engineering it will be a world leader in next-generation renewable energy design, creating optimal conditions for coral storage while minimising energy consumption and solar gain.

## Environment Minister releases Marine Mega Fauna Stranding Guidelines & National Marine Turtle Action Plan

- Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Prakash Javadekar has released Marine Mega Fauna Stranding Guidelines and the National Marine Turtle Action Plan in New Delhi. The documents contain ways and means to promote inter-sectoral action for conservation.
- It also suggests improved coordination amongst the government, civil society and all relevant stakeholders on the response to cases of stranding, injury or mortality of marine mammals and also conservation of marine turtles. India has rich marine biodiversity along a vast coastline of over seven thousand 500 kilometer.

Prakash Javadekar is the incumbent Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Minister of Information and Broadcasting and also served as the Union Minister of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India. He was elected to the upper house Rajya Sabha as a Member of Parliament from Maharashtra in 2018.



## Siruvani hills identified as butterfly super-hotspot

- A six-year study conducted by The Nature and Butterfly Society (TNBS) has identified Siruvani hills in Coimbatore district as a butterfly super-hotspot.
- Members of TNBS documented 240 (74%) out of 325 butterfly species found in T.N. from Siruvani hills between March 2015 and December 2020. As per a methodology formulated by TNBS, a place can be defined as a hotspot if 25% (75 species and above) of the State checklist species (325) are found in a single area.
- The 240 butterflies are from six families — Swallowtails (17), Whites and Yellows (28), Brush-footed Butterflies (72), Blues (69), Metalmarks (1) and Skippers (53).

## Two new species of ants discovered from Kerala and Tamil Nadu

- Two new species of a rare ant genus have been discovered in Kerala and Tamil Nadu by a team of scientists, the Department of Science and Technology.
- One of the two species found in the Periyar Tiger Reserve of Kerala has been named *Ooceraea Joshii* in honour of professor Amitabh Joshi — a distinguished evolutionary biologist from Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR). The other named *Ooceraea decamera* (decamera refers to the ten-segmented antennal count) was discovered from Alagarkoil in Madurai.

## Earth's ice loss now in worst-case zone

- A total of about 28 trillion tonnes of ice from sea ice, ice sheets, and glaciers have melted around the world since the mid-1990s. Earth's ice is currently melting faster than it was in the mid-1990s. This comes from a new study showing that these losses now follow a worst-case scenario for climate change pushing global temperatures even higher. The annual rate of melting is now about 57 percent faster than three decades ago, researchers said.
- “The roof of the ice now follows the worst-case warming scenario set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. A rise in sea level of this magnitude will have a very serious impact on coastal communities this century,” said researcher Thomas Slater of the Center for Polar Observation and Modeling at the University of Leeds.

**Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. We maintain this deficit by liquidating stocks of ecological resources and accumulating waste, primarily carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Earth Overshoot Day is hosted and calculated by Global Footprint Network, an international research organization that provides decision-makers with a menu of tools to help the human economy operate within Earth's ecological limits. Earth Overshoot Day 2020 fell on August 22.**

## SPORTS



### Sports Personalities in News

#### The ICC Awards of the Decade announced

- **Virat Kohli**, who had scored **20,396 runs in all international cricket during the time period, which is more than anyone else**, was also part of team India that won the ICC CWC 2011 and ICC Champions Trophy 2013. He was also named ICC Cricketer of the Year in both 2017 and 2018, so it was no surprise that he **emerged as the clear jury favourite with winning the Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade**.
- **All-rounder, Ellyse Perry was a clear favourite in the Female Cricketer of the Decade category and won the Rachael Heyhoe-Flint Award**, as she had scored 4,349 runs with four centuries and took 213 wickets in all international crickets during the decade – which was also the most wickets taken by any player.
- **Steve Smith bagged the ICC Men’s Test Cricketer of the Decade** for scoring 7,040 runs in 69 Tests in the period at an average of 65.79 with 26 centuries. He was also named the ICC Player of the Year in 2015 and ICC Test Player of the Year in 2015 and 2017. In the MRF Tyres ICC Test Player Rankings, his points tally was of 947 at the end of 2017 which is the second-highest in the history of the ICC Test batting rankings history.
- **Rashid Khan took home the ICC Men’s T20I Cricketer of the Decade award**, for taking 89 wickets at an average of just 12.62 apiece with an economy rate of 6.14 runs per over in 48 matches during the decade.
- **MS Dhoni won the ICC Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade**, chosen by fans **unanimously for his gesture of calling back former England batter Ian Bell following a disputable runout at Trent Bridge in 2011**.

The ICC Awards of the Decade is a one-off edition of the ICC Awards annual awards programme, aimed at celebrating the stand-out performers and moments from the past ten years of international cricket. **For the first time the fans’ voice will be heard in selecting the winners across categories including the Sir Garfield Sobers and Rachael Heyhoe Flint Awards**, which celebrate the best overall player from the men’s and women’s game over the past decade. **The fan vote will make up 10% of the voting, while votes from an expert panel will make up the remaining 90%**. The voting panel took into account players’ performance between 1 January 2011 and 7 October 2020. **The announcement of the ICC World XI Teams, along with the winners of the individual ICC awards, was made on 28 December 2020.**

#### MP: CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan to felicitate sportspersons, coaches at Bhopal

- **Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan felicitated sportspersons, coaches and sports personalities with state level sports award for the year 2019** at Bhopal. Padmashri, Arjuna and Dronacharya Awardee Olympian shooter Jaspal Rana were the special guest.
- **Olympian hockey player and winner of bronze medal at 1968 Mexico Olympics Shri Inam-ur-Rehman of Bhopal is being awarded the Life Time Achievement Award** for the year 2019, recognising his outstanding contribution in the development and promotion of hockey.
- **Chief Minister Shri Chouhan gave away state level Vikram, Eklavya, Vishwamitra and Life Time Achievement awards** at the sports award ceremony. **As many as 28 outstanding sport persons were awarded**, including 14 players who have been nominated for Eklavya Award, 10 for Vikram Award, 3 for Vishwamitra Award and one for Life Time Achievement Award.

## Ojha to be inducted in IPL council

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- **Pragyan Ojha**, the former India left-arm spinner, will become the **first Indian Premier League (IPL) champion to be included in the IPL governing council**. Ojha has been **nominated as the Indian Cricketers' Association (ICA) representative** in the council. The BCCI annual general meeting will ratify Ojha's inclusion in Ahmedabad.

## Mullagh is first aborigine in Australian Hall of Fame

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- **Johnny Mullagh**, who played on the **1868 Aboriginal team** that was **Australia's first to tour England**, became the **first indigenous inductee into the country's cricket Hall of Fame**. The inaugural Mullagh Medal was awarded at the end of the second Test against India.

## Lewis Hamilton knighted in UK honours list

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- **Lewis Hamilton** has been **knighted in Britain's traditional New Year Honours list after equalling Michael Schumacher's record of seven Formula One world titles**.
- **The list recognises outstanding achievements in various fields** including showbusiness, sport and politics, as well as the contributions of a larger number of everyday citizens.

## Ronaldo beats Messi to be crowned Player of the Century at Globe Soccer Awards

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- **Cristiano Ronaldo and Pep Guardiola** were honoured at the **Globe Soccer Awards in Dubai**, the duo named **player and coach of the century** respectively. Barcelona's Lionel Messi, Liverpool's Mohamed Salah and former player Ronaldinho were also in the race to bag the accolade but the Portuguese outclassed all to clinch the award.

## Ajinkya Rahane becomes first recipient of Mullagh Medal at MCG

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- **Indian stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane**, who won **Man of the Match for his vital ton at the Boxing Day Test**, was **bestowed with the Mullagh Medal**. He is the **first recipient of the iconic medal** which is named after former Australian skipper and cricket **Johnny Mullagh**.

## Leon Mendonca becomes India's 67<sup>th</sup> chess Grandmaster

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- While every other sport saw setbacks in the year of the pandemic, chess in India **thrived it was for the first time India won the Chess Olympiad**.
- The year 2020 concludes with yet another good news as **Leon Mendonca becomes India's 67<sup>th</sup> Grandmaster at the age of 14 years 9 months and 17 days**.
- **Leon, who was locked out in Europe because of the COVID-induced lockdown**, played a total of 16 tournaments lifting his ELO rating by 140 points (2452 to 2544) and achieving all three GM norms within three months. **His feat makes him the 29<sup>th</sup> youngest GM in the world**. He is also the second GM from Goa.

## Cristiano Ronaldo becomes first person to reach 250 million followers on Instagram

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- Juventus star forward **Cristiano Ronaldo** reached an impressive milestone outside the football field. **Ronaldo becomes the first person to hit the 250 million mark on Instagram**.
- **With 19.7 million likes**, Ronaldo also managed to hold the record of the **most-liked post of 2020**. The Portuguese star's post mourning the death of soccer legend Diego Maradona got the most number of likes on Instagram last year.

## Babar Azam named 'Most Valuable Cricketer' in PCB Awards

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- **Pakistan captain Babar Azam** was named the **Most Valuable Cricketer of the Year in the PCB awards** following his stellar performances during the season. The 26-year-old was also **adjudged the White-ball Cricketer of the Year** after averaging 110.5 and 55.2 in the ODIs and T20Is respectively.

## Claire Polosak to become first female match official in men's Test match

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- **Australia's Claire Polosak** is set to become the **first female match official in a men's Test match** when she takes up the **fourth umpire's role in the third Test between India and Australia** starting.

- The 32-year-old from New South Wales has already **earned the distinction of being the first woman on-field umpire in a men’s ODI match in ICC’s Division 2 league between Namibia and Oman played at the Windhoek in 2019.**
- In the India-Australia Test match, the on-field umpires will be two former pacers Paul Reiffel and Paul Wilson while the TV Umpire will be Bruce Oxenford. As per ICC rules for Test matches, the fourth umpire is appointed by the home cricket board from their nominees to the International Panel of ICC Umpires and from the host country.

### Sean Desai becomes first National Football League coordinator of Indian descent

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- **Indian-American Sean Desai** has been **named new defensive coordinator for Chicago Bears, making him the first National Football League (NFL) Coordinator of South Asian and Indian descent.**
- According to Chicago Bears, **Desai began his coaching career at Temple, his alma mater, in 2006**, serving as a defensive assistant and special teams coach for five seasons. As special teams coordinator in 2010 at the age of 27, he was one of the youngest coordinators in college football.



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Career  
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## Sport Events

### India's largest hockey stadium planned in Rourkela, will host 2023 world cup games

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced that India's biggest hockey stadium will come up at Rourkela and the 20,000-capacity facility will host matches of FIH men's World Cup in 2023. Spread over 15 acres of land, the stadium will be constructed in the Biju Patnaik University of Technology campus.

### Kiwis become No.1 in Test cricket for first time ever

- New Zealand grabbed the number one position in the ICC Test rankings for the first time in history after decimating Pakistan by an innings and 176 runs in the second Test in Christchurch.
- The comfortable series-clinching victory, shaped by captain Kane Williamson's double century, pushed the Kiwis to top of the heap as they became the sixth country in the past 10 years to be ranked number one in Test cricket.

### India's first indoor ski park to come up at Kufri

- India's first indoor ski park will come up at Kufri in Shimla with the objective of making Himachal Pradesh a favourite tourist destination in the country, besides providing tourists world class amenities in the state.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the state government and Nagsons Developers to develop India's first indoor ski park at Kufri in Shimla in the presence of Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur.

### Ladakh: Khelo India first Zaskar Winter Sports Festival begins

- In Ladakh, Khelo India 1<sup>st</sup> Zaskar Winter Sports Festival began. Engaging the Youth and opening new vistas of tourism in Zaskar are the main aims of the festival.
- Ladakh MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal inaugurated Chadar Trek to kick start and set the tone for 13- Day Zaskar Winter Sports Festival from the confluence of Indus and Zaskar rivers near Sangam, Leh.
- Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG), formerly Khelo India School Games (KISG), means Play India Youth Games, held annually in January or February, are the national level multidisciplinary grassroots games in India held for two categories, namely under-17 years school students and under-21 college students.
- Every year best 1000 kids will be given an annual scholarship of Rs.5 lakh (US\$7,000) for 8 years to prepare them for the international sporting events. On 31 January 2018, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, inaugurated Khelo India School Games at the opening ceremony based on Guru-shishya tradition held at Indira Gandhi Arena. From the 2019 events, Khelo India School Games were renamed to Khelo India Youth Games after Indian Olympic Association came on board earlier in September 2018. Haryana topped medals list in the inaugural edition of the Khelo India games.
- On 22 February 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the first edition of the Khelo India University Games in Cuttack to give athletes the exposure of multi-disciplinary events at the university level.
- Union Minister for sports Kiren Rijiju virtually inaugurated eight Khelo India State Centre of Excellence (KISCE), including one in Nagaland. The KISCE inaugurated in other states are Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur, Mizoram, Odisha and Telangana.

### India registers historic win over Australia in Brisbane test to seal 4-match series 2-1; Retains Border-Gavaskar Trophy

- India created history by defeating Australia by three wickets in the fourth and final Test at the Gabba in Brisbane and retained the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. India successfully chased the 328-run target to seal the four-match series 2-1. This was the first defeat for Australia at their fortress Gabba in 32 years as Rishabh Pant's brilliant unbeaten 89, Shubman Gill's 91, and Cheteshwar Pujara's 56 run knock in the second innings guided India to the memorable Test series win. Rishabh Pant was awarded the Man of the Match while Pat Cummins was awarded the Player of the Series.

### Union Tourism Minister inaugurates IISM branch in Kargil

- In Kargil of Ladakh Union territory, the Union Tourism Minister Mr Prahlad Singh Patel has inaugurated a branch of Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering (IISM). The Minister participated in various events to celebrate the National Tourism Day with National Events of Adventure Tourism, (NEAT) in Kargil district.

## Breakdancing became an official Olympic sport

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- **Breakdancing became an official Olympic sport.** The International Olympic Committee's pursuit of urban events to lure a younger audience saw street dance battles officially **added to the medal events program at the 2024 Paris Games.** Also confirmed for Paris by the IOC executive board were skateboarding, sport climbing and surfing. Those three sports will **make their Olympic debuts at the Tokyo Games which were postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic by one year to open on July 23, 2021.**
- **Breakdancing will be called breaking at the Olympics, as it was in the 1970s by hip-hop pioneers in the United States.** It was proposed by Paris organizers almost two years ago after positive trials at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires.

## UP to get its first sports university in Meerut, to be built at cost of Rs 700 crores

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- **Uttar Pradesh will soon have its first sports university in Meerut** after the state cabinet approved the State Sports University Bill 2021 draft.
- **The university will aim at providing best infrastructure practices and services to athletes.** A government spokesman said the university will help athletes in getting training, thereby making them ready for national and international level competitions. The sports university will be built at an approximate cost of Rs 700 crores and will come up in the Salawa village in Sardhana tehsil of Meerut district. The cost of the project will be borne by the state government.

## Tamil Nadu beat Baroda by 7 wickets to lift second Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy

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- **In Cricket, Tamil Nadu lifted the coveted Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy after defeating Baroda** by seven wickets in the final at the Sardar Patel Stadium in Ahmedabad.
- **This was Tamil Nadu's second Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) triumph,** after winning their first title way back in 2006-07. Baroda, who had won the title twice in the past (in 2011-12 and 2013-14), ended runners-up this time.



## AWARDS



### US President presents ‘Legion of Merit’ award to PM Modi for his leadership in elevating US-India strategic partnership

- US President Donald Trump presented the prestigious Legion of Merit award to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership in elevating strategic partnership of the two countries and emergence of India as a global power.
- India’s Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, accepted the award on behalf of the prime minister from the US National Security Advisor Robert O’Brien at the White House. Mr Modi was presented with the highest degree Chief Commander of the Legion of Merit which is given only to the Head of State or Government
- Mr Modi was given the award in recognition of his steadfast leadership and vision that has accelerated India’s emergence as a global power and elevated the strategic partnership between the United States and India to address global challenges.
- The US President also presented the Legion of Merit to Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The awards were received by their respective ambassadors in Washington DC.

### Haryana awarded Digital India Awards 2020 for eGovernance

- Haryana Government’s efforts to employ e-Governance to make delivery of citizen-centric services to the people in a time-bound and hassle-free manner, have been recognised and rewarded by the Central Government as President of India, Ram Nath Kovind has conferred Digital India Awards 2020 to the state Government on December 30 for its Antyodaya Saral Project.
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) under the category ‘Excellence in Digital Governance — State/UT’ conferred the award.

### Pt Satish Vyas conferred Tansen Samman at the World Music Festival

- In Madhya Pradesh, 96<sup>th</sup> Tansen Music Festival began in Gwalior with strict COVID-19 guidelines in place. In the inaugural ceremony renowned santoor player, Pandit Satish Vyas was conferred upon the prestigious Tansen Samman.
- Bhopal-based institution Abhinav Kala Parishad was honoured with Raja Mansingh Tomar award.

### Suriname President, Curacao PM, NZ minister among 30 Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awardees

- Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi, Curacao Prime Minister Eugene Rhuggenaath and New Zealand minister Priyanca Radhakrishnan were among 30 NRIs, and Indian-origin people and organisations who were conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award.
- President Ram Nath Kovind, who delivered the valedictory address on the third and final day of the 16<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations, presented the awards at a virtual event.

- The award is the highest honour conferred by the President of India as part of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Conventions on a Non-Resident Indian (NRI), Person of Indian Origin (PIO), and organisation or institution established and run by NRIs or PIOs.
- Mr Rhuggenaath, Mr Santokhi and Ms Radhakrishnan were awarded for their public service. Mukhesh Aghi, president and CEO of US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, was also among the awardees.
- In an acceptance speech on behalf of all awardees, Mr Aghi said this award represents the very best of India from all over the world linking our ‘janambhumi’ (homeland) with our ‘karambhumi’ (the country where one works).

Pravasi Bharatiya Samman (Overseas Indian Honour/Award) is an award constituted by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India in conjunction with the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Non-Resident Indian Day), to honour exceptional and meritorious contribution in their chosen field/profession. The award is given by the President of India. Since 2016, the Government of India has doubled the number of awardees each year to 30 after a decision to grant the award once every two years.

### Denmark’s Oscar nominee ‘Another Round’ to be opening movie at 51<sup>st</sup> IFFI in Goa

- The 51<sup>st</sup> International Film Festival of India (IFFI) will open with the Indian premiere of the movie ‘Another Round’ by Thomas Vinterberg.
- The movie starring Cannes Best Actor Award winner Mads Mikkelsen is among a star-studded line up of movies being showcased at IFFI. The movie is also Denmark’s official entry to the Oscars.
- The festival will also witness the World Premier of ‘Mehrunisa’. The film by Sandeep Kumar will premier mid-fest. The festival will close on 24<sup>th</sup> January with the India Premier of the historical drama ‘Wife of a Spy’ by Kiyoshi Kurosawa.

### Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan felicitates Kayakalp awards

- Public and Private Health Facilities were felicitated with Kayakalp award for high standards of Sanitation and Hygiene.
- Applauding the importance of the Kayakalp scheme, Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan said Kayakalp has not only been able to facelift the condition of public health facilities but has also made a significant impact in improving the behaviour of masses.
- The government had launched a National Initiative ‘Kayakalp’ on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015 to ensure hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness in Public Health Facilities in India.

### Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda to receive SKOCH Challenger Award virtually

- Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda virtually received SKOCH Challenger Award conferred to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for e-Governance.
- The award has been given to the Ministry for its IT-led initiatives and other transformational initiatives leading to outcome-based performance improvement. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has taken up several transformational initiatives recently.
- It has digitalised all the processes leading to a paperless office, monitoring is data driven and a performance dashboard is d on a real time basis. There is transparency with tribal related data available in the public domain.

### Paradip refinery receives National energy conservation award 2020

- Paradip Refinery has won First prize under the 30<sup>th</sup> National Energy Conservation Awards-2020 in the “Petroleum Refinery Sector”.
- The award is instituted by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under The Ministry of Power, Government of India to give national recognition to industries and establishments that have taken exemplary efforts on energy conservation while maintaining their production.



## Janaagraha's Best State award won by Odisha

- Odisha took home Janaagraha's Best State and the Best Civic Agency award, while Gujarat took home the Best State Election Commission, Kerala bagged the Best State Finance Commission, Indore secured Best Municipality award for its PPP based integrated solid waste management.
- The second edition of Janaagraha's City Governance Awards was a virtual event held. The awards recognise ground-breaking work in decentralisation in the urban context by institutions across government. The awards were presented by Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri.

## Rajendra Kumar Bhandari selected for Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar

- Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society and Dr. Rajendra Kumar Bhandari have been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar for their excellent work in Disaster Management.
- Union Home Ministry announced the award every year on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The award carries a cash prize of 51 lakh rupees and a certificate in case of an institution and five lakh rupees and a certificate in case of an individual.

## Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal honoured by Canada's Hindi Writers Guild

- Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' was honoured by the Hindi Writers Guild, Canada for his literary work. Nishank was conferred with the "Sahitya Gaurav Samman" in the presence of the Governor through a virtual programme.

## Indian mathematician Nikhil Srivastava is joint winner of maths prize

- Indian mathematician Nikhil Srivastava, has been named winner of the prestigious 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize along with two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison–Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs.
- Srivastava from the University of California, Berkeley, Adam Marcus, from the Ecole polytechnique federale de Lausanne (EPFL) and Daniel Alan Spielman from Yale University will receive the 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize, the National Academy of Sciences of the U.S. said in the statement.

## Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and late singer SP Balasubramaniam were named for this year's Padma Vibhushan

- Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and late singer SP Balasubramaniam were named for this year's Padma Vibhushan while former Chief Ministers late Tarun Gogoi and Keshubhai Patel, former Union Minister late Ram Vilas Paswan and former Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan have been awarded Padma Bhushan. Ram Vilas Paswan served as the Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution who passed away in October 2020.
- Seven persons will get Padma Vibhushan. They include former Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, sculptor Sudarshan Sahoo and Islamic scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Eminent Singer late S P Balasubramaniam will be awarded the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest civilian award posthumously.
- Ten persons will get Padma Bhushan. They include former Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, Singer K S Chithra, prominent poet Chandrashekhara Kambara and retired Civil Servant Nripendra Misra. Former Gujarat Chief Minister late Keshubhai Patel, Former Assam Chief Minister late Tarun Gogoi and Former Union Minister late Ram Vilas Paswan will be honoured with Padma Bhushan posthumously.
- 102 persons will get Padma Shri. They include Social Worker Sindutai Sapkal, Musician Bombay Jayashri, British film director Peter Brook and Greek Indologist Nicholas Kazanas. Former Governor of Goa late Mridula Sinha, Spanish-Indian Jesuit priest and author late Father Vallés will be given the award posthumously.
- Padma Awards, one of the highest civilian honours of India announced annually on the eve of Republic Day, are given in three categories – Padma Vibhushan (for exceptional and distinguished service), Padma Bhushan (distinguished service of higher order) and Padma Shri (distinguished service).

- The Padma Awards are conferred on the recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year. These awards are conferred by the President of India at ceremonial functions which are held at Rashtrapati Bhawan usually around March/April every year. The Union Home Ministry said the President has approved conferment of 119 Padma awards – seven Padma Vibhushan, 10 Padma Bhushan and 102 Padma Shri. Twenty-nine women are among the Padma awardees and the list also includes 10 persons from the category of foreigners, NRI, PIO AND OCI and one transgender. Sixteen people have been given the award posthumously.

The Padma Vibhushan is the second-highest civilian award of the Republic of India, after the Bharat Ratna. Instituted on 2 January 1954, the award is given for “exceptional and distinguished service”, without distinction of race, occupation, position, or sex. The Padma Bhushan is the third-highest civilian award in the Republic of India, preceded by the Bharat Ratna and the Padma Vibhushan and followed by the Padma Shri. Instituted on 2 January 1954, the award is given for “distinguished service of a high order...without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex.” Padma Shri is the fourth-highest civilian award in the Republic of India, after the Bharat Ratna, the Padma Vibhushan and the Padma Bhushan.

### Barle gets Padma Shri for promotion of Chhattisgarh’s folk dance form

- Radhe Shyam Barle has been awarded Padma Shri, India’s fourth-highest civilian award, for his contribution to art. A resident of Chhattisgarh’s Durg, Barle has been associated with the state’s Panthi folk dance since his childhood. He has also taught the dance across the country and abroad.
- Panthi is mainly performed by men of the Santnami community during Magh Purnima on the birth anniversary of Guru Ghasidas. The songs are based on the teachings of Guru Ghasidas, Kabir and other spiritual poets. Barle has performed at various national and international events in the past two decades.

### Maha Vir Chakra awarded to Galwan valley hero Col Santosh Babu posthumously

- Colonel B Santosh Babu, the Commanding Officer of 16 Bihar Regiment, who lost his life during the Galwan Valley clash last year, was posthumously awarded with Maha Vir Chakra.
- Subedar Sanjiv Kumar of 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Parachute Regiment, CRPF Inspector Pintu Kumar Singh, CRPF Head Constable Shyam Narayan Singh Yadav, CRPF Constable Vinod Kumar were posthumously awarded with Kirti Chakra. Deputy Commandant CRPF Rahul Mathur was awarded Kirti Chakra.
- Naib Subedar Nuduram Soren of 16 Bihar Regiment, Havildar K Palani of 81 Field Regiment, Naik Deepak Singh of Army Medical Corps 16 Bihar Regiment and Sepoy Gurtej Singh of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Punjab Regiment were awarded Vir Chakra posthumously. Havildar Tejinder Singh of 3 Medium Regiment was awarded Vir Chakra.
- Major Anuj Sood of 21<sup>st</sup> Battalion Rashtriya Rifles, Jammu and Kashmir police inspector Arshad Khan, J&K police Selection Grade Constable GH Mustafa Barah, J&K police Constable Naseer Ahmed Kolie and J&K Special Police Officer Bilal Ahmed Magray was posthumously awarded with Shaurya Chakra. Rifleman Pranab Jyoti Das of 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Assam Rifles and Paratrooper Sonam Tshering Tamang were awarded Shaurya Chakra.

Param Vir Chakra (PVC) is India's highest military decoration, awarded for displaying distinguished acts of valour during wartime. Param Vir Chakra translates as the “Greatest of the Ultimate Brave”, and the award is granted for “most conspicuous bravery in the presence of the enemy”. Only 21 military personnel have received this award to date. Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) (literally great warrior medal) is the second highest military decoration in India, after the Param Vir Chakra, and is awarded for acts of conspicuous gallantry in the presence of the enemy, whether on land, at sea or in the air. It replaced the British Distinguished Service Order (DSO). Post-independence, new awards were instituted on 26 January 1950, with retroactive effect from 15 August 1947.

### Liberation War fighter Lt. Col Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir and Musicologist Sanjida Khatun from Bangladesh awarded Padma Shree

- Bangladesh Liberation War fighter Lt. Col. (Retd.) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir and well known musicologist, Rabindra Sangeet exponent and academic Sanjida Khatun from Bangladesh have been awarded the Padma Shri for the year 2021. Padma awards are one of the highest civilian awards of the country.

- **Lt. Col. Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir** has been awarded **Padma Shri** for his contribution in the field of **Public Affairs**. Lt. Col. Zahir is a veteran of the **1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh**. He deserted the Pakistan army and crossed over to India to fight the liberation war of Bangladesh. **He organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> Artillery Force under Sector 4 in the Sylhet region.**
- He was given the **death sentence for deserting the Pakistan army** which he still carries against his name. He has also done pioneering work in documenting the contribution of liberation war fighters of both Bangladesh and India. **He is a recipient of Shwodhinta Padak, the Independence Award which is the highest civilian award of Bangladesh.**
- **Sanjida Khatun** is a renowned cultural figure of Bangladesh. She is an eminent **Rabindra Sangeet exponent and musicologist**. She played a prominent role in **organising artists of the then East Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971.**
- Earlier, in 1961 she played a key role in **observing the centenary of Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore** despite oppression by the **stringent martial law imposed by Pakistan under General Ayub**. She is also the founding member of the cultural organisation Chhayanut doing pioneering work to promote dance, music and other forms of art in Bangladesh.

### Meghalaya selected for Special Award for Information Technology applications in Elections

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- **The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Meghalaya** was selected for a **Special Award for Information Technology applications in Elections** by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**, in the National Best Electoral Practices Awards-2020.
- **The award recognises the sustained and consistent IT application efforts in electoral activities** being made by the Office of the CEO in the entire Enrolment to Elections (E2E) process and for leveraging technology for the benefit of all categories of voters, both general and persons with disabilities (PWDs).

### Uttar Pradesh adjudged best tableau among 32 tableaux that participated in Republic Day Parade

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- **Uttar Pradesh** was adjudged the best tableau among the **32 tableaux that participated in the Republic Day Parade** this year. **The tableau of Uttar Pradesh was based on the theme Ayodhya: Cultural Heritage of Uttar Pradesh.** Tableau of Tripura was adjudged the second best, which depicted promotion of eco-friendly tradition for achieving self-reliance in socio-economic parameters.
- **Among the nine tableaux from various Ministries, Departments and Paramilitary Forces, the Department of Biotechnology tableau won the top honour.** The tableau depicted Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan: COVID, the process of vaccine development through various processes. The tableau of Central Public Works Department, CPWD, with the theme Amar Jawan, bagged the special prize for paying tribute to the fallen heroes of the Armed Forces.

### Art created in a petri dish in India has just won an international award

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- **Khamari's Microbial Peacock (above)** won second prize at the **American Society for Microbiology's (ASM)** annual agar art contest. **Khamari is a doctoral fellow in medical microbiology at the Sri Sathya Sai deemed university in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh.** He's been "painting" with microbes for just over a year and already, in December, one of his art works — **Microbial Peacock.**
- **A panel of scientists and bio-artists judged 189 creations from 29 countries.** Entries were evaluated on creativity, artistry, scientific accuracy, and accessibility to the general public. At first glance, Microbial Peacock may seem unremarkable. Give tracing paper and a pencil, almost anyone could draw a bird like it.

### Jane Fonda to be honoured with Cecil B. DeMille Award at Golden Globes for her decorated career & 'unrelenting activism'

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- **Jane Fonda cemented herself into Hollywood allure as a chameleonlike actor and social activist,** and now the **Golden Globes will honour her illustrious career** with its highest honor. Fonda will receive the Cecil B. DeMille Award during the 78<sup>th</sup> annual awards ceremony on Feb. 28.

## 32 children awarded Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

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- **Thirty-two children** have been awarded the ‘Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar’ this year for their **exceptional abilities and outstanding accomplishments** in the fields of innovation, scholastics, sports, arts, culture, social service and bravery.
  - The Ministry of Women and Child Development said the **awardees are from 32 districts of 21 States and Union territories**. “**Seven awards have been given in the field of Art and Culture, nine awards for Innovation and five for Scholastic Achievements**. Seven children have won in Sports category, three have been felicitated for Bravery and one child has been honoured for her efforts in the field of Social Service”.
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## PERSONS IN NEWS

### Sweden's fiancé minister appointed new IMFC chair

- The members of the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC), the policy advisory committee of the Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have selected Sweden's Minister for Finance, Ms. Magdalena Andersson, as Chair of the Committee for a term of three years.
- Andersson, who will be the first woman to hold the position, resumes January 18, 2021. She succeeds Lesetja Kganyago, Governor of the South African Reserve Bank, who has chaired the IMFC since January 18, 2018.

### Major General Gautam Chauhan becomes first to head Indian Army's human rights cell

- The Indian Army has appointed a Major General rank officer to head its newly created human rights cell to give high priority to the observance of human rights convention and values.
- Major General Gautam Chauhan took charge as the first Additional Director General Human Rights in the Indian Army and will work under the India Army vice Chief Lieutenant General SK Saini.

### Biden picks first woman to serve as deputy defense secretary

- President-elect Joe Biden nominated former Pentagon official Kathleen Hicks to serve as the first female deputy defense secretary. Colin Kahl, who served as Biden's national security adviser when he was vice president, was nominated for undersecretary of defense for policy.

### ISRO Chairman K Sivan gets one-year extension

- ISRO Chairman K Sivan has been given an one-year extension, till January 14, 2022, as the secretary, Department of Space, according to a Personnel Ministry order issued.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the extension of tenure of K Sivan, secretary, Department of Space and chairman, Space Commission, for a period of one-year beyond January 14, 2021, that is up to January 14, 2022, it said.

### Ramesh Chandra Joshi takes charge as CBI's Chief Information Officer

- Senior Indian Information Service (IIS) officer Ramesh Chandra Joshi became the new face of the CBI for interactions with the media by taking charge as its chief information officer, a post lying vacant since March.
- A 1993-batch IIS officer, Mr Joshi was posted as the additional director general of the government's Press Information Bureau (PIB), from where he was handpicked for the high-pressure job at the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

### Dr Harsh Vardhan nominated as member on GAVI Board by Global Alliance for Vaccines & Immunisation

- Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan has been nominated a member on the GAVI Board by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation.
- Dr. Harsh Vardhan will represent India for two years starting from 2021 to 2023. The GAVI Board oversees the operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation.

### 7-year old world's youngest author becomes the first Indian kid to ink a four-book deal

- 7-year-old Abhijita Gupta, the world's youngest author, has become the first Indian child to sign a deal with the Invincible for her four upcoming books and she has already received a part of the royalty payment for the first 10,000 copies of her book.
- Abhijita also unveiled the cover of her second book- 'We Will Surely Sustain.' The 7-year-old Abhijita Gupta has been recognized as the world's youngest author by the International Book of Records.
- The Asia Book of Records has conferred on her title of the 'Grandmaster in Writing.' According to the India Book of Records, she is the youngest author to write poetry and prose.

## Justice S Muralidhar takes oath as Chief Justice of Odisha High Court

- **Justice S Muralidhar** took oath as the **Chief Justice of the Odisha High Court**. Governor of Odisha Prof. Ganeshi Lal administered the oath of office at Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar in a simple ceremony. Earlier, President of India, Ram Nath Kovind had appointed Justice Muralidhar as the Chief Justice of Odisha.

## Indian-American becomes US Army's first CIO

- **Indian-American Dr Raj Iyer** has taken over as the **first Chief Information Officer of the US Army**, after the Pentagon created the position in July 2020.
- One of the highest ranking Indian-American civilians in the US Department of Defense, **Iyer, who holds a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering, serves as the principal advisor** to the Secretary of the Army and directs representation of the secretary in matters relating to information management/information technology (IT).

## Argentine filmmaker Pablo Cesar to head 51<sup>st</sup> IFFI's International Jury

- The International Jury for 51<sup>st</sup> edition of International Film Festival of India has been announced with eminent filmmakers from across the world. **The 51 IFFI is headed by Argentina filmmaker Pablo Cesar.**

## Joe Biden names two Indian Americans in National Security Council of White House

- **In the United States, the President-elect Joe Biden** has appointed two Indian-Americans to the **National Security Council of the White House**. Biden has named **Indian-American Sumona Guha** as **senior director for South Asia** and **Tarun Chhabra** as **senior director for Technology and National Security**.
- **Sumona Guha** is currently serving as **senior vice president at Albright Stonebridge Group**. She was co-chair of the South Asia foreign policy working group during the Biden-Harris campaign. During the Obama-Biden administration, she was special advisor for national security affairs to the then Vice President Biden.
- **Tarun Chhabra, who has been appointed senior director for Technology and National Security**, is a senior fellow at the Centre for Security and Emerging Technology at Georgetown University.
- **Chhabra had also served on the National Security Council staff as director for Strategic Planning and director for Human Rights and National Security Issues** during the Obama-Biden Administration. Chhabra is an alumnus of Stanford University, Oxford University and Harvard Law School.
- **Biden has also named Shanthi Kalathil as Coordinator for Democracy and Human Rights in his National Security Council**. She is currently senior director of the International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy. US Capitol Siege
- Trump — who lost the popular and Electoral College vote — continues to dispute the election results, without evidence, and has encouraged his supporters to attend the rallies. He took the stage about noon to roaring crowds, falsely claiming he had won the election. Later at the U.S. Capitol, **throng of people pushed past police who were trying to block them from entering the building as lawmakers inside debated counting Electoral College votes confirming Biden's victory.**

## Sweden's postal service issues stamps featuring Greta Thunberg

- **Climate activist Greta Thunberg** is to feature on a set of stamps issued by Sweden's postal service. She will **join a hall of fame of Swedish personalities, from Zlatan Ibrahimovic to Greta Garbo**, who have been depicted on the country's postage stamps. The stamps go on sale from PostNord and show Thunberg in her familiar yellow raincoat standing on a rocky coast looking out at a flock of birds.
- **Greta Thunberg is a Swedish environmental activist** who is internationally known for challenging world leaders to take immediate action against climate change. **She attended the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit**. Her speech there, in which **she exclaimed "how dare you,"** was widely taken up by the press and incorporated into music.
- She received numerous honours and awards including an honorary Fellowship of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, **inclusion in Time's 100 most influential people, being the youngest Time Person of the Year, inclusion in the Forbes list of The World's 100 Most Powerful Women (2019) and two consecutive nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize (2019 and 2020).**

## Joe Biden appoints Indian-American Sumona Guha as senior Director for South Asia

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- **The Biden-Harris transition team announced the appointment of Indian American Sumona Guha to the role of Senior Director for South Asia at the National Security Council.**
- **Ms Guha co-chaired the South Asia foreign policy working group** on the Biden-Harris campaign, and was a member of the transition team. She will succeed the Trump administration's Lisa Curtis in the role.
- **Ms Guha, a former Foreign Service officer, has been a Senior Vice President since mid-2018** at the Albright Stonebridge Group, whose chair is former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

## Biden ropes in 20 Indian-Americans, 17 in key White House positions

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- **U.S. President-elect Joe Biden has nominated at least 20 Indian-Americans, including 13 women, to key positions in his incoming administration**, a record for the small ethnic community that constitutes one per cent of America's population. As many as 17 of them would be part of the Biden administration in the powerful White House complex.
- **The January 20<sup>th</sup> inauguration, where Mr. Biden, 78, would be sworn in as the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the U.S., is already historic as it is for the first time ever that a woman, Kamala Harris, would be sworn as the Vice-President of the country.** Ms. Harris, 56, is also the **first ever Indian-origin and African-American to be sworn in as the Vice-President of the U.S.**
- **It is also for the first time ever that so many Indian-Americans have been roped into a presidential administration ever before the inauguration.** Mr. Biden, a Democrat, is still quite far away from filling all the positions in his administration.
- **Topping the list is Neera Tanden, who has been nominated as Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget and Dr. Vivek Murthy, who has been nominated as the U.S. Surgeon General.**

## Shilpa Shirodkar becomes first Bollywood star to get COVID-19 vaccine

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- **Bollywood star Shilpa Shirodkar has become the first Indian celebrity to get a vaccination against the deadly coronavirus.** She is currently in Dubai and has been trending after she revealed getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

## Jayant Khobragade named India's next envoy to ASEAN secretariat

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- **India named Jayant Khobragade as its next ambassador to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) secretariat in Jakarta**, months after Pakistan declined to accept his posting as the deputy chief of mission in Islamabad.
- **Khobragade, an officer of the 1995 batch of the Indian Foreign Service**, is currently serving as a joint secretary in the external affairs ministry. India first posted a dedicated ambassador to ASEAN in 2014 following the elevation of ties between the two sides to a strategic partnership and in view of growing cooperation in areas ranging from security to trade.

## Legendary Indian classical musician Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan passes away

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- **Legendary Indian classical musician and Padma Vibhushan awardee Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan died at his residence in Mumbai. Born on March 3, 1931 in Badaun in Uttar Pradesh, Ghulam Mustafa Khan was the eldest son in a family of four brothers and three sisters.** Both of his parents belonged to renowned musical background.
- **He got his basic classical music training from his father and later studied music under his cousin, Ustad Nissar Hussain Khan. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1991, followed by Padma Bhushan in 2006 and Padma Vibhushan in 2018.**

## Sanitation Worker Manish Kumar becomes first Indian to get Covid-19 Vaccine in Milestone Moment

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- **As India kicked off the world's biggest Covid-19 vaccination drive, a frontline sanitation worker at Delhi AIIMS, Manish Kumar, received the first jab against the deadly respiratory disease.**

- He was **inoculated in the presence of Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan**. All India Institute of Medical Sciences Director Dr Randeep Guleria also received the vaccine shot.

## Austin becomes first Black Pentagon chief

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- **Lloyd J. Austin, a West Point graduate who rose to the Army's elite ranks and marched through racial barriers in a 41-year career, won Senate confirmation to become the nation's first Black secretary of defense.**
- **The 93-2 vote gave President Joe Biden his second Cabinet member; Avril Haines was confirmed as the first woman to serve as director of national intelligence.** Biden is expected to win approval for others on his national security team in coming days, including Antony Blinken as secretary of state.

## Janet Yellen becomes first US woman treasury secretary

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- **The US Senate has confirmed eminent economist Janet Yellen as the first woman Treasury Secretary of the United States.** Yellen was confirmed by the Senate in a broad bipartisan support of 84-15 votes. Both the Democratic and the Republican parties have 50 members in the 100-seat Senate.

## India's First Woman Fighter Pilot Participates In Republic Day Fly-Past

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- **Flight Lieutenant Bhawana Kanth, the first woman in India to qualify for combat mission in a fighter jet became the first woman fighter pilot to participate in the Republic Day fly-past.**
- **Bhawana Kanth joined the Indian Air Force fighter squadron in 2017 and flew her first solo flight on an MiG-21 Bison in March 2018.** She is currently posted at a fighter base in the western sector. **Along with Mohana Singh and Avani Chaturvedi, Flight Lt Kanth was the first woman selected for the IAF fighter stream in 2016.**

## Col Narendra 'Bull' Kumar, who helped India secure Siachen glacier, passes away

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- **Ace mountaineer Colonel Narendra 'Bull' Kumar who helped India secure the Siachen Glacier passed away at the Army Research and Referral Hospital in New Delhi due to age-related illness.**
- **Col Kumar, who was awarded the Kirti Chakra, Padma Shri, Arjun award and the McGregor medal, carried out multiple expeditions in the Siachen glacier area in the late 1970s and early 1980s.**

## Indian American Congressman Ami Bera re-named as Chair of House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee

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- **In the US, veteran Indian-American Congressman Ami Bera has been re-elected as chairman of the House Foreign Subcommittee on Asia, Pacific, Central Asia and Non-proliferation.** Bera is the **longest-serving Indian American currently in Congress.**

## Priyanca Radhakrishnan created history by becoming the first Indian-Kiwi woman to become a minister in New Zealand

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- **Indian-origin politician Priyanca Radhakrishnan created history by becoming the first Indian-Kiwi woman to become a minister in New Zealand.** Radhakrishnan was one of five new ministers inducted into freshly reelected Labour Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern who also unveiled a revamped cabinet that she has described as "incredibly diverse".

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## MISCELLANEOUS

### Gwalior hosts much-awaited Tansen Music Festival under strict COVID-19 guidelines in place

- In Madhya Pradesh, the much-awaited Tansen Music Festival concluded in Gwalior with strict COVID-19 guidelines in place. In the inaugural ceremony renowned santoor player Pt Satish Vyas was conferred upon the prestigious Tansen Samman. Bhopal-based institution Abhinav Kala Parishad was honoured with Raja Mansingh Tomar award.
- The inaugural day events started with cross-cultural offerings of Harikatha, Milad and shehnai vadan at Tansen's samadhi sthal in Hazira. The festival concluded on December 30 at Behat village, the birthplace of the music maestro Tansen.

### Newly designed Vistadome tourist coach successfully completes 180 km/hour during speed trial

- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal said that the newly designed Vistadome tourist coach successfully completed 180 kilometre per hour during speed trial. The Minister said, the UNESCO world heritage site Nilgiri Mountain Railway in Tamil Nadu resumed operations from 31<sup>st</sup> December this year.

### 'Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan' Project

- Tourism and Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel took a review meeting of the Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan project in New Delhi. A detailed presentation was given about the present status and progress at various monuments.
- Adopt a Heritage is a well-conceived initiative and hoped that by leveraging CSR, this project would help in providing the basic amenities such as cleanliness, safe drinking water, light and sounds in the lesser-known monuments.

### North East's first-ever specialised Ginger Processing Plant in Meghalaya is being revived

- Minister for Development of North Eastern Region, DoNER Dr Jitendra Singh has informed that North East's first-ever specialised Ginger Processing Plant at Ri-Bhoui district in Meghalaya is being revived and is likely to become functional in the beginning of 2021. It is the only Ginger Processing Plant of North East India established around the year 2004 but it has remained non-functional for many years.

### Law and Justice Ministry notifies elevation of four judges

- Law and Justice Ministry has notified the elevation of four judges as Chief Justices of Odisha, Telangana, Madras and Jammu and Kashmir High Courts. President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed Dr. Justice S. Muralidhar as Chief Justice of Odisha High Court and Kumari Justice Hima Kohli as Chief Justice of Telangana.
- Justice Pankaj Mithal will be Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court and Justice Sanjib Banerjee, Chief Justice of Madras.

### Govt launches Global Pravasi Rishta portal to connect with Indian Diaspora across the world

- Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan launched the Global Pravasi Rishta portal and mobile App, to connect with Indian Diaspora across the world. The portal will act as a dynamic communication platform between our pravasis, the Ministry of External Affairs and missions abroad and will help in engaging Indian diaspora more intensively.

### PM unveils project for affordable housing

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation of six Light House Projects, as part of the Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC-India) initiative, in Indore, Rajkot, Chennai, Ranchi, Agartala and Lucknow via videoconference.
- About 1,000 houses at each location are to be constructed in a year, using six distinct technologies from a basket of 54 such technologies shortlisted under the GHTC-India, 2019.

## PM Narendra Modi to deliver inaugural address at National Metrology Conclave

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered the inaugural address at the National Metrology Conclave** through video conferencing. He also dedicated National Atomic Timescale and Bhartiya Nirdeshak Dravya to the nation and lay the foundation stone of the National Environmental Standards Laboratory.
- **The National Atomic Timescale generates Indian Standard Time** with an accuracy of 2.8 nanosecond. Bhartiya Nirdeshak Dravya is supporting testing and calibration of laboratories for quality assurance, at par with international standards.
- **The National Environmental Standards Laboratory** will aid self-reliance in the certification of ambient air and industrial emission monitoring equipment.
- **National Metrology Conclave 2021 is being organised by Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Physical Laboratory, CSIR-NPL New Delhi** which is entering into its 75<sup>th</sup> year of inception.
- **The theme of the conclave is Metrology for the Inclusive Growth of the Nation.**

## Manipur Forest Department launches Website with German assistance

- **Forest Minister Awangbow Newmai launched the website [www.cosfom.mn.gov.in](http://www.cosfom.mn.gov.in)** for the Community-based Sustainable Forest Management for Water Resource Conservation in Manipur (COSFOM) at Sanjenthong in Imphal.
- **COSFOM is a project of the Government of India supported by the Federal Government of Germany through KfW, a German development bank in Frankfurt** with the Manipur Forest Department as the executing agency. It is managed by the Community Forestry and Water Conservation Society-Manipur.

## Dharmendra Pradhan launches missed call facility for LPG consumers in Bhubaneswar

- **Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan launched the missed call facility for LPG consumers in Bhubaneswar.**
- **Indian Oil LPG customers can now give a missed call to 8454955555 for refill booking** for all India and for new connection for Bhubaneswar city. The Minister also rolled out the second phase of the **world class octane 100 premium grade petrol, under the brand XP 100.**
- The Petroleum Minister said that while about 13 crore people were **given LPG connection between 1955 and 2014, now it is about to reach 30 crore**, representing a quantum jump there by empowering Indian women.

## PM Narendra Modi dedicated to nation New Rewari - New Madar Section of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the 306 Kilometer New Rewari - New Madar Section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor.**
- He also **flagged off the world's first Double Stack Long Haul 1.5 Kilometer long Container Train** hauled by electric traction from New Ateli -New Kishangarh during the event.
- **The New Rewari - New Madar section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor is situated in Haryana and Rajasthan.** It consists of nine newly built dedicated freight corridor stations which includes three junction stations in New Rewari, New Ateli and New Phulera.
- The opening of this stretch will **benefit various industries in Rewari - Manesar, Narnaul, Phulera and Kishangarh areas of Rajasthan and Haryana** and will also enable better usage of the container depot of CONCOR at Kathuwas.

## Irdai to introduce standard home insurance policy Bharat Griha Raksha

- **The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) has decided to introduce a standard home insurance policy** that will cover the risk of fire and allied perils for certain risks.
- **The Irdai had issued guidelines announcing that the Standard Fire and Special Perils (SFSP) Policy** provided for in the erstwhile **All India Fire Tariff (AIFT) 2001** will be replaced by the following standard products that shall be mandatorily offered by all general insurers carrying on fire and allied perils insurance business from 1 April.

## HM Amit Shah releases inaugural issue of National Police K-9 Journal

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- Home Minister Amit Shah released the inaugural issue of the National Police K-9 Journal in New Delhi. It is the first such publication in the country on the subject of Police Service K9s, Police Dogs.

## India sets up high-level group for South Asia energy security

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- The government has set up a high-level group headed by former Union power secretary Ram Vinay Shahi and tasked it with helping build a South Asia-focused energy security architecture.
- Cross-border energy trade is a key part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's neighbourhood-first policy, with plans to build energy links to check China's growing influence. India's energy diplomacy ranges from cross-border electricity trade to supplying petroleum products and setting up liquefied natural gas terminals.

## Ravi Shastri's First-Ever Book to Share Insights of His Life in Cricket

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- Indian cricket team coach Ravi Shastri is all set to come up with his first-ever book in which the former player will share the never-before-revealed anecdotes and insights of his life in cricket. HarperCollins India announced the acquisition of Shastri's first book on his life in cricket, to be published in summer 2021.

## Railway Minister Piyush Goyal launches Freight Business Development Portal

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- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal launched a Freight Business Development Portal as one stop solution for all the needs of freight customers. The Minister said that Indian Railways is an invisible thread which connects the length and breath of India.

## Cherry Blossom Mao Festival held in Manipur

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- In Manipur, the Cherry Blossom Mao Festival was held at Senapati district marking the beginning of pink season in the district. Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh graced the function virtually due to the pandemic.
- The Mao area of Senapati district in Manipur is known for Cherry Blossom, a plant which is popularly known as Sakura in Japan. The Manipur government started organizing the festival every year from 2017 onward. However this year, the authority decided to scale down the festival due to COVID-19 pandemic.

## Nepali climbers make history by becoming first to scale K2 peak in winter

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- Pakistan felicitated a team of 10 Nepali climbers for making history by becoming the first to scale in winter the world's second highest mountain K2, considered as the world's most dangerous and challenging peak.
- K2 with its daunting 8,611 meters height is located in Gilgit-Baltistan side of the Karakoram Range. It was the only one among 8,000-meter high peaks that was never scaled in winter. The history was made by a group of 10 Nepali climbers. The achievement was the result of a collaborative effort between the climbers affiliated with multiple teams: one led by Nirmal Purja and the other by Mingma Gyalje Sherpa.

## National Youth Festival to be organized from January 12

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- The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is organized a week long National Youth Festival in the country commencing from the 12<sup>th</sup> of this month. Every year, the festival is being held to commemorate the birth anniversary of youth icon Swami Vivekananda.

## Prakash Javadekar releases MEE of 146 National Park and Wildlife Sanctuaries

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- Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Prakash Javadekar released Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of 146 National Park and Wildlife Sanctuaries in the country.
- At present, India has a network of 903 Protected Areas in the country covering about five per cent of the total geographic area of the country. In order to assess the efficacy of Protected Areas, evaluation of management effectiveness is required.
- The Minister also announced that from this year onwards ten best National Parks, five Coastal and Marine parks and top five Zoos in the country will be ranked and awarded every year.

## Centre merges J&K cadre officers with AGMUT

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the Centre has merged J&K cadre for all India Services Viz; IAS, IPS and IFS officers with that of Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram and Union Territory (AGMUT), also called the Union Territory cadre, through an ordinance.
- The government said the President has promulgated an ordinance to amend J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 and make IAS, IPS and Indian Forest Service officers of existing cadre of J&K a part of AGMUT cadre.
- The move will help tackle the shortage of All India Services Officers in J&K owing to an earlier rule fixing the ratio of direct recruits in Civil Services to promotees from J&K State Civil Services (Kashmir Administrative Service) at 50:50 instead of 67:33 formula followed in other states.

## First ever Ice climbing festival celebrated in Nubra valley

- In Leh, the first ever Ice climbing festival was celebrated in Nubra valley. The Seven Day event was organized by Nubra Adventure Club. Ice climbing is a popular winter sport abroad. Taking the cue, local adventure sports lovers have explored several ice climbing spots in Nubra valley to attract the adventure tourists to the region.

## Govt notifies rules for renewal of International Driving License while traveling abroad

- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a notification to facilitate the issuance of International Driving Permit (IDP) for Indian citizens whose IDP has expired while they are abroad. There was no mechanism for its renewal while citizens were abroad and their IDP expired.
- After this amendment, Indian citizens can apply for renewal through Indian Embassies and Missions abroad, from where these applications will move to the VAHAN portal in India, to be considered by the concerned Road Transport Officers (RTOs).
- The International Driving Permit will be couriered to the citizen at his or her address abroad by the respective RTOs. The Ministry said that the notification also removes the conditions of a Medical Certificate and a valid visa at the time of making the request for the IDP in India.
- The idea is that a citizen who has a valid driving licence should not have a requirement for another medical certificate. Further, there are countries where the Visa is issued on arrival or Visa is issued at the last moment and in such cases, VISA is not available when applying for the IDP in India before travel. Therefore, IDP application can now be made without VISA.

## India's first indigenously developed driverless Metro Car unveiled

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled India's first indigenously designed and developed Driverless Metro Car at the BEML manufacturing facility in Bengaluru.
- State-of-the-art driverless metro cars, being manufactured at the company's Bangalore Complex, are made up of stainless-steel body with a capacity of carrying 2280 passengers in six-cars Metro train-set.

## PM Modi to address National Youth Parliament Festival- 2021

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the National Youth Parliament Festival - 2021. The Festival is organised on 12<sup>th</sup> January on the occasion of the National Youth Day in order to encourage the youth in the age group of 18-25 years to engage with public issues and understand the common man's point of view.

## PM Modi to lay foundation stone of Ahmedabad, Surat Metro Rail Projects

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi lays the foundation stone of Ahmedabad Metro Rail Project Phase-II and Surat Metro Rail Project through video conferencing.
- The Metro Projects will provide an environment friendly 'Mass Rapid Transit System' to these cities. Ahmedabad Metro Rail Project Phase-II is 28.25 kilometres long with two corridors. The two Metro Projects will provide an environment friendly 'Mass Rapid Transit System' to these two fastest growing cities.
- The length of Corridor-1 of phase-II is 22.8 kilometers from Motera Stadium to Mahatma Mandir which is a completely elevated corridor. The length of Corridor-2 is 5.4 Kilometres from GNLU to GIFT City with 2 elevated stations, having interchange facility at GNLU and a bridge over Sabarmati River.



## Union Minister Nitin Gadkari lays foundation stone virtually for construction of elevated corridor in Hubballi, Karnataka

- Union Minister for Road Transport, Highways and MSMEs Nitin Gadkari **laid the foundation stone for the construction of an elevated corridor at Rani Chennamma Circle in Hubballi** in a virtual mode.
- Speaking on the occasion, the Minister announced that a decision is taken for **13 highway projects of 847 kilometres at a cost of Rs 21,000 crore in North Karnataka**. This will include four laning of Hubballi-Dharwad bypass and Dharwad-Belagavi stretch of the highway.

## For the first time in India a post-graduate diploma course in Buddhist heritage and Tourism

- Now, those who aspire to **make a career in tourism or Buddhist studies now can fulfill their wish as Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) in association with Deccan College (Deemed University)** has started a post-graduate diploma in Buddhist heritage and tourism. This is probably the first of its kind course in the country.
- **The course syllabus has been jointly created by SPPU Pali Department and Deccan College**. Recently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between SPPU Vice-chancellor Nitin Karmalkar and acting VC Prasad Joshi.
- **The course will help the students to learn and make a career in Tourism besides learning about Buddhist heritage, culture, history, historical places, and traditions among others. Ellora, Ajanta, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha has got a few Buddhist historical places.** Similarly, China, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Sri-Lanka, Cambodia, Tibet have a good population of Buddhist followers and monks.

## CAQM setting up Decision Support System for air quality for Delhi-NCR

- **The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in NCR and adjoining areas has begun the process of setting up a Decision Support System (DSS)**. It will have a web, Geographical Information System (GIS) and multi-model based operational and planning decision support tool.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in a statement said that this tool will help immensely in capturing the static and dynamic features of the emissions from various sources. It will have **an integrated framework to handle both primary and secondary pollutants using a chemical transport model**. The Ministry said, the system will also be able to handle the source specific interventions with the framework to estimate benefits of interventions.
- It will also focus on presenting the best results in a comprehensive user friendly and simple format for different users. The Commission has entrusted the task to **expert groups from reputed knowledge institutions of the country for framework development of Air Quality Management Decision Support System**. The System will use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help improve the air quality over targeted sectors of Delhi and NCR.

## Wonderla Bangalore becomes first theme park in India to get Covid-safe certification

- Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, amusement park Wonderla Bangalore announced that it become the **first theme park in the country to secure OV-Safe certification by Bureau Veritas India**. The theme park and resort in Bangalore.

## PM Modi unanimously chosen as next Chairman of Shree Somnath Trust

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi was unanimously chosen as the next Chairman of Shree Somnath Trust**. The trust manages the world famous Somnath Temple at Prabhas Patan town in Gir-Somnath district of Gujarat.
- **The Trustees unanimously chose Prime Minister Modi as the next Chairman of the Trust**, to guide it in the times to come. The Prime Minister accepted the responsibility and also appreciated the efforts of Team Somnath.

## HM Amit Shah launches Ayushman Bharat scheme for Central Armed Police Forces

- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the Ayushman CAPF health scheme in Guwahati for about 28 lakh personnel of Central Armed Police Forces and their families in all the states where Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana is operational**. It was a **great occasion coinciding with the Parakram Diwas to start Ayushman Bharat scheme for the Central Armed Police Forces**.

## Railways rename Howrah-Kalka Mail as ‘Netaji Express’

- Days before the nation celebrates the 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian Railways renamed the Howrah-Kalka Mail as the ‘Netaji Express’. The great freedom fighter was born on January 23, 1897 and floated Azad Hind Fauj to fight for India’s independence. Netaji’s prakram had put India on the express route of freedom and development”.

## GI tag sought for India’s costliest mushroom

- A geographical indication (GI) tag has been sought for one of the costliest mushrooms in the world that grows in Jammu and Kashmir’s Doda district. Locally called Gucchi, or Morel, the mushroom, priced at over Rs.20,000 a kg, is a forest produce collected by local farmers and tribals. Last June, saffron from the State had been granted a GI tag.

## SC Railway commissions 106 kms of Electric traction of railway line in Andhra Pradesh

- In Andhra Pradesh, South Central Railway has completed and commissioned 106 kms of Electric traction of the railway line between Vijayawada-Uppaluru-Bhimavaram sections of Vijayawada Division.
- The newly commissioned Electrification work of the section includes single line with electric traction from Vijayawada to Uppaluru for a length of 18 kms and double line with electric traction from Uppaluru to Bhimavaram Town for a length of 88 kms.

## Union Home Minister Amit Shah says, provide home to every citizen of country by August 2022

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah has said that the Modi Government will provide a home to every citizen of the country by August 2022. He was speaking after the e-dedication of one kilometer long Railway overbridge at Shilaj in Ahmedabad.
- Mr. Shah said that the government is undertaking the rural and urban housing projects in such a way that everyone will get home by 15<sup>th</sup> August 2022.
- The Modi government has already provided 10 crore units of affordable housing. He said that more than 13 crore poor families were provided LPG gas cylinders under the Prime Minister Ujjwala Yojana.
- The government has provided electricity to all villages in the country and now the focus is to provide drinking water to every household by 2022.

## New scheme initiated in Rajasthan to make people aware about importance of nourishment of pregnant women

- A new scheme has been initiated in Sirohi district, Rajasthan to make people aware about importance of nourishment of pregnant women and children.
- The scheme called Ek Paudha Suposhit Beti Ke Naam or A plant on the name of well-nourished daughter’ has been started under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme of the union government.
- Under this Scheme on the birth of a girl child a drumstick plant is being distributed by district administration this nutritional plant is taken care of by family members of girl child.

## Union Minister Kiren Rijiju assigned additional charge of Ministry of AYUSH

- Union Minister Kiren Rijiju has been assigned the additional charge of the Ministry of AYUSH. President’s Secretariat said, during the hospitalization and treatment of AYUSH Minister Shripad Naik following a road accident, his portfolio related to the Ministry of AYUSH has been temporarily assigned to Mr Rijiju in addition to his existing portfolios. The President has directed that this arrangement may continue till Mr Naik resumes his work related to the Ministry of AYUSH.

## Aadhaar grew from an idea into one of the world’s largest identity platform

- Ram Sewak Sharma, the first director general of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) writes an insider’s account in The Making of Aadhaar: World’s Largest Identity Platform.

- **Sharma recounts** how he came on board, **his early interactions with UIDAI's then chairman Nandan Nilekani and the groundwork for the project.** He recalls how the venture moved forward despite setbacks, either in terms of the technologies that it wanted to implement or in the form of political opposition.

## Maharashtra CM inaugurates Balasaheb Thackeray Gorewada International Zoological Park

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- **In Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray inaugurated Balasaheb Thackeray Gorewada International Zoological Park in Nagpur.** The park has been **developed by the State Forest Department and Forest Development Corporation.** It is spread across an area of 1,914 hectares and includes a wildlife sanctuary, Indian safari, African safari biodiversity park and night safari.
- Speaking on the occasion Thackeray announced that, **Gondwana Theme Park or Gondwana Theme Village will be set up in Nagpur to introduce the culture of Vidarbha tribals to the global tourists** along with wild tourism. Adjacent to the park is the famous Gorewada Lake, which is a good place for bird watching.

## Bengaluru: India's 1<sup>st</sup> centralised AC railway terminal at Byappanahalli to be ready in February

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- **India's first centralised AC railway terminal is set to come up in Bengaluru.** South Western Railway (SWR) officials said Sir M Visvesvaraya Terminal Bengaluru (Byappanahalli Third Coaching Terminal) will be ready by the end of February. "At present, only a few spaces like retiring rooms at railway stations are air-conditioned, but this terminal will have centralised AC system.

## Mumbai: BMC is India's first civic body to launch 'Heritage Walk'

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- **The first batch of 15 excited, wide-eyed tourists entered the hallowed portals of the iconic BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) building – the headquarters of Asia's richest civic body which administers India's commercial capital – for the inaugural 'Heritage Walk'.**
- "This is the first municipal corporation in the country to organise such a Heritage Walk. This initiative will boost tourism and also give Mumbai an identity as a tourist destination," said BMC Municipal Commissioner I.S. Chahal.

## Kaushambi district of Uttar Pradesh becomes Corona free

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- **Kaushambi district of Uttar Pradesh has been declared Corona free. This is the first district of the state where not a single person has the infection of coronavirus.**

## 'Soorarai Pottru', first Tamil film to release on OTT, joins the Oscars race

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- **Tamil film Soorarai Pottru, starring Suriya and directed by Sudha Kongara, has joined the Oscar race for this year in the Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Director and many other categories. Soorarai Pottru is based on the life of Captain Gopinath, who founded budget airline Air Deccan.** Suriya plays the lead role in the film, also starring Aparna Balamurli and Paresh Rawal. On Republic Day, the film's co-producer Rajsekar Pandian took to Twitter to announce the big news about *Soorarai Pottru* entering the Oscar race.

## "Udyog Manthan" being organized from Jan 4 to March 2

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- **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade is organized Udyog Manthan - a marathon of focused sector-specific webinars for promoting Quality and Productivity in Indian Industry.** Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal chaired the session.

## Lucknow metro becomes first to sanitise coaches using ultraviolet rays

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- **The Lucknow Metro has become the first metro in India to use ultraviolet (UV) rays to sanitise train coaches.** For this, the LMRC has procured UV sanitization apparatus from M/s FB TECH, an Indian firm in Jaipur, Rajasthan.
- The apparatus, which was certified by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in October 2020, **sanitizes the entire coach in just seven minutes.** However, in order to keep the train bacteria-free, the LMRC is sanitising each coach for 15 minutes.

## Pakistan's cultural capital Lahore has once again topped the list of world's most polluted cities

- **Pakistan's cultural capital Lahore has once again topped the list of world's most polluted cities.** “Lahore ranks the most polluted city in the world,” according to air pollution data released by the US Air Quality Index.
- According to the index, Lahore reported a particulate matter (PM) rating of 423. **Pakistan’s financial capital Karachi ranked at 7 on the AQI.** New Delhi came in second with a PM of 229, while Nepal’s capital Kathmandu ranked the third-worst city with a PM of 178.

## Indian Coast Guard celebrates its 45<sup>th</sup> Raising Day

- **Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is celebrating its 45<sup>th</sup> Raising Day on 01 February 2021.** The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) through its tireless pursuits of excellence has established itself as a reliable force that responds with alacrity to situations impinging on the Security of the Coastline, Safety of the Seafaring Community and Coastal Populace.
- **As the fourth largest Coast Guard in the world,** Indian Coast Guard has played a significant role in securing the Indian Coasts and enforcing regulations within the Maritime Zones of India.
- True to its motto “Vayam Rakshamah” meaning “We Protect”, the service has to its credit saving over 10,000 lives and **apprehending around 14,000 miscreants since inception in 1977.** On an average, the Coast Guard saves one precious life every second day at sea. **The current Director-General of Indian Coast Guard is Krishnaswamy Natarajan.**

## Expert committee to review proposal to ban 27 pesticides

- The government has **appointed an expert panel to review industry’s objections to the proposed ban on 27 widely used pesticides** which officials say are harmful to animals and humans.
- **“The committee, led by chairman TP Rajendran, former assistant director general of ICAR, is likely to submit its report in three months. His report will decide the fate of those 27 pesticides which the government wants to ban,”** said a senior agriculture ministry official, who did not wish to be identified. **These are part of the 66 contentious pesticides which are being reviewed for their toxicity.** In 2018, the government had already banned 18 of them. **D. V. Sadananda Gowda is serving as the Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers and representing the Bangalore North constituency in the Lok Sabha.**

## Road Transport and Highways Ministry and DRDO sign MoU for technical exchange on sustainable geo-hazard management

- **Road Transport and Highways Ministry and Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO signed** a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen **collaboration in the field of technical exchange and co-operation on sustainable geo-hazard management.** The MoU was signed by Secretary Ministry of Road and Transport Giridhar Aramane and Secretary DRDO Dr Satieesh Reddy.
- It has been agreed that both will **co-operate in the areas of mutual benefit including, conceptual planning of integrated avalanche and landslide protection schemes for all weather connectivity** in snow bound areas of the country. This initiative will ensure safety of road users on National Highways in the country and safeguard them from the adverse effects of landslides and other natural calamities.

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## IMPORTANT DAYS

### World Braille Day: 4 January

- **World Braille Day is observed on January 4 every year to mark the birth anniversary of Louis Braille, the inventor of Braille language. Born on January 4, 1809 in France, Braille is credited for developing Braille language for blind and visually impaired people.**
- **The first World Braille Day was celebrated on January 4 in 2019** after it got approval from the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) via a proclamation in November 2018.
- **World Braille Day Theme spreads awareness about Braille and other accessible forms of communication.** Everyone deserves the same accommodations, service, and right of ability.

### World war orphans day on 6<sup>th</sup> January

- **The World Day of War Orphans is observed on January 6 every year.** The day aims to raise awareness about children who have been orphaned due to wars. The objective of the day ensures to voice out the predicament of war orphans and highlight the emotional, social, and physical challenges children face while growing up.
- This special day enables the international community to recognize the sufferings and plights of orphans during world War. **This day is organised by French organisation, SOS Enfants en Detresses.**
- **Displaced children are a big part of IDPs they (International Displaced Persons) who are forced to leave everything - including their homes, places of work and possessions.** It is important that they don't suffer and die of hunger and disease.

### World Hindi Day 2021

- **World Hindi Day is celebrated every year on January 10.** Hindi is not only the country's most-spoken language, but it is the **third most-spoken language in the world with 615 million speakers after English, Mandarin, according to the UN.** Being one of the most popular languages in the world, there is a huge interest among students from across the world to pursue a career in Hindi language.

### Indian Armed Forces Veterans Day observed

- **Indian Armed Forces Veterans Day is being observed.** This day is celebrated on 14<sup>th</sup> of January every year to honour services rendered by veterans of the Army.
- This year is being celebrated as Swarnim Vijay Varsh. It marks 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 1971 Indo-Pak War. The Army Chief said, this **entire year will be celebrated as Swarnim Vijay Varsh to mark 1971 war victory.** He added that several events will be organised across the country.

### International Day of Education: 24 January

- **International Day of Education is an annual international observance day held on January 24** and is dedicated to education.
- On December 3, 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution **proclaiming January 24 as International Day of Education,** in celebration of the role of education for bringing global peace and sustainable development.

### International Day of Education 24 January

- **The right to education is enshrined in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.** The declaration calls for free and compulsory elementary education.
- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989,** goes further to stipulate that countries shall make higher education accessible to all. International Day of Education is an annual international observance day held on January 24 and is dedicated to education.
- **The third International Day of Education (January 24) was marked on Monday 25 January 2021 under the theme 'Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation'.** Now is the time to power education by stepping up collaboration and international solidarity to place education and lifelong learning at the centre of the recovery.

## International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust

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- **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** is an international memorial day on **27 January** commemorating the tragedy of the Holocaust that occurred during the Second World War. It commemorates the genocide that resulted in the deaths of **6 million Jews and 11 million others**, by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.
- The theme of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2021 is “Facing the Aftermath: Recovery and Reconstitution after the Holocaust”.

## National Tourism Day

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- On **25 January**, **National Tourism Day** is observed every year to raise awareness of the importance of tourism for the country's economy.
- This year, the theme of **National Tourism Day** is ‘**Dekho Apna Desh**’. Coronavirus pandemic has intensely affected the tourism sector due to the restrictions on travel. The Ministry of Tourism has been organizing seminars around the theme beginning from January 21 to February 22, 2021.

## National Voters' Day

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- The **National Voters' Day** has been celebrated on **January 25** every year since **2011**, all across the country to mark the foundation day of Election Commission of India, i.e. **25<sup>th</sup> January 1950**. **11<sup>th</sup> National Voters' Day (NVD)** celebrated on **25<sup>th</sup> January 2021**. Theme for this year's NVD is ‘**Making Our Voters Empowered, Vigilant, Safe and Informed**’.

## World Leprosy Day

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- **World Leprosy Day** is observed internationally every year on the **last Sunday of January** to increase the public awareness of Leprosy or Hansen's disease. This date was chosen by French humanitarian Raoul Follereau as a tribute to the life of Mahatma Gandhi who had compassion for people afflicted with leprosy.
- **World Leprosy Day 2021** theme is to “**Beat Leprosy, End Stigma and advocate for Mental Wellbeing.**”

## International Customs Day

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- **Annually held on January 26**, **International Customs Day (ICD)** recognizes the role of custom officials and agencies in maintaining border security. It focuses on the working conditions and challenges that customs officers face in their jobs.
- **2021 will witness the theme of “Customs bolstering recovery, renewal and resilience”** which will focus on the endeavours of customs to emerge from the pandemic crisis and help people.

## World Wetlands Day

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- **World Wetlands Day** is celebrated on the **second day of February** every year, though it was **not originally celebrated until 1997**. This day serves to recognize the influence and positive production that Wetlands have had on the world and in terms brings communities together for the benefit of Mother Nature.
  - This year's theme is ‘**Wetlands and Water**’. According to UNESCO, the particular theme has been adopted to highlight the “importance of wetlands as a source of freshwater” and encourage “action to restore them and stop their loss”.
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## QUESTIONS

- Which of the following countries will host first-ever trail and mountain running worlds in 2021?  
(a) Myanmar (b) Thailand (c) Japan (d) Malaysia
- Name the first woman who has been appointed as the chairperson of International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC), the policy advisory committee of the Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).  
(a) Margareta Thomson (b) Andriana Matthews (c) Magdalena Andersson (d) Istuti Kazaka
- The Rajaji Tiger Reserve is welcomed the first big cat from Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve in the first such relocation in \_\_\_\_\_ aimed at tiger population management.  
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Uttarakhand (c) Uttar Pradesh (d) Himachal Pradesh
- Which of the following central Asian countries signed a loan and guarantee agreements with three development banks to finance construction of the Central Asian nation's first solar photovoltaic power plant recently?  
(a) Turkmenistan (b) Tajikistan (c) Uzbekistan (d) Kazakhstan
- Which of the following states has been awarded with Digital India Awards 2020 for eGovernance for its Antyodaya Saral Project?  
(a) Haryana (b) Punjab (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Jharkhand
- Recently, US President Donald Trump presented the prestigious Legion of Merit to \_\_\_\_\_ for his leadership in elevating strategic partnership of the two countries and emergence of India as a global power.  
(a) Prime Minister Narendra Modi (b) President Ramnath Kovind  
(c) Home Minister Amit Shah (d) Chief Minister of Gujarat Vijay Rupani
- Who will become the first Indian Premier League (IPL) champion to be included in the IPL governing council?  
(a) Anil Kumble (b) Sunil Joshi (c) Rajesh Chauhan (d) Pragnan Ojha
- Recently, Union Minister for Road Transport Nitin Gadkari has said that construction of \_\_\_\_\_ Green Express Highways which is in progress will prove to be a game changer in the field of transportation and traveling.  
(a) 8 (b) 12 (c) 18 (d) 22
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will establish a Regional Academic Centre for Space at \_\_\_\_\_ to facilitate short and long term projects at the institute.  
(a) IIT-Bombay (b) IIT-Varanasi (c) IIT-Delhi (d) IIT-Madras
- India's first hot air balloon wildlife safari in a tiger reserve was launched in the world famous \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (b) Satpura Tiger Reserve  
(c) Pench Tiger Reserve (d) Panna Tiger Reserve
- The first country in the world to receive the Blue Flag Certification for 8 beaches in a single attempt is  
(a) USA (b) Russia (c) China (d) India
- Recently, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has extended the validity of vehicular documents such as driving licenses (DLs), registration certificates (RCs) and Permits till \_\_\_\_\_ in the light of need to prevent the spread of Covid-19.  
(a) 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 (b) 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 (c) 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021 (d) 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021

13. What is the name of the India's first pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, PCV inaugurated by Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan recently?  
(a) Pneumostat (b) Pneumopill (c) Pneumosil (d) Pneumolite
14. Recently, Indian and \_\_\_\_\_ Navy concluded the two-day naval passage exercise PASSEX in the South China Sea as part of efforts to boost maritime cooperation between the two countries.  
(a) Vietnamese (b) Indonesian (c) Malaysian (d) Singaporean
15. The much-awaited Tansen Music Festival began in:  
(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Rajasthan (c) Haryana (d) Madhya Pradesh
16. The world's largest radio telescope, the Five-hundred-metre Aperture Spherical Telescope or FAST has been installed in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Chile (b) Peru (c) China (d) Canada
17. Which of the following companies launched premium-grade Petrol (100 Octane) in the country?  
(a) Bharat Petroleum (b) Indian Oil (c) Hindustan Petroleum (d) Reliance Energy Limited
18. Which of the following states has given away state level Vikram, Eklavya, Vishwamitra and Life Time Achievement awards at the sports award ceremony?  
(a) Haryana (b) Madhya Pradesh (c) Uttar Pradesh (d) Maharashtra
19. Which of the following countries recently launched remote sensing satellite "Yaogan-33"?  
(a) Japan (b) South Korea (c) China (d) Thailand
20. Who among the following cricketers has been named as the ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade?  
(a) Mahendra Singh Dhoni (b) Kane Williamson  
(c) Jason Holder (d) Virat Kohli
21. Which of the following municipal corporations recently signed an MoU with UNDP India to co-create India's first Social Impact Bond (SIB)?  
(a) Pune (b) Pimpri Chinchwad (c) Kanpur (d) Shimla
22. Who has been recently nominated a member on the GAVI Board by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation?  
(a) Shri Narendra Modi (b) Shri Rajnath Singh  
(c) Shri Piyush Goyal (d) Dr. Harsh Vardhan
23. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of \_\_\_\_\_ Dedicated Freight Corridor through video conferencing.  
(a) Eastern (b) Western (c) Northern (d) Southern
24. Railway Minister Piyush Goyal said that the newly designed Vistadome tourist coach successfully completed \_\_\_\_\_ kilometre per hour during speed trial.  
(a) 120 (b) 150 (c) 180 (d) 200
25. Which of the following banks has unveiled a digital lending platform to enable prospective retail clients to get loans digitally through a paperless process and m-connect + app?  
(a) Punjab National Bank (b) Union Bank of India  
(c) Canara Bank (d) Bank of Baroda



26. Recently, Hexagon Capability Center India (HCCI), the largest product development unit of the technology major Hexagon AB has launched the nation's first Artificial Intelligence Community Centre, HexArt, in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Bengaluru (b) Hyderabad (c) Jaipur (d) Bhopal
27. Indian Space startup, Skyroot Aerospace, has proven the crucial propulsion technology of their maiden rocket \_\_\_\_\_ with the latest test-firing of an engine.  
(a) Vikram-1 (b) Vikram-5 (c) Virat-6 (d) Vinay-9
28. Recently, Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan, virtually inaugurated India's highest Meteorological Centre in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Leh (b) Manali (c) Tawang (d) Rangpo
29. Who has become the first indigenous inductee into the Australia's cricket Hall of Fame?  
(a) Tom Blundell (b) David Boon (c) Chris Mcdermott (d) Johnny Mullagh
30. Who among the following took charge as CBI's Chief Information Officer?  
(a) N.K. Pant (b) Bhaskar Rao (c) Vinay Sahasrabudhe (d) Ramesh Chandra Joshi
31. Recently, India's first pollinator park opened in:  
(a) Kolhapur (b) Udaipur (c) Guwahati (d) Haldwani
32. North East's first-ever specialised Ginger Processing Plant in \_\_\_\_\_ is being revived and is likely to become functional in the beginning of 2021.  
(a) Manipur (b) Mizoram (c) Meghalaya (d) Assam
33. Who among the following released the report – 'Action Agenda for an Atma Nirbhar Bharat' prepared by Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council, TIFAC in New Delhi?  
(a) Prime Minister Narendra Modi  
(b) Science and Technology Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan  
(c) Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman  
(d) Home Minister Amit Shah
34. President-elect Joe Biden nominated \_\_\_\_\_ to serve as the first female deputy defense secretary.  
(a) Andriana Jose (b) Kathleen Hicks (c) Prosper Heta (d) Catherine Johnson
35. Which of the following banks is set to appoint former economic affairs secretary Atanu Chakraborty as the next chairman of the bank?  
(a) ICICI Bank (b) Axis Bank (c) HDFC Bank (d) RBL Bank
36. Recently, Unicas, a joint venture between the financial services companies Cahsaa and United Multistate Credit Cooperative Society, announced the launch of the world's first physical branch of a cryptocurrency bank in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Bengaluru (b) Hyderabad (c) Jaipur (d) Bhopal
37. Name India's first indigenously designed missile system which can target fighter jets, cruise missiles, drones and other aerial assets.  
(a) Anant (b) Akash (c) Unnat (d) Prakash
38. Recently, Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO along with Indian Navy conducted the successful maiden test trial of \_\_\_\_\_ India's first indigenously designed and developed Air Dropped Container.  
(a) SAHAYAK-NG (b) SAHAYATA-UG (c) SANTOSH-JK (d) UNNAT-OL

39. Who has been recently knighted in Britain's traditional New Year Honours list after winning seven Formula One world titles?  
(a) Michael Schumacher (b) Valtteri Bottas (c) Lewis Hamilton (d) Charles Leclerc
40. Who has been recently crowned as Player of the Century at Globe Soccer Awards?  
(a) Luka Modric (b) Ronaldo (c) Lionel Messi (d) Cristiano Ronaldo
41. Which of the following states is related with "Kisan Fasal Rahat Yojana" a compensation scheme aimed at providing security cover to farmers in case of crop damage due to natural calamity?  
(a) Punjab (b) Haryana (c) Himachal Pradesh (d) Jharkhand
42. Which of the following states virtually launched a mobile application 'DigiNest to give people access to the state government's directory, which can be synced with a Smartphone?  
(a) Haryana (b) Punjab (c) Uttar Pradesh (d) Himachal Pradesh
43. Recently, Algeria's president signed the country's new constitution into law. Who is the current President of Algeria?  
(a) Abdelaziz Bouteflika (b) Abdelmadjid Tebboune  
(c) Ahmed Gaid Salah (d) Ahmed Ben Bella
44. National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) said transaction through Unified Payment Interface platform would continue to be free. NPCI was setup in:  
(a) 1998 (b) 2001 (c) 2005 (d) 2008
45. Which of the following releases report on Trends and Progress of Banking in India?  
(a) State Bank of India (b) SIDBI (c) Reserve Bank of India (d) NABARD
46. The first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in the country has been set up at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Rajkot (b) Gandhinagar (c) Jaipur (d) Lucknow
47. Recently, the central government set up a consortium of 10 national research institutions, which will collaborate for carrying out effective surveillance and monitoring of the genomic variations observed in the new SARS nCov-2 virus strain, recently identified from the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Germany (b) United Kingdom (c) Canada (d) France
48. Who has been recently given a one-year extension as the Secretary, Department of Space?  
(a) Sivan K (b) Natrajan H (c) Ravindran Juneja (d) Avinash Chandra
49. Name the first recipient of the iconic medal which is named after former Australian skipper and cricket Johnny Mullagh.  
(a) Virat Kohli (b) Jasprit Bumrah (c) Ajinkya Rahane (d) Ravindra Jadeja
50. World Braille Day is celebrated every year on:  
(a) 1<sup>st</sup> January (b) 2<sup>nd</sup> January (c) 4<sup>th</sup> January (d) 6<sup>th</sup> January
51. Which of the following Indian states signed a contract to set up the first ethanol plant in country under the Public-private partnership (PPP) model?  
(a) Haryana (b) Gujarat (c) Chhattisgarh (d) Jharkhand
52. Who will be new Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court?  
(a) Justice Sanjib Banerjee (b) Kumari Justice Hima Kohli  
(c) Dr. Justice S. Muralidhar (d) Justice Pankaj Mithal

53. Who has become the first person to head Indian Army's human rights cell?  
(a) Amit Rathore (b) Deepak Razdan (c) Gautam Chauhan (d) Ravindran Murlidhar
54. Recently, who launched the Global Pravasi Rishta portal and mobile App, to connect with Indian Diaspora across the world?  
(a) Amit Shah (b) Rajnath Singh (c) V. Muraleedharan (d) Nirmla Sitharaman
55. India is beginning its \_\_\_\_\_ year tenure as a Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council.  
(a) One (b) Two (c) Three (d) Five
56. Recently, Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has recognised four tea producing sites spanning across three countries as the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). Which of the following countries is not among the three?  
(a) China (b) India (c) Japan (d) Korea
57. The Defence Research and Development Organisation is an agency under the Department of Defence Research and Development in Ministry of Defence of the Government of India headquartered in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Delhi (b) Pune (c) Bhopal (d) Hyderabad
58. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide a USD 231-million loan to augment electricity generation capacity in \_\_\_\_\_ through construction of a 120-megawatt (MW) hydroelectric power plant.  
(a) Assam (b) Nagaland  
(c) Arunachal Pradesh (d) Haryana
59. Recently, A 'monolith', the likes of which have appeared and vanished in different parts of the world since November, has now emerged in a garden in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Ahmedabad city, Gujarat (b) Pune city, Maharashtra  
(c) Lucknow city, Uttar Pradesh (d) Shimla city, Himachal Pradesh
60. Recently, Colonel Narendra 'Bull' Kumar passed away Hospital in New Delhi. He was a:  
(a) Footballer (b) Mountaineer (c) Para Glider (d) Cricketer
61. Recently, which of the following countries has changed one word in its national anthem to reflect what its Prime Minister called "the spirit of unity" and the country's indigenous population?  
(a) New Zealand (b) Australia (c) France (d) Canada
62. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the \_\_\_\_\_ Natural Gas Pipeline to the nation through video conferencing.  
(a) Mumbai-Pune (b) Kochi – Mangaluru (c) Kolkata-Haldia (d) Lucknow-Kanpur
63. Recently, The government announced that it would open three missions after a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared the proposal from the Ministry of External Affairs. Which is not among three missions?  
(a) Estonia (b) Niger (c) Dominican Republic (d) Paraguay
64. Which of the following companies has recently opened the world's largest Supercharger station in China's Shanghai?  
(a) Samsung (b) Tesla (c) Hitachi (d) Huawei
65. According to BFSI Movers and Shakers 2020 report by Wizikey, which of the following banks has emerged as the top player among the 100 Banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) companies in the country?  
(a) Axis Bank (b) HDFC Bank (c) ICICI Bank (d) Yes Bank

66. China's first Mars exploration mission \_\_\_\_\_ travelled more than 400 million km and is expected to enter Mars orbit next month.  
(a) Tianwen-1 (b) Sianwen-2 (c) Diater-5 (d) Alkoz-9
67. Who among the following inaugurated the Virtual Agri-hackathon 2020 in New Delhi?  
(a) Shri Narendra Modi (b) Shri Rajnath Singh  
(c) Shri Narendra Singh Tomar (d) Smt Nirmala Sitharaman
68. Recently, Leon Mendonca becomes India's \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) India's 67<sup>th</sup> Grandmaster (b) India's youngest footballer  
(c) India's youngest person to attain graduate degree (d) India's youngest Doctor
69. World War Orphans Day is observed on:  
(a) 1<sup>st</sup> January (b) 2<sup>nd</sup> January (c) 4<sup>th</sup> January (d) 6<sup>th</sup> January
70. Who has been recently conferred with Tansen Samman at the World Music Festival in Gwalior?  
(a) Pandit Sumit Vats (b) Pandit Anupam Bhaduria  
(c) Pandit Satish Vyas (d) Pandit Sudhanshu Mukherjee
71. The 51<sup>st</sup> International Film Festival of India (IFFI) will open with the Indian premiere of the movie \_\_\_\_\_ by Thomas Vinterberg.  
(a) Another Round (b) The Parasite (c) Malory (d) The Summer
72. Which of the following countries has successfully cultured the new coronavirus strain, which originated in the U.K.?  
(a) China (b) USA (c) India (d) Sri Lanka
73. Recently, Home Minister Amit Shah released the inaugural issue of the National Police \_\_\_\_\_ Journal in New Delhi.  
(a) K-9 (b) I-7 (c) U-9 (d) E-3
74. Which of the following has recently constructed a composite Digital Payments Index (DPI) to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country?  
(a) NABARD (b) SIDBI  
(c) Reserve Bank of India (d) Ministry of Finance
75. National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has announced that RuPay has partnered with \_\_\_\_\_ to launch an innovative payment solution for Indian merchants – RuPay PoS in association with PayNearby.  
(a) Yes Bank (b) RBL Bank (c) HDFC Bank (d) ICICI Bank
76. Who among the following takes over the reins of SAIL as its first woman chairperson?  
(a) Deeksha Patel (b) Soma Mondal (c) Vineeta Bhaskar (d) Sanghamitra Mahajan
77. Who has been appointed as the new Chairman & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Railway Board (Ministry of Railways) recently?  
(a) Anil Kumar Mathur (b) Abhay Chandra (c) Deepak Mahajan (d) Suneet Sharma
78. Recently, who became the first person to hit the 250 million mark on Instagram?  
(a) Lionel Messi (b) Cristiano Ronaldo (c) Brad Pitt (d) Michael Jordan



79. Recently who was named the Most Valuable Cricketer of the Year in the PCB awards following his stellar performances during the season?  
(a) Yasir Shah (b) Rizvan Ahmed (c) Babar Azam (d) Imam Ul Haq
80. Which of the following countries has recently deployed a fleet of underwater drones called Sea Wing (Haiyi) glider in the Indian Ocean?  
(a) Japan (b) South Korea (c) Vietnam (d) China
81. Recently, the first hilltop Buddhist monastery of the Gangetic Valley has been found in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Lakhisarai district of Bihar (b) Buxor district of Bihar  
(c) Prayagraj district of Uttar Pradesh (d) Chandauli district of Uttar Pradesh
82. Recently, Justice S Muralidhar took oath as the Chief Justice of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Odisha High Court (b) Madhya Pradesh High Court  
(c) Bihar High Court (d) Kerala High Court
83. World's first and India's only hospital train \_\_\_\_\_ is currently stationed in Badarpur, Assam.  
(a) 'Lifeline Express' (b) 'Lifeprovider Express' (c) 'Longlife Express' (d) 'Life Express'
84. Which of the following Asian countries will be the co-chair of the IUCN-supported Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP) for three years?  
(a) Bangladesh (b) India (c) China (d) Thailand
85. Who among the following will head 51<sup>st</sup> IFFI's International Jury?  
(a) Mario Conty (b) Anthonie Hilton (c) Pablo Cesar (d) Nicholas Fir
86. Recently, Migrant workers' Cell has been created by \_\_\_\_\_ Municipal Corporation for the first time in the Country under the 'National Urban Livelihood Mission Scheme'.  
(a) Surat (b) Pune (c) Bhubaneswar (d) Bhopal
87. Which of the following state run banks recently announced the launch of banking services on messaging platform Whatsapp?  
(a) Punjab National Bank (b) State Bank of India (c) Bank of Baroda (d) Union Bank of India
88. The National Atomic Timescale generates Indian Standard Time with an accuracy of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) 0.8 nanosecond (b) 2.8 nanosecond (c) 3.4 nanosecond (d) 6.6 nanosecond
89. According to the Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual list of top donations, who made the single-largest charitable contribution in 2020?  
(a) Warren Buffett (b) Azim Premji (c) Mark Zuckerberg (d) Jeff Bezos
90. Every year Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a celebratory day observed on \_\_\_\_\_ by the Republic of India to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India.  
(a) 6<sup>th</sup> January (b) 9<sup>th</sup> January (c) 12<sup>th</sup> January (d) 15<sup>th</sup> January
91. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the world's first Double Stack Long Haul 1.5 Kilometer long Container Train hauled by electric traction from \_\_\_\_\_ during the event.  
(a) New Ateli -New Kishangarh (b) Rewari- Bhopal  
(c) Habibganj- Patna Sahib (d) Ankaleshwar-Surat

92. Which of the following has become the first Urban Cooperative Bank (UCB) in India to transition to a Small Finance Bank under the voluntary transition scheme?  
(a) Utkarsh Small Finance Bank (b) Shivalik Small Finance Bank  
(c) Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (d) Fincare Small Finance Bank
93. Which of the following states introduced 'Launch Pad Scheme' being started for boys and girls coming out of child care institutions and having completed 18 years of age?  
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Uttar Pradesh  
(c) Karnataka (d) Maharashtra
94. India sets up high-level group for South Asia energy security, who is the head of the high-level group?  
(a) Adavaita Rana (b) Mahendra Singh Nagar  
(c) Ram Vinay Shahi (d) Vibhanshu Patel
95. Recently, the first batch of over \_\_\_\_\_ women disaster combatants and rescuers has been inducted into the country's federal calamity force NDRF.  
(a) 40 (b) 50 (c) 100 (d) 250
96. Recently, India's top food regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) reduced Trans fat levels in food from 5% to \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) 4.5% (b) 4% (c) 3% (d) 2%
97. Which of the following countries is not among the five new countries which formally joined the U.N. Security Council recently?  
(a) Mexico (b) Ireland (c) Thailand (d) Kenya
98. A committee set up under the chairmanship of former union secretary \_\_\_\_\_ to fix ceiling rates under a duty refund scheme - RoDTEP - for exporters is expected to submit the complete report.  
(a) G K Pillai (b) H K Khan (c) J L Hingloo (d) M S Singh
99. Which of the following declared Bird flu as a State disaster as thousands of domestic birds were found to be infected by H5N8 virus?  
(a) Karnataka (b) Kerala (c) Tamil Nadu (d) Andhra Pradesh
100. Recently, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and Union Minister for Textiles and Women & Child Development Smriti Zubin Irani jointly launched the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Toycathon 2021 (b) Soyathan 2021  
(c) Mocathan 2020 (d) Cartcathon 2021
101. Which of the following have become the first groups of states to have completed the One Nation, One Ration Card Reforms, Ease of Doing Business Reforms and Urban Local Bodies Reforms?  
(a) Bihar and Jharkhand (b) Odisha and Andhra Pradesh  
(c) Gujarat and Maharashtra (d) Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh
102. IRDAI is set to introduce standard home insurance policy \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Bharat Griha Raksha (b) Indian Home Protection  
(c) Bharat Suraksha (d) Indian Safety

103. Recently, The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between \_\_\_\_\_ on a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to ‘Specified Skilled Worker’.
- (a) Indian and Japan (b) Indian and China  
(c) Indian and Thailand (d) Indian and Cambodia
104. Who launched a Freight Business Development Portal as one stop solution for all the needs of freight customers?
- (a) Prime Minister Narendra Modi (b) Railway Minister Piyush Goyal  
(c) Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (d) Home Minister Amit Shah
105. Which of the following has become home to world’s first undersea traffic circle recently?
- (a) Egypt (b) Faroe Islands (c) Panama (d) Monaco
106. Recently, Micro-finance institutions have made a pitch for issuance of tax-free social bonds for five years by \_\_\_\_\_ to exclusively provide debt to the sector operating in semi urban, rural areas or aspirational districts.
- (a) SIDBI/NABARD (b) FCI/NABARD  
(c) RBI/Ministry of Finance (d) SBI/RBI
107. A new approach for surveying African elephants using satellite imagery and artificial intelligence (AI) was developed by an international team of researchers led by \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) University of Oxford (b) University of Cambridge  
(c) University of Texas (d) University of Chicago
108. Which of the following countries builds world’s largest seed bank to boost food security?
- (a) India (b) China (c) New Zealand (d) Australia
109. Who becomes the first female match official in a men’s Test match when she takes up the fourth umpire’s role in the third Test between India and Australia?
- (a) Helen Glas (b) Miranda Hockoi (c) Claire Polosak (d) Mirale Thomas
110. Which of the following cricket teams grabbed the number one position in the ICC Test rankings for the first time in history?
- (a) England (b) New Zealand (c) West Indies (d) Pakistan
111. Name the world’s youngest author who has become the first Indian child to sign a deal with the Inevitable for her four upcoming books.
- (a) Alolika Bnnerjee (b) Abhijita Gupta (c) Shubhani Rawat (d) Shriyangi Mehta
112. India’s first indoor ski park will come up at:
- (a) Champawat (b) Kufri (c) Tawang (d) Manali
113. Which of the following banks has announced an alliance with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur and FIRST (Foundation for Innovation & Research in Science & Technology) to jointly establish the IIT Kanpur Innovation Centre at the IIT campus?
- (a) State Bank of India (b) Union Bank of India (c) Union Bank of India (d) Punjab National Bank
114. According to Assocham, India’s economy is showing decisive signs of a \_\_\_\_\_ recovery in 2021 with the return of consumer confidence, robust financial markets, an uptick in manufacturing and exporters braving it out in the global market with never-say-die spirit.
- (a) ‘V-shaped’ (b) ‘U-shaped’ (c) ‘Y-shaped’ (d) ‘S-shaped’

115. Which of the following countries is related with “25<sup>th</sup> Amendment” which was ratified in 1967, and created a legal mechanism for designating a head of state when the president is disabled or dead?  
(a) Russia (b) Canada (c) USA (d) France
116. The World’s largest repatriation exercise \_\_\_\_\_ have been brought back more than 44.7 lakh people since May 2020.  
(a) Vande Bharat Mission (b) Naman Bharat Mission  
(c) Namaste Bharat (d) Welcome Back to India
117. Which of the following countries will soon be a part of the United Nations (UN) mandated international disaster rescue operations as the country’s federal contingency force, NDRF, is expected to obtain a globally recognised standardization?  
(a) Bangladesh (b) India (c) Australia (d) Japan
118. Indian Railways has achieved a landmark to enhance the maximum speed to 130 kilometres per hour for 1,280 km length out of 1,612 Km in Golden Quadrilateral - Golden Diagonal route.  
(a) South Central Railway zone (b) North East Frontier Railway zone  
(c) Western Railway zone (d) North East Railway zone
119. The World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting for 2021 will be held in:  
(a) Taiwan (b) Singapore (c) Thailand (d) Malaysia
120. The famous “Crystal Award” is associated with:  
(a) World Bank (b) NASA  
(c) World Economic Forum (d) IMF
121. Name Indian cricket team coach who is all set to come up with his first-ever book in which the former player will share the never-before-revealed anecdotes and insights of his life in cricket.  
(a) Sunil Gavaskar (b) Anil Kumble (c) Ravi Shastri (d) Mohinder Amarnath
122. Which of the following states launched the website www.cosfom.mn.gov.in for the Community-based Sustainable Forest Management for Water Resource Conservation recently?  
(a) Mizoram (b) Nagaland (c) Manipur (d) Tripura
123. Recently, Union Minister for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan dedicated the new coastal research vehicle \_\_\_\_\_ to the nation at Chennai port.  
(a) ‘Sagar Anveshika’ (b) ‘Sagar Anushka’ (c) ‘Sagar Taruna’ (d) ‘Sagar Videshika’
124. Recently, India’s largest fuel retailer Indian Oil has now teamed up with \_\_\_\_\_, India’s largest lender, to launch the \_\_\_\_\_ Indian Oil Co-branded RuPay Debit Card.  
(a) PNB (b) SBI (c) Union Bank of India (d) Canara Bank
125. The Centre has decided to form a committee under \_\_\_\_\_ to find a solution to issues associated with preservation of Ladakh’s land, culture and language apart from demands from the region to be included under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.  
(a) Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy  
(b) Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai  
(c) Minister of Home Amit Shah  
(d) Prime Minister Narendra Modi



126. Recently, State-run \_\_\_\_\_ has signed an agreement with the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) for assistance in setting up renewable energy (RE) projects.  
(a) NTPC (b) NHPC (c) BHEL (d) SAIL
127. NCAVES India Forum 2021 is being organised by the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation  
(b) Ministry of Economic Affairs  
(c) Ministry of Home Affairs  
(d) Ministry of Science & Technology
128. Name the Indian-American who has taken over as the first Chief Information Officer of the US Army, after the Pentagon created the position in July 2020?  
(a) Vimal Sachan (b) Dr Raj Iyer  
(c) Dr Uday Veer Rajgotra (d) Dr Bhushan Malik
129. Who among the following launched Government's Digital Calender and Diary App in New Delhi?  
(a) Prakash Javadekar (b) Narendra Modi  
(c) Rajnath Singh (d) Amit Shah
130. Recently, Eugene Rhuggenaath was conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award. He is the current Prime Minister of:  
(a) Fiji (b) Curacao (c) Trinidad & Tobago (d) Suriname
131. Who will command an all-women pilot team of Air India which will fly over the North Pole on the world's longest air route as the carrier's first non-stop service between San Francisco and Bengaluru?  
(a) Captain Shivani Manhas (b) Captain Papagari Thanmai  
(c) Captain Akansha Sonaware (d) Captain Zoya Aggarwal
132. Who among the following overtook Amazon boss Jeff Bezos to become the world's wealthiest person?  
(a) Warren Buffett (b) Elon Musk (c) Mark Zuckerberg (d) Bill Gates
133. During the inaugural session of 16<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas who was the Chief Guest?  
(a) Aniruddh Jagganath (b) Chandrikapersad Santokhi  
(c) Rahul Sharma (d) Rishi Sunak
134. Who has been appointed as senior director for Technology and National Security in United States?  
(a) Vivek Murthi (b) Tanuj Raizada  
(c) Deepak Soani (d) Tarun Chhabra
135. Recently, The National Internet Exchange of India, NIXI has announced that it will offer a free Internationalized Domain Name, IDN in any of the preferred \_\_\_\_\_ official Indian language along with every IN domain booked by the registrant.  
(a) 12 (b) 16 (c) 22 (d) 24
136. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up an academic advisory council with former deputy governor \_\_\_\_\_ as the chairperson to advise the full-time director of the central bank's College of Supervisors (CoS).  
(a) Usha Thorat (b) H.R.Khan (c) N S Vishwanathan (d) Viral V Acharya
137. Which of the following countries will chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee of UNSC in 2022?  
(a) Australia (b) India (c) New Zealand (d) Kenya

138. A six-year study conducted by The Nature and Butterfly Society (TNBS) has identified Siruvani hills in \_\_\_\_\_ as a butterfly super-hotspot.  
(a) Coimbatore district (b) Guntur district (c) Thissur District (d) Wayanad district
139. Recently, the Cherry Blossom Mao Festival was held in:  
(a) Sikkim (b) Manipur (c) Mizoram (d) Nagaland
140. Name the Indian-American who has been appointed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas to its Houston branch's board of directors.  
(a) Aniket Bharadwaj (b) Rishabh Maheshwari  
(c) Bhavesh V Patel (d) Anoop Chandra Bajaj
141. Home Minister Amit Shah launched the 'Single Window Clearance System', an online platform to obtain clearances for smooth operationalisation of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Coal mines (b) Gold mines (c) Copper mines (d) Mica mines
142. Who among the following will take sole charge as President of COP26 – the United Nations climate summit scheduled for Glasgow, Scotland?  
(a) Mahesh Jain (b) Rishi Sunak (c) Alok Sharma (d) Deepak Mahajan
143. National Youth Festival is being held to commemorate the birth anniversary of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Swami Vivekananda (b) Major Dhyanchand  
(c) Sachin Tendulkar (d) Swami Dayananad Saraswati
144. A High Level Committee, headed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been constituted to commemorate the \_\_\_\_\_ birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in a befitting manner.  
(a) 100<sup>th</sup> (b) 125<sup>th</sup> (c) 130<sup>th</sup> (d) 150<sup>th</sup>
145. Who among the following addressed the National Youth Parliament Festival – 2021?  
(a) Prime Minister Narendra Modi (b) President Ramnath Kovind  
(c) Vice President Venkaih Naidu (d) Home Minister Amit Shah
146. The Embassy of Israel in India has appointed \_\_\_\_\_ as Honorary Consul in the region with jurisdiction over the States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim.  
(a) Joyshree Das Verma (b) C Rumona Devi (c) Anamika Ray (d) Anjali Zakaria
147. Name the famous personality who has been permanently suspended from social network app Twitter due to the risk of further incitement of violence.  
(a) Leonardo Di Caprio (b) Emma Wattson (c) Donald Trump (d) Mike Pence
148. Recently, The Biden-Harris transition team announced the appointment of Indian American \_\_\_\_\_ to the role of Senior Director for South Asia at the National Security Council.  
(a) Sumona Guha (b) Meenakshi Guha (c) Shivangi Mohapatra (d) Aditi Kwatra
149. India's first toy cluster to come up in Bhanapur village of Koppal district in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Andhra Pradesh (b) Telangana (c) Tamil Nadu (d) Karnataka
150. Who has become the first Indian celebrity to get a vaccination against the deadly coronavirus?  
(a) Sushmita Sen (b) Shilpa Shirodkar (c) Dia Mirza (d) Urmila Matondkar

151. Which of the following is India's first cheetah sanctuary?  
(a) Nagarhole National Park (b) Kaziranga National Park  
(c) Kuno-Palpur wildlife sanctuary (d) Hemis National Park
152. What is the name of the Startup India International Summit?  
(a) Shurutat (b) Prarambh (c) Ready (d) Innovation
153. Indian Navy is coordinated the second edition of largest coastal defence exercise \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Sea Vigil-88 (b) Sea Vigil-21 (c) Ocean Search-7 (d) Sea Search-09
154. At present, India has a network of \_\_\_\_\_ Protected Areas in the country covering about five per cent of the total geographic area of the country.  
(a) 298 (b) 399 (c) 657 (d) 903
155. Name the eco-friendly, non-toxic paint which was developed by Khadi and Village Industries Commission.  
(a) Khadi Prakritik Paint (b) Khadi Natural Paint  
(c) Natural Khadi Paint (d) Prakritik Eco friendly Paint
156. Recently, the Centre has merged Jammu and Kashmir cadre for all India Services Viz; IAS, IPS and IFS officers with that of \_\_\_\_\_, also called the Union Territory cadre, through an ordinance.  
(a) Punjab (b) AGMUT (c) Haryana (d) Lakshadweep
157. The country of focus at the 51<sup>st</sup> International Film Festival of India (IFFI) starting at Goa on January 16 is  
(a) Bangladesh (b) Nepal (c) Sri Lanka (d) Malaysia
158. According to Digital Evolution Scorecard 2020 developed by Tufts University's Fletcher School in partnership with Mastercard, India ranks \_\_\_\_\_ in 'Break Out Economies'.  
(a) 1<sup>st</sup> (b) 2<sup>nd</sup> (c) 4<sup>th</sup> (d) 7<sup>th</sup>
159. In India, Financial Stability Report (FSR) is released by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Reserve Bank of India (b) NITI Aayog (c) Finance Ministry (d) NABARD
160. World Hindi Day is celebrated every year on \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) January 8 (b) January 9 (c) January 10 (d) January 12
161. In Leh, the first ever Ice climbing festival was celebrated in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Nubra valley (b) Dabyan Valley (c) Aru Valley (d) Gurez Valley
162. Recently, The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to introduce the Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) system for all payment transactions of value \_\_\_\_\_ and above undertaken by entities (non-individuals) using the Reserve Bank-run Centralised Payment Systems with effect from April 1.  
(a) Rs 10 crore (b) Rs 25 crore (c) Rs 50 crore (d) Rs 100 crore
163. Recently, The United States has designated \_\_\_\_\_ as a "state sponsor of terrorism".  
(a) Cuba (b) Mexico (c) Belgium (d) Somalia
164. India decided to set up \_\_\_\_\_ facility for academic collaboration with the Arab World in a step that will have far reaching impact on people to people contacts between Delhi and its extended neighbours.  
(a) one million dollar (b) five million dollar (c) ten million dollar (d) twenty million dollar

165. The French-led One Planet Summit, backed by the United Nations and the World Bank, saw more than 50 nations support a plan to create protected areas covering \_\_\_\_\_ of global lands and oceans.  
(a) 10% (b) 15% (c) 20% (d) 30%
166. Recently, FSS (Financial Software and Systems), a leading payment processor and provider of integrated payment products, has partnered with \_\_\_\_\_ to promote financial inclusion among underserved and unbanked segments.  
(a) India Post Payments Bank (b) State Bank of India  
(c) Union Bank of India (d) Jio Payments Bank
167. As per the ‘Hurun Global 500’ report, how many private Indian firms have made it to the list of 500 most valuable companies across the world?  
(a) 5 (b) 7 (c) 11 (d) 15
168. According to the latest report by the Henley Passport Index, which country tops the list of being the most powerful passport in the world for the year 2021?  
(a) China (b) USA (c) Australia (d) Japan
169. Recently, bug experts blamed the dwindling populations on climate change, herbicides, along with changes in how we use land. Owing to such changes, Earth is losing \_\_\_\_\_ of insects ever year.  
(a) 0.5 to 0.75% (b) 1 to 2 % (c) 1.5 to 3% (d) 2.5 to 5%
170. “Kayakalp Awards” are awarded in the field on:  
(a) Film & Theatre (b) Finance  
(c) Hygiene & Sanitation (d) Sports
171. Which of the following Indian states inaugurated the ‘Fire Park’ a first of its kind initiative in the country to bring awareness on fire safety measures?  
(a) Jharkhand (b) Odisha (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Tamil Nadu
172. The Health and Family Welfare Ministry has set up a technical expert group to examine the adverse findings from the National Family Health Survey-5. The committee is chaired by:  
(a) Anita Madan (b) Sharmishtha Mukherjee  
(c) Priya Sudan (d) Preeti Pant
173. The new Foreign Trade Policy-FTP will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 for a period of \_\_\_\_\_ years.  
(a) Two (b) Three (c) Five (d) Ten
174. Recently, Donald Trump has become the \_\_\_\_\_ US president to be impeached twice.  
(a) First (b) Second (c) Fifth (d) Seventh
175. Which of the following countries Prime Minister Juri Ratas resigned over corruption scandal in his party?  
(a) Lithuania (b) Latvia (c) Estonia (d) Ireland
176. Which of the following Indian companies is developing a container terminal at the strategically coveted Colombo Port?  
(a) Adani Group (b) Reliance Group (c) Godrej Group (d) JSW Group
177. Which of the following refineries has won the first prize under the 30<sup>th</sup> National Energy Conservation Awards-2020 in the “Petroleum Refinery Sector”?  
(a) Jamnagar Refinery (b) Paradip Refinery (c) Mangalore Refinery (d) Kochi Refinery



178. Recently, A first of its kind genome sequencing laboratory is being launched at the \_\_\_\_\_ for testing samples of all travellers arriving into the country who test positive for Coronavirus disease (Covid-19).  
(a) New Delhi international airport (b) Indore international airport  
(c) Lucknow international airport (d) Mumbai international airport
179. Which of the following states took home Janaagraha's Best State awards recently?  
(a) Haryana (b) Rajasthan (c) Odisha (d) Madhya Pradesh
180. Which of the following banks has announced its partnership with Aditya Birla Wellness Private Limited?  
(a) Yes Bank (b) HDFC Bank (c) RBL Bank (d) IDFC First Bank
181. Recently, a major-rank Indian Army officer, Anoop Mishra has indigenously developed the world's first universal bulletproof jacket \_\_\_\_\_ which can be used by both male and female combatants.  
(a) 'Shakti' (b) 'Suyogya' (c) 'Power' (d) 'Samridhi'
182. Indian Armed Forces Veterans Day is being observed every year on:  
(a) 4<sup>th</sup> January (b) 8<sup>th</sup> January (c) 11<sup>th</sup> January (d) 14<sup>th</sup> January
183. National Informatics Centre and Central Board of Secondary Education, CBSE jointly launched \_\_\_\_\_ Software to provide a total engineering solution for students and Faculty of Engineering Graphics Curriculum.  
(a) CollabCAD (b) MollabNAC (c) CollanFAD (d) KollarKLO
184. Recently, Archaeologists have discovered the world's oldest known cave art — a life-sized picture of a wild pig that was painted at least 45,500 years ago in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Malaysia (b) Indonesia (c) South Korea (d) Thailand
185. Who among the following has not joined the 2021 Global Board of Directors of US India Business Council (USIBC) as vice chairs?  
(a) Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (b) Aditya Puri  
(c) Milind Pant (d) Edward Knight
186. Which of the following banks has provided a major relief to Maharashtra farmers under its loan settlement schemes "Rin Samadhan Yojna"?  
(a) Punjab National Bank (b) State Bank of India (c) Union Bank of India (d) Canara Bank
187. Recently, PayPal Holding Inc has become the first foreign operator with 100% control of a payment platform in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Japan (b) China (c) South Korea (d) USA
188. In 2021, Climate activist Greta Thunberg is to feature on a set of stamps issued by \_\_\_\_\_ postal service.  
(a) Iceland's (b) Sweden's (c) Netherland's (d) Norway's
189. The 19<sup>th</sup> Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF) was inaugurated on 16<sup>th</sup> January. The tribute section of the festival was dedicated to the legendary filmmaker \_\_\_\_\_ to commemorate his birth centenary.  
(a) Satyajit Ray (b) Basu Chatterjee (c) Bimal Roy (d) Guru Dutt
190. The Union Cabinet approved a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on scientific and technical cooperation between the Ministry of Earth Sciences and the National Centre of Meteorology of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Saudi Arabia (b) Mexico (c) UAE (d) Canada

191. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a working group on digital lending — including online platforms and mobile apps — to study all aspects of digital lending activities in the regulated financial sector as well as by unregulated players. The Chairperson of this working group is
- (a) Ajay Kumar Choudhary (b) S.P. Vasudevan  
(c) Jayant Kumar Dash (d) Manoranjan Mishra
192. Recently, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar inaugurated air taxi services from Chandigarh to \_\_\_\_\_ from Chandigarh Airport under UDAN scheme of the central government.
- (a) Hisar (b) Bhopal  
(c) New Delhi (d) Darjeeling
193. The combined market capitalisation of all listed companies in India has crossed the country's \_\_\_\_\_ for the first time in more than 10 years.
- (a) NNP (b) GDP (c) GNP (d) NPP
194. Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC), valued at Rs 4,633 crore, is set to hit the market with its initial public offer (IPO). The headquarters of IRFC is:
- (a) Mumbai (b) Bhopal (c) Vadodara (d) New Delhi
195. Which of the following countries has unveiled a new submarine-launched ballistic missile described as the world's most powerful weapon by its country media?
- (a) South Korea (b) North Korea (c) Thailand (d) China
196. The UN Human Rights Council elected \_\_\_\_\_ ambassador as its president in 2021, following an unprecedented secret ballot after a diplomatic stand-off blocked the usual consensus decision.
- (a) Mexico's (b) Fiji's (c) Canada's (d) Maldives's
197. In a first for India, the local administration in \_\_\_\_\_ has started issuing ID cards to people from the third gender to help them avail the benefits of the state government's welfare schemes.
- (a) Indore (b) Bhopal (c) Lucknow (d) Chandigarh
198. According to a report by the United Nations, India has the largest diaspora population in the world with \_\_\_\_\_ people from the country living outside their homeland in 2020.
- (a) 10 million (b) 18 million (c) 27 million (d) 45 million
199. Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda virtually received SKOCH Challenger Award conferred to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Effective Leading (b) e-Governance  
(c) Planning Implementation (d) Program Leading
200. International Day of Education is an annual international observance day held on \_\_\_\_\_ and is dedicated to education.
- (a) January 11 (b) January 14 (c) January 18 (d) January 24
201. India's first Labour Movement Museum, showcasing the history of world labour movement, will be launched in \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Karnataka (b) West Bengal (c) Kerala (d) Puducherry
202. India's first railway station with a Green Building Certification is
- (a) Guntur Station (b) Kevadiya station  
(c) Navsari station (d) Shimla station

203. Recently, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled India's first indigenously designed and developed Driverless Metro Car at the BEML manufacturing facility in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) New Delhi (b) Chennai  
(c) Pune (d) Bengaluru
204. Which among the following recently released "Adaptation Gap Report 2020"?  
(a) UNDP (c) IMF  
(b) Greenpeace International (d) UNEP
205. Recently, The first foreign funded project Ekuveni synthetic running track in \_\_\_\_\_ in 2021 that was backed by India was inaugurated.  
(a) Mauritius (b) Maldives (c) Sri Lanka (d) Seychelles
206. Yoweri Museveni has won a sixth term as President, extending his 35-year rule after an election in which of the following countries?  
(a) Nigeria (b) Liberia (c) Uganda (d) The Gambia
207. U.S. President-elect Joe Biden has been sworn in as the \_\_\_\_\_ President of the U.S.  
(a) 42<sup>nd</sup> (b) 45<sup>th</sup> (c) 46<sup>th</sup> (d) 49<sup>th</sup>
208. Which of the following banks has tied up with Niyto, a new age fintech, to issue prepaid cards to workers of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)?  
(a) HDFC Bank (b) ICICI Bank  
(c) Axis Bank (d) RBL Bank
209. Recently, Union Minister for Earth Sciences Dr Harsh Vardhan virtually inaugurated first Doppler Weather Radar (DWR) installed at \_\_\_\_\_ in Himachal Pradesh on the occasion of 146<sup>th</sup> India Meteorological Department Foundation Day.  
(a) Chamba (b) Manali (c) Kufri (d) Dalhousie
210. Recently, Pakistan felicitated a team of 10 Nepali climbers for making history by becoming the first to scale in winter the world's second highest mountain \_\_\_\_\_ considered as the world's most dangerous and challenging peak.  
(a) Trishul (b) K2 (c) Kangchenjunga (d) Lhotse
211. Who has become the first Indian to get Covid-19 Vaccine in Milestone Moment?  
(a) Anant Mishra (b) Manish Kumar (c) Diwakar Bannerjee (d) Hemant Vishwas
212. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry launched month-long mass awareness campaign \_\_\_\_\_ to spread awareness about green and clean energy.  
(a) 'SAKSHAM' (b) 'SAMARTH' (c) 'SARTHAK' (d) 'SAMARPAN'
213. According to the road warning hazards index, which of the following countries ranked first in Arab world for road hazards technology?  
(a) Oman (b) Jordan (c) UAE (d) Saudi Arabia
214. India's first indigenous 9 mm machine pistol has been jointly developed by the \_\_\_\_\_ and the Indian Army.  
(a) Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)  
(b) Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)  
(c) Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)  
(d) Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)

215. Which of the following nations will host a G7 summit in June 2021?  
(a) Canada (b) USA (c) United Kingdom (d) Germany
216. Recently, scientists and government officials sighted 156 endangered Irrawaddy dolphins in \_\_\_\_\_, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon.  
(a) Sambhar (b) Chilika (c) Wular (d) Lonar
217. Who among the following union ministers was honoured by the Hindi Writers Guild, Canada for his literary work?  
(a) Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' (b) Smriti Irani  
(c) Narendra Singh Tomar (d) Prakash Javadekar
218. Recently, Scientists from the ZSI have concluded that India is home to both the (sub) species Himalayan red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) and the Chinese red panda (*Ailurus styani*) and \_\_\_\_\_ splits the red panda into these two phylogenetic species.  
(a) Siang river in Arunachal Pradesh (b) Subansiri River in Assam  
(c) Lohit River in Arunachal Pradesh (d) Kameng River in Arunachal Pradesh
219. Recently, Padma Vibhushan awardee Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan died. He was a famous:  
(a) Hockey Player (b) Shehnai Maestro  
(c) Lyricist (d) Indian classical musician
220. Name the first domestic asset management company which signed up with the Principles for Responsible Investment supported by the United Nations.  
(a) IDFC First Asset Management Company  
(b) Axis Asset Management Company  
(c) HDFC Asset Management Company  
(d) Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company
221. Which of the following has become India's first train to run on Push-Pull technology empowering the Government's "Mission Raftar" thus achieving another milestone in Railway history?  
(a) New Delhi Jaipur Rajdhani Express  
(b) New Delhi Bhopal Rajdhani Express  
(c) New Delhi Mumbai Rajdhani Express  
(d) New Delhi Kolkata Rajdhani Express
222. Which of the following became the first theme park in the country to secure OV-Safe certification by Bureau Veritas India recently?  
(a) Essel World, Mumbai (b) Imagicaa, Khopoli  
(c) Kingdom of Dreams, Gurugram (d) Wonderla Bangalore
223. The Flint water crisis is an ongoing public health crisis that began in 2014 when the City of Flint in \_\_\_\_\_ which has a population of roughly 100,000—changed its water supply from Lake Huron to the Flint River.  
(a) California (b) Michigan (c) Nevada (d) Texas
224. Who was recently unanimously chosen as the next Chairman of Shree Somnath Trust?  
(a) Shri Amit Shah (b) Shri Vijay Rupani  
(c) Shri Masukhlal Mandaviya (d) Shri Narendra Modi
225. Which of the following countries has become the first country in the world to administer the coronavirus vaccine to refugees?  
(a) Oman (b) Jordan (c) Russia (d) Saudi Arabia



226. India signed a Memorandum of Cooperation, MoC a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) with which of the following countries?  
(a) Ireland (b) China (c) Japan (d) Mauritius
227. Google has begun to remove money-lending apps that do not comply with the country's banking regulations from its Android Play Store to monitor the glut of fintech applications hosted on the search giant's platform in which of the following countries?  
(a) Sri Lanka (b) India (c) USA (d) France
228. Name one of the costliest mushrooms in the world that grows in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district which has recently sought geographical indication (GI) tag.  
(a) Oyster (b) Shiitake (c) Gucchi (d) Cremini
229. Recently, Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), Delhi based DRDO laboratory, handed over \_\_\_\_\_ a bike-based casualty transport emergency vehicle to Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in a ceremony held at CRPF HQ in New Delhi.  
(a) Rakshita (b) Rakshak (c) Surakshit (d) Sewarth
230. Recently, \_\_\_\_\_ and Indian Farm Forestry Development Co-operative Ltd (IFFDC) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work together for tribal livelihood generation.  
(a) TRIFED (b) Ministry of Tribal Affairs  
(c) Ministry of Home Affairs (d) NABARD
231. Which of the following states recently announced the 'Horticulture Development Mission' (Bagayat Vikas Mission)?  
(a) Maharashtra (b) Gujarat (c) Karnataka (d) Madhya Pradesh
232. Which of the following ministries recently announced collaboration with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to develop a Quantum Computing Applications Lab in the country?  
(a) Ministry of Home Affairs (b) Ministry of Sports & Youth Affairs  
(c) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (d) Ministry of Finance
233. The first \_\_\_\_\_ IPR dialogue between the European Union (EU) Commission and Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) was held through a virtual platform.  
(a) India-USA (b) India-Canada (c) India-EU (d) India-Maldives
234. Which of the following nuclear plants is connecting its largest domestically-built nuclear reactor to the grid is a boost for plans to deploy the technology to help the world's third-biggest polluter limit emissions?  
(a) Kakrapar Atomic Power Station (b) Tarapur Atomic Power Station  
(c) Narora Atomic Power Station (d) Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant
235. Which of the following cricket teams retained the Border-Gavaskar Trophy?  
(a) Australia (b) India (c) New Zealand (d) England
236. Buddhist studies now can fulfill their wish as \_\_\_\_\_ in association with Deccan College (Deemed University) has started a post-graduate diploma in Buddhist heritage and tourism.  
(a) Savitribai Phule Pune University  
(b) Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University  
(c) Kavayitri Bahinabai Chaudhari North Maharashtra University  
(d) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University

237. The Centre for Networked Intelligence at the \_\_\_\_\_ has got a new state-of-the-art networking lab recently.  
(a) IIT Madras (b) Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru  
(c) IIT Delhi (d) IIT Bombay
238. International Day of Education is an annual international observance day held on \_\_\_\_\_ and is dedicated to education.  
(a) 18<sup>th</sup> January (b) 20<sup>th</sup> January (c) 23<sup>rd</sup> January (d) 24<sup>th</sup> January
239. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has notified Inter Country Transport Vehicles Rules, 2021. The permit will remain valid for a period of \_\_\_\_\_ from the date of its issue.  
(a) Six Months (b) One Year (c) Three Years (d) Five Years
240. Which of the following states has taken the lead in undertaking power sector reforms stipulated by the Department of Expenditure of the Ministry of Finance?  
(a) Maharashtra (b) Madhya Pradesh (c) Gujarat (d) Andhra Pradesh
241. Recently, NITI Aayog released the second edition of the India Innovation Index-2020. In the 2020 ranking which of the following states retained its first position in the Major States category?  
(a) Kerala (b) Maharashtra (c) Karnataka (d) Madhya Pradesh
242. The first airport in the world to run fully on solar energy is  
(a) Rawalpindi International Airport (b) Mirpur International Airport  
(c) Cochin International Airport (d) Indore International Airport
243. Recently, The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the investment of Ratle Hydro Electric (HE) Project located on \_\_\_\_\_ in Jammu and Kashmir.  
(a) Jhelum River (b) Chenab River  
(c) Beas River (d) Sutluj River
244. Recently, Days before the nation celebrates the 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian Railways renamed the \_\_\_\_\_ as the 'Netaji Express'.  
(a) Howrah-Kalka Mail (b) Darjeeling- Jaipur Mail  
(c) Kolkata-New Delhi Mail (d) Howrah-Chennai Mail
245. Recently, Road Transport and Highways Ministry and \_\_\_\_\_ signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen collaboration in the field of technical exchange and co-operation on sustainable geo-hazard management.  
(a) DRDO (b) NASA (c) ISRO (d) HAL
246. Which of the following organizations released the "Global Risks Report 2021"?  
(a) UNDP (b) World Economic Forum  
(c) International Monetary Fund (d) World Bank
247. Which of the following banks recently announced the launch of a new mobile application called 'InstaFX'?  
(a) HDFC Bank (b) ICICI Bank (c) IDFC First Bank (d) Axis Bank
248. Recently, Scientists in \_\_\_\_\_ have developed a new gene therapy which can reverse some of the effects of ageing in mice and extend their lifespans, findings which may one day contribute to similar treatment for humans.  
(a) New York (b) Beijing (c) Tokyo (d) London

249. Which of the following has become the first global airline in the world to achieve the prestigious 5-Star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating by international air transport rating organisation, Skytrax?  
(a) Singapore Airlines (b) Emirates (c) Qatar Airways (d) La Compagnie
250. Recently, Joint exercise of Indian Air Force and Air and Space force of France \_\_\_\_\_ commenced at Jodhpur Airforce station.  
(a) Desert Night-21 (b) Blue Knight- 8 (c) Rafale Bling-04 (d) Nomadic Elephant
251. According to Union Minister for Fisheries Dr. Giriraj Singh the Centre has invested 27 thousand crore rupees for schemes relating to \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Blue Economy (b) Purple Economy (c) Golden Economy (d) Grey Economy
252. Recently, Union Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated the first small-scale LNG supply infrastructure of Shell Energy India at its LNG terminal at \_\_\_\_\_ in Gujarat.  
(a) Bhuj (b) Hazira (c) Somnath (d) Porbandar
253. A large scale Joint Military exercise \_\_\_\_\_ involving assets of Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and Indian Coast Guard will be conducted under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.  
(a) Exercise Suraksha (b) Exercise Kavach (c) Exercise Blue Sea (d) Exercise Sahayata
254. According to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the Indian Government will provide a home to every citizen of the country by August \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) 2021 (b) 2022 (c) 2024 (d) 2025
255. Which of the following countries Prime Minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa recently submitted his resignation to parliament after protests over the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic?  
(a) Kyrgyzstan (b) Mongolia (c) Turkmenistan (d) Afghanistan
256. Recently, Indian-origin Kamala Harris was sworn in as America's first woman Vice President during a historic inauguration at the West Front of the Capitol. Kamala Harris is the \_\_\_\_\_ US Vice President.  
(a) 43<sup>rd</sup> (b) 45<sup>th</sup> (c) 47<sup>th</sup> (d) 49<sup>th</sup>
257. Which of the following country is set to get Europe's largest solar power plant?  
(a) Spain (b) France (c) Germany (d) Ireland
258. The world's first ammonia fuel-ready vessel is under construction for \_\_\_\_\_ Avin International at a Chinese shipyard.  
(a) Greek shipowner (b) Irish shipowner  
(c) British shipowner (d) German shipowner
259. International Holocaust Remembrance Day is an international memorial day on \_\_\_\_\_ commemorating the tragedy of the Holocaust that occurred during the Second World War.  
(a) 24 January (b) 27 January (c) 29 January (d) 31 January
260. Recently, who has been named by India as the next ambassador to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) secretariat in Jakarta?  
(a) Aditya Mithare (b) Anjani Kashyap (c) Jayant Khobragade (d) Mahesh Deshmukh
261. Which of the following states is all set to act as knowledge partner with WIPRO group?  
(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Odisha (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Rajasthan

262. India is all set to adopt the European Train Control System (ETCS) in mainline railways for the very first time between:  
(a) Lucknow and Gorakhpur (b) Delhi and Meerut  
(c) Guwahati and Dimapur (d) Rewari and Chandigarh
263. Recently, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and \_\_\_\_\_ signed an MoU for continuation of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways Professorial Chair focusing on research and development, teaching and training in the area of Development of Highway Infrastructure.  
(a) Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Delhi (b) Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Roorkee  
(c) Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Bombay (d) Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Madras
264. The iconic Thiksey Monastery is located in:  
(a) Arunachal Pradesh (b) Nagaland (c) Ladakh (d) Manipur
265. Who won US Senate confirmation to become the nation's first Black secretary of defense?  
(a) Matthew G Marshal (b) Alexander M Thomson  
(c) Benjamin F Gooch (d) Lloyd J. Austin
266. Which of the following states has become the first state to get additional funds for capital projects for successfully carrying out reforms in various citizen-centric areas?  
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Jharkhand (c) Odisha (d) Rajasthan
267. The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has stepped up to \_\_\_\_\_ in overall turnover ranking and now is at the top spot among 300 leading cooperatives in the world.  
(a) 34<sup>th</sup> (b) 47<sup>th</sup> (c) 65<sup>th</sup> (d) 89<sup>th</sup>
268. India's largest multi-modal logistic park will come up in:  
(a) Mumbai (b) Lucknow (c) Ahmedabad (d) Bengaluru
269. Recently, India sent 1 million doses of a COVID vaccine to Nepal as a gift under the \_\_\_\_\_ Initiative.  
(a) 'Vaccine Sahayata' (b) 'Vaccine Maitri' (c) 'Vaccine Maitri' (d) 'Vaccine Mitra'
270. National Tourism Day is observed every year to raise awareness of the importance of tourism for the country's economy on:  
(a) 15<sup>th</sup> January (b) 18<sup>th</sup> January  
(c) 21<sup>st</sup> January (d) 25<sup>th</sup> January
271. Name the Indian mathematician who has been named winner of the prestigious 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize along with two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison–Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs.  
(a) Amit Ranjan (b) Vivek Murthy  
(c) Nikhil Srivastava (d) Animesh Kataria
272. Recently, the Union Tourism Minister Mr Prahlad Singh Patel has inaugurated a branch of Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering (IISM) in:  
(a) Tawang (b) Dimapur  
(c) Chamoli (d) Kargil
273. The nation paid homage to the great freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his birth anniversary. Neta Ji was born in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Cuttack, Odisha (b) Bhubaneswar, Odisha  
(c) Kolkata, West Bengal (d) Dajeeling, West Bengal



274. Which of the following Indian states initiated a scheme called Ek Paudha Suposhit Beti Ke Naam or A plant on the name of well-nourished daughter' has been started under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme of the union government?  
(a) Rajasthan (b) Haryana (c) Punjab (d) Himachal Pradesh
275. Who has been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar for his excellent work in Disaster Management?  
(a) Dr Sudhakant Vishnoi (b) Dr. Amit Vajpayee  
(c) Dr. Rajendra Kumar Bhandari (d) Dr. Suresh Malhar'
276. Recently, Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the \_\_\_\_\_ in Guwahati for about 28 lakh personnel of Central Armed Police Forces.  
(a) Ayushman CAPF health scheme (b) Indian Sena CAPF health scheme  
(c) Indian CAPF health scheme (d) Veer Bharat CAPF health scheme
277. Recently, the Treaty on the Prohibition of \_\_\_\_\_ enters into force on 22 January 2021.  
(a) War Gas (b) Nuclear Weapons (c) Hazardous Chemicals (d) Phenol
278. Recently, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the Union Budget mobile app even as final stages of FY 2021-22 Budget preparations began with the \_\_\_\_\_ ceremony.  
(a) Halwa (b) Kheer (c) Rabri (d) Jalebi –Imarti
279. Recently, Two new species of a rare ant genus have been discovered in \_\_\_\_\_ by a team of scientists, the Department of Science and Technology.  
(a) Kerala and Tamil Nadu (b) Maharashtra and Goa  
(c) Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (d) Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu
280. In India, The \_\_\_\_\_ seeks to equip the trainer jet with combat capabilities through an internally-funded HAL programme.  
(a) Hawk-i project (b) Eagle project (c) Sharp project (d) Tiger project
281. In a first, which of the following states has started 'jail tourism' in the state on January 26?  
(a) Gujarat (b) Haryana (c) Maharashtra (d) Madhya Pradesh
282. Which of the following states cabinet recently cleared the Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill to make retired High Court Judges also eligible for Lokayukta's post?  
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Goa (c) Maharashtra (d) Karnataka
283. Which of the following states has become the first state in the country with two airstrips on expressways to facilitate emergency landing and take-off of fighter planes?  
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Uttar Pradesh (c) Haryana (d) Rajasthan
284. Recently, Kuwait's emir has reappointed \_\_\_\_\_ as prime minister, after the cabinet resigned in a standoff with parliament over its vote to question the premier.  
(a) Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah (b) Sheikh Sabat al-Khalid al-Subaih  
(c) Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Abdullah (d) Sheikh Sadah al-Khalid al-Mahmud
285. According to a United Nations (UN) report titled 'Ageing water infrastructure: An emerging global risk' 32,716 large dams (55% of the world's total) are found in just four Asian countries. Which is not among the four countries?  
(a) Japan (b) China (c) Thailand (d) South Korea

286. According to Bloomberg Billionaires Index, who is the only Indian to feature in the top 36 richest billionaires in the world?  
(a) Shiv Nadar (b) Mukesh Ambani (c) Azim Premji (d) Cyrus Poonawala
287. Which of the following companies is planning to set up India's first gas to ethanol plant at its ferro alloy plant in Chandrapur in Maharashtra with the help of the Centre?  
(a) SAIL (b) Essar (c) GAIL (d) Jindal
288. How many children have been awarded the 'Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar' this year for their exceptional abilities and outstanding accomplishments in the fields of innovation, scholastics, sports, arts, culture, social service and bravery?  
(a) Thirty-two (b) Thirty-five (c) Thirty-nine (d) Forty-nine
289. Which of the following has developed the country's first indigenous machine pistol ASMI?  
(a) Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)  
(b) Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)  
(c) Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)  
(d) Kalyani Group
290. In order to encourage more young voters to take part in the political process, Government of India has decided to celebrate \_\_\_\_\_ every year as "National Voters' Day".  
(a) 21<sup>st</sup> January (b) 23<sup>rd</sup> January (c) 25<sup>th</sup> January (d) 27<sup>th</sup> January
291. Which of the following ministries organizes Bharat Parv every year since 2016 in front of the ramparts of the Red Fort on the occasion of Republic Day celebrations?  
(a) Ministry of Tourism (b) Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
(c) Ministry of Home Affairs (d) Ministry of Defence
292. Recently, India celebrated its \_\_\_\_\_ Republic Day.  
(a) 70<sup>th</sup> (b) 71<sup>st</sup> (c) 72<sup>nd</sup> (d) 75<sup>th</sup>
293. Recently, Giuseppe Conte resigned as Prime Minister of \_\_\_\_\_ hoping to be granted a fresh mandate by the head of state to form a new government after a coalition rupture left him without a majority in the Senate.  
(a) Spain (b) France (c) Italy (d) Panama
294. Lt. Col. (Retd.) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir and well known musicologist, Rabindra Sangeet exponent and academic Sanjida Khatun from \_\_\_\_\_ have been awarded the Padma Shri for the year 2021.  
(a) Bangladesh (b) Afghanistan (c) Myanmar (d) Nepal
295. The US Senate has confirmed eminent economist \_\_\_\_\_ as the first woman Treasury Secretary of the United States.  
(a) Alexandra Jessy (b) Janet Yellen (c) Christine Lagarde (d) Dessy Hirte
296. Recently, the government has appointed an expert panel to review industry's objections to the proposed ban on 27 widely used pesticides which officials say are harmful to animals and humans. The chairman of this committee is:  
(a) Mahesh Deshmukh (b) Vibhas Jain (c) TP Rajendran (d) Anant Subramanian
297. Recently, Indian-American \_\_\_\_\_ has been named new defensive coordinator for Chicago Bears, making him the first National Football League (NFL) Coordinator of South Asian and Indian descent.  
(a) Sean Desai (b) Mohammad Irfan (c) Amit Jagtap (d) Kuldeep Prasanna

298. Radhe Shyam Barle has been associated with Panthi folk dance since his childhood and has been awarded Padma Shri recently. Panthi is folk dance of:  
(a) Jharkhand (b) Chhattisgarh (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Karnataka
299. World Leprosy Day is observed internationally every year on the \_\_\_\_\_ of January to increase the public awareness of Leprosy or Hansen's disease.  
(a) First Sunday (b) Second Sunday (c) Last Sunday (d) Third Saturday
300. Name the first district of Uttar Pradesh where not a single person has the infection of coronavirus and has been declared Corona free.  
(a) Sant Kabir Nagar district (b) Sambhal district  
(c) Kaushambi district (d) Gorakhpur district
301. Who is the newly appointed first women Prime Minister of Estonia?  
(a) Alexandra Otwood (b) Margared Jhallar (c) Kaja Kallas (d) Kersti Kaljulaid
302. The first Indian woman fighter pilot to participate in the Republic Day fly-past is  
(a) Bhawana Kanth (b) Anupama Seth (c) Deepika Rani (d) Amita Malhotra
303. Recently, India's first snow igloo café has come up at \_\_\_\_\_ one of the Asia's premier ski resorts situated in the Pir Panjal Range of the Himalayas.  
(a) Tawang (b) Rangpo (c) Srinagar (d) Gulmarg
304. Recently, Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) has conducted the successful maiden launch of \_\_\_\_\_ Missile from Integrated Test Range off the coast of Odisha.  
(a) Akash-NG (New Generation) (b) Prithvi -NG (New Generation)  
(c) Vyom -NG (New Generation) (d) Amber-NG (New Generation)
305. Recently, which of the following countries has announced the completion of the Kobe LH2 Terminal, the world's first liquefied hydrogen receiving terminal?  
(a) South Korea (b) Taiwan (c) Japan (d) China
306. In its latest update, the IMF projected a \_\_\_\_\_ per cent growth rate for India in 2021.  
(a) 5.5 (b) 7.8 (c) 8.9 (d) 11.5
307. The Gondwana Theme Park or Gondwana Theme Village will be set up in \_\_\_\_\_ to introduce the culture of Vidarbha tribals to the global tourists along with wild tourism.  
(a) Pune (b) Nagpur (c) Indore (d) Jabalpur
308. Uttar Pradesh will soon have its first sports university in \_\_\_\_\_ after the state cabinet approved the State Sports University Bill 2021 draft.  
(a) Meerut (b) Gautam Buddha Nagar  
(c) Gorakhpur (d) Lucknow
309. The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer \_\_\_\_\_ was selected for a Special Award for Information Technology applications in Elections by the Election Commission of India (ECI), in the National Best Electoral Practices Awards-2020.  
(a) Sikkim (b) Meghalaya  
(c) Manipur (d) Mizoram

310. International Customs Day (ICD) is held every year on:  
(a) 21<sup>st</sup> January (b) 23<sup>rd</sup> January (c) 26<sup>th</sup> January (d) 31<sup>st</sup> January
311. India's first centralised AC railway terminal is all set to come up in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Nizamabad (b) Bhopal (c) Bengaluru (d) Chennai
312. Electronics, Information Technology and Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad launched a virtual intelligence tool \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Vikas (b) Tejas (c) Trishul (d) Pinaka
313. The Textiles Committee of the Ministry of Textiles has signed a Memorandum of Understanding- MoU with Nissenken Quality Evaluation Centre, \_\_\_\_\_ to boost export of Textile and Apparel.  
(a) Japan (b) China (c) South Korea (d) Thailand
314. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the World Economic Forum's \_\_\_\_\_ through video conferencing.  
(a) Dublin Dialogue (b) Davos Dialogue (c) New York Dialogue (d) Ottawa Dialogue
315. Recently, which of the following has become the first Indian University to have signed Memorandum-of-Understanding (MoUs) with World's Top 306 Universities under its International Academic Alliance (IAA) flagship program?  
(a) Chandigarh University (b) Delhi University  
(c) Bhopal University (d) Lucknow University
316. The FDI into India up by \_\_\_\_\_ percent to USD 43.85 billion during April-November 2020.  
(a) 19 (b) 26 (c) 37 (d) 47
317. According to a report by Brand Finance, which of the following companies has retained the title of world's most valuable and strongest IT services brand with record brand value of \$26 billion?  
(a) Accenture (b) IBM (c) TCS (d) Google
318. Who has been honoured with Cecil B. DeMille Award at Golden Globes for her decorated career & 'unrelenting activism'?  
(a) Leonardo Di Caprio (b) Maher Ali (c) Jane Fonda (d) Brad Pitt
319. Recently, The world's first fleet of double-decker hydrogen buses has officially been launched into service in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Aberdeen (b) Helsinki (c) Dublin (d) Riyadh
320. The Kerala government is all set to launch Rs 300 crore three-tower first 'Gender Park' in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Kochi (b) Thrissur (c) Kollam (d) Kozhikode
321. Uttar Pradesh government will establish the first leather park of the country in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Kanpur district (b) Agra district (c) Meerut district (d) Moradabad district
322. India has joined the world to Light up \_\_\_\_\_ as a sign of unity to combat the Neglected Tropical Diseases.  
(a) Red Fort (b) Mehrauli (c) Qutub Minar (d) Lotus Temple
323. Recently, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Prakash Javadekar has released Marine Mega Fauna Stranding Guidelines and the National Marine Turtle Action Plan in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) New Delhi (b) Dehradun (c) Agra (d) Jaipur



324. For the first time in India, the West Bengal Transport Corporation has introduced a boat library on \_\_\_\_\_ in association with a heritage book store.  
(a) Hoogly River (b) Teesta River (c) Mahananda River (d) Jalangi River
325. Which of the following countries has received the Geographical Indicator (GI) tag for its Basmati, paving the way for creating a local registry for the particular strain of rice?  
(a) Bangladesh (b) Pakistan (c) Myanmar (d) Sri Lanka
326. Name the veteran Indian-American Congressman who has been re-elected as chairman of the House Foreign Subcommittee on Asia, Pacific, Central Asia and Non-proliferation.  
(a) Pramila Jaypal (b) Ami Bera (c) Jayant Krishnamurthi (d) Sujal Kalyan
327. For 2020, Transparency International (TI)'s Corruption Perception Index (CPI) was released recently. India's rank has slipped six places to \_\_\_\_\_ among 180 countries in corruption perception index (CPI) in 2020.  
(a) 62<sup>nd</sup> (b) 74<sup>th</sup> (c) 86<sup>th</sup> (d) 96<sup>th</sup>
328. The second annual World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Day was marked on \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) 21<sup>st</sup> January (b) 25<sup>th</sup> January (c) 30<sup>th</sup> January (d) 2<sup>nd</sup> February
329. Name the telecom major which has announced to become the India's first telecom operator to successfully demonstrate and orchestrate LIVE 5G service over a commercial network in Hyderabad city.  
(a) Bharti Airtel (b) Reliance Jio (c) BSNL (d) VI
330. Which of the following companies announced the completion of India's first 3D printed two-storey building?  
(a) Hiranandani Builders (b) Piramal Buildcom (c) L&T Construction (d) JP group
331. Which of the following states was adjudged the best tableau among the 32 tableaux that participated in the Republic Day Parade this year?  
(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Madhya Pradesh (c) Tripura (d) Jharkhand
332. The Rs 945 crore Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) will be operational from \_\_\_\_\_ as the government looks to boost the ecosystem, providing the crucial capital for young companies.  
(a) April 1, 2021 (b) September 1, 2021 (c) July 1, 2022 (d) January 1, 2022
333. According to the India Justice Report (IJR) 2020, which of the following states came at the bottom among the large and mid-sized states when it came to overall delivery of justice?  
(a) Rajasthan (b) Bihar (c) West Bengal (d) Uttar Pradesh
334. Five Eyes is a network of five nations who collaborated to better respond to increasing threats by North Korea and China. Which of the following countries is not among 5 nations?  
(a) USA (b) New Zealand (c) India (d) Australia
335. Recently, India has been ranked \_\_\_\_\_ in a coronavirus performance index out of 98 countries.  
(a) 34<sup>th</sup> (b) 49<sup>th</sup> (c) 65<sup>th</sup> (d) 86<sup>th</sup>
336. Recently, The results of the Peoples' Climate Vote, the world's biggest ever survey of public opinion on climate change are published. It is covering \_\_\_\_\_ countries with over half of the world's population.  
(a) 25 (b) 40 (c) 50 (d) 75

337. Recently, Agreement for the financial support of the implementation of Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) project of Ministry of Education was signed between Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) and \_\_\_\_\_ along with Ministry of Education.  
(a) World Bank (b) International Monetary Fund  
(c) Asian Development Bank (d) European Central Bank
338. Which of the following banks and CSC e-Governance Services recently announced the launch of EMI Collection Services for CSC business correspondents across the country?  
(a) HDFC Bank (b) ICICI Bank (c) Axis Bank (d) RBL Bank
339. Recently, Union Government said that India's \_\_\_\_\_ Economic Recovery happened due to Mega Vaccination Drive, Robust Recovery in the Services Sector and Robust Growth in Consumption and Investment.  
(a) V-Shaped (b) U-Shaped (c) X-Shaped (d) Y-Shaped
340. The first metro in India to use ultraviolet (UV) rays to sanitise train coaches is  
(a) Noida Metro (b) Lucknow Metro (c) Jaipur Metro (d) Kochi Metro
341. The world's first 'hybrid' air show 'Aero India' is organised in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Bengaluru (b) Bhopal (c) Hyderabad (d) Pune
342. India and the US are kicked off a major combat exercise in \_\_\_\_\_ in the first such bilateral wargame after the Biden administration took charge in Washington.  
(a) Karnataka (b) Tamil Nadu (c) Rajasthan (d) Haryana
343. Recently, A first of its kind arboretum conserving over 210 species of trees found in the Shivalik range of Himalayas was inaugurated in \_\_\_\_\_ district.  
(a) Uttarakhand's Nainital (b) Uttarakhand's Chamoli  
(c) Himachal Pradesh's Mandi (d) Himachal Pradesh's Shimla
344. World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on:  
(a) 1<sup>st</sup> February (b) 2<sup>nd</sup> February (c) 5<sup>th</sup> February (d) 8<sup>th</sup> February
345. Recently, The first batch of 15 excited tourists entered the hallowed portals of the iconic \_\_\_\_\_ building which administers India's commercial capital – for the inaugural 'Heritage Walk'.  
(a) Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) (b) National Stock Exchange  
(c) Gateway of India (d) Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus
346. Recently, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other senior leaders from the ruling party of \_\_\_\_\_ National League for Democracy (NLD) have been detained.  
(a) Thailand (b) Myanmar (c) Laos (d) Cambodia
347. The UK is applying to join a free trade area Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The trade agreement was formed in year \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) 2010 (b) 2012 (c) 2016 (d) 2018
348. Recently, India has been ranked \_\_\_\_\_ among 11 Asia Pacific countries in a newly-launched "Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index" by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).  
(a) 4<sup>th</sup> (b) 6<sup>th</sup> (c) 10<sup>th</sup> (d) 11<sup>th</sup>

349. In Cricket, which of the following teams lifted the coveted Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy recently?  
(a) Kerala (b) Tamil Nadu (c) Rajasthan (d) Gujarat
350. The Indian Coast Guard is celebrated its 45<sup>th</sup> Raising Day on:  
(a) 23<sup>rd</sup> January (b) 26<sup>th</sup> January (c) 29<sup>th</sup> January (d) 1<sup>st</sup> February



Career  
Launcher

## ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. **b** Thailand's northern city of Chiang Mai will host the inaugural world mountain and trail championships next year.
2. **c** The members of the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC), the policy advisory committee of the Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have selected Sweden's Minister for Finance, Ms. Magdalena Andersson, as Chair of the Committee for a term of three years.
3. **b** The Rajaji Tiger Reserve is welcomed the first big cat from Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve in the first such relocation in Uttarakhand aimed at tiger population management.
4. **c** The Uzbek government signed loan and guarantee agreements with three development banks to finance construction of the Central Asian nation's first solar photovoltaic power plant.
5. **a** Haryana Government's efforts to employ e-Governance to make delivery of citizen-centric services to the people in a time-bound and hassle-free manner, have been recognised and rewarded by the Central Government as President of India, Ram Nath Kovind will confer Digital India Awards 2020 to the state Government on December 30 for its Antyodaya Saral Project.
6. **a** US President Donald Trump presented the prestigious Legion of Merit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership in elevating strategic partnership of the two countries and emergence of India as a global power.
7. **d** Pragyan Ojha, the former India left-arm spinner, will become the first Indian Premier League (IPL) champion to be included in the IPL governing council.
8. **d** Union Minister for Road Transport, Highways and MSMEs Nitin Gadkari has said that the government is fully committed towards development in the field of infrastructure. Construction of 22 Green Express Highways which is in progress will prove to be a game changer in the field of transportation and traveling.
9. **b** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will establish a Regional Academic Centre for Space at IIT-Varanasi to facilitate short and long term projects at the institute.
10. **a** India's first hot air balloon wildlife safari in a tiger reserve was launched in the world famous Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve by Madhya Pradesh forest minister Vijay Shah.
11. **d** India, which has become the first country in the world to receive the Blue Flag Certification for 8 beaches in a single attempt, hosted the Blue flags in all its beaches.
12. **b** Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has extended the validity of vehicular documents such as driving licenses (DLs), registration certificates (RCs) and Permits till 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2021 in the light of need to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
13. **c** Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurated India's first pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, PCV. The vaccine named Pneumosil has been developed by the Serum Institute of India Private Limited, SIIPL in collaboration with partners like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
14. **a** Indian and Vietnamese Navy concluded the two-day naval passage exercise PASSEX in the South China Sea as part of efforts to boost maritime cooperation between the two countries.
15. **d** In Madhya Pradesh, the much-awaited Tansen Music Festival began in Gwalior with strict COVID-19 guidelines in place.



- 16. c** The world's largest radio telescope, the Five-hundred-metre Aperture Spherical Telescope or FAST has been installed in Pingtang in China's Guizhou province.
- 17. b** In a move that can be a potential game-changer in the petroleum fuel retail market in India, Indian Oil launched premium-grade Petrol (100 Octane) in the country.
- 18. b** Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan felicitated sportspersons, coaches and sports personalities with state level sports award for the year 2019 at Bhopal.
- 19. c** China has successfully launched a new remote sensing satellite into space.
- 20. d** Virat Kohli has been named as the ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade while Steve Smith has been adjudged as the ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Decade.
- 21. b** Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) recently signed an MoU with UNDP India to co-create India's first Social Impact Bond (SIB).
- 22. d** Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan has been nominated a member on the GAVI Board by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation.
- 23. a** Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor, EDFC through video conferencing.
- 24. c** Railway Minister Piyush Goyal said that the newly designed Vistadome tourist coach successfully completed 180 kilometre per hour during speed trial.
- 25. d** Bank of Baroda (BoB) has unveiled a digital lending platform to enable prospective retail clients to get loans digitally through a paperless process.
- 26. b** Hexagon Capability Center India (HCCI), the largest product development unit of the technology major Hexagon AB has launched the nation's first Artificial Intelligence Community Centre, HexArt, was launched in Hyderabad.
- 27. a** Indian Space startup, Skyroot Aerospace, has proven the crucial propulsion technology of their maiden rocket Vikram-1, with the latest test-firing of an engine.
- 28. a** Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan, virtually inaugurated India's highest Meteorological Centre in Leh.
- 29. d** Johnny Mullagh, who played on the 1868 Aboriginal team that was Australia's first to tour England, became the first indigenous inductee into the country's cricket Hall of Fame.
- 30. d** Senior Indian Information Service (IIS) officer Ramesh Chandra Joshi became the new face of the CBI for interactions with the media by taking charge as its chief information officer, a post lying vacant since March.
- 31. d** The Uttarakhand forest department dedicated the newly built Pollinator Park to the public, claiming it to be the country's first such park, spread over 4 acres in Haldwani in Nainital district.
- 32. c** Minister for Development of North Eastern Region, DoNER Dr Jitendra Singh has informed that North East's first-ever specialised Ginger Processing Plant at Ri-Bhoui district in Meghalaya is being revived and is likely to become functional in the beginning of 2021.

- 33. b** Science and Technology Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan released the report - Action Agenda for an Atma Nirbhar Bharat prepared by Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council, TIFAC in New Delhi.
- 34. b** President-elect Joe Biden nominated former Pentagon official Kathleen Hicks to serve as the first female deputy defense secretary.
- 35. c** India's largest private sector lender HDFC Bank is set to appoint former economic affairs secretary Atanu Chakraborty as the next chairman of the bank.
- 36. c** Unicas, a joint venture between the financial services companies Cahsaa and United Multistate Credit Cooperative Society, announced the launch of the world's first physical branch of a cryptocurrency bank in the Indian city of Jaipur.
- 37. b** Akash is a surface-to-air missile with a range of 25 kilometres. Developed by DRDO, it is India's first indigenously designed missile system and can target fighter jets, cruise missiles, drones and other aerial assets.
- 38. a** Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO along with Indian Navy conducted the successful maiden test trial of SAHAYAK-NG India's first indigenously designed and developed Air Dropped Container
- 39. c** Lewis Hamilton has been knighted in Britain's traditional New Year Honours list after equalling Michael Schumacher's record of seven Formula One world titles.
- 40. d** Cristiano Ronaldo and Pep Guardiola were honoured at the Globe Soccer Awards in Dubai, the duo named player and coach of the century respectively.
- 41. d** Jharkhand's Kisan Fasal Rahat Yojana will take three months to come into effect.
- 42. b** Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh virtually launched a mobile application 'DigiNest to give people access to the state government's directory, which can be synced with a smartphone.
- 43. b** The current president is Abdelmajid Tebboune, who won the 2019 Algerian presidential election on 12 December and assumed the office on 19 December 2019.
- 44. d** National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) said transaction through Unified Payment Interface platform would continue to be free. Set up in 2008, NPCI is an umbrella organization for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.
- 45. c** The rise in NPAs may partly be attributable to stagnant growth in loans and advances and weak balance sheets, according to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) Trends and Progress of Banking in India report.
- 46. b** The first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in the country has been set up at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) in Gandhinagar.
- 47. b** The central government set up a consortium of 10 national research institutions, which will collaborate for carrying out effective surveillance and monitoring of the genomic variations observed in the new SARS nCov-2 virus strain, recently identified from the United Kingdom.
- 48. a** Sivan K. has been given an one-year extension, till January 14, 2022, as the Secretary, Department of Space.
- 49. c** Indian stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane, who won Man of the Match for his vital ton at the Boxing Day Test, was bestowed with the Mullagh Medal.

- 50. c** World Braille Day is an international day on 4 January and celebrates awareness of the importance of Braille as a means of communication in the full realization of the human rights for blind and visually impaired people.
- 51. c** Chhattisgarh government recently signed a contract execution (MoU) for the country's first ethanol plant to be set up in the state under the public-private partnership (PPP) model.
- 52. d** Justice Pankaj Mithal will be Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court and Justice Sanjib Banerjee, Chief Justice of Madras.
- 53. c** Major General Gautam Chauhan took charge as the first Additional Director General Human Rights in the Indian Army and will work under the India Army Vice Chief Lieutenant General SK Saini.
- 54. c** Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan launched the Global Pravasi Rishta portal and mobile App, to connect with Indian Diaspora across the world.
- 55. b** India is beginning its two-year tenure as a Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council.
- 56. b** All the four sites chosen by the FAO are in the Asian continent and include two tea production sites from China- the world's largest producer- and one each from Korea and Japan, according to the information provided on the FAO website.
- 57. a** The Defence Research and Development Organisation is an agency under the Department of Defence Research and Development in Ministry of Defence of the Government of India, charged with the military's research and development, headquartered in Delhi, India.
- 58. a** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide a USD 231-million loan to augment electricity generation capacity in Assam through construction of a 120-megawatt (MW) hydroelectric power plant.
- 59. a**
- 60. b** Ace mountaineer Colonel Narendra 'Bull' Kumar who helped India secure the Siachen Glacier, passed away at the Army Research and Referral Hospital in New Delhi due to age-related illness.
- 61. b** Australia has changed one word in its national anthem to reflect what the Prime Minister called "the spirit of unity" and the country's indigenous population
- 62. b** Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the Kochi - Mangaluru Natural Gas Pipeline to the nation through video conferencing.
- 63. b** The government announced that it would open three missions in Estonia, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic in 2021, after a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared the proposal from the Ministry of External Affairs.
- 64. b** Tesla is adding more and more electric vehicles to the roads and to support its ecosystem, the EV maker has also been quickly expanding its Supercharger network.
- 65. b** HDFC Bank has emerged as the top player among the 100 Banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) companies in the country.
- 66. a** China's first Mars exploration mission Tianwen-1 travelled more than 400 million km and is expected to enter Mars orbit next month.

- 67. c** Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar inaugurated the Virtual Agri-hackathon 2020 in New Delhi.
- 68. a** The year 2020 concludes with yet another good news as Leon Mendonca becomes India's 67<sup>th</sup> Grandmaster at the age of 14 years 9 months and 17 days.
- 69. d** This special day enables the international community to recognize the sufferings and plights of orphans during world War.
- 70. c** In the inaugural ceremony renowned santoor player, Pandit Satish Vyas was conferred upon the prestigious Tansen Samman.
- 71. a** The 51<sup>st</sup> International Film Festival of India (IFFI) will open with the Indian premiere of the movie 'Another Round' by Thomas Vinterberg.
- 72. c** India has successfully cultured the new coronavirus strain, which originated in the U.K., the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said.
- 73. a** Home Minister Amit Shah released the inaugural issue of the National Police K-9 Journal in New Delhi. It is the first such publication in the country on the subject of Police Service K9s, Police Dogs.
- 74. c** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constructed a composite Digital Payments Index (DPI) to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.
- 75. b** National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) announced that RuPay has partnered with RBL Bank to launch an innovative payment solution for Indian merchants – RuPay PoS in association with PayNearby.
- 76. b** Soma Mondal takes over the reins of state-run Steel Authority of India (SAIL) as its first woman chairperson, will have multiple tasks at hand.
- 77. d** Suneet Sharma has been appointed as the new Chairman & Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Railway Board (Ministry of Railways) and ex-officio Principal Secretary to Government of India.
- 78. b** Juventus star forward Cristiano Ronaldo reached an impressive milestone outside the football field. Ronaldo becomes the first person to hit the 250 million mark on Instagram.
- 79. c** Pakistan captain Babar Azam was named the Most Valuable Cricketer of the Year in the PCB awards following his stellar performances during the season.
- 80. d** China has deployed a fleet of underwater drones called Sea Wing (Haiyi) glider in the Indian Ocean.
- 81. a** The first hilltop Buddhist monastery of the Gangetic Valley has been found at Lal Pahari in Lakhisarai district of Bihar.
- 82. a** Justice S Muralidhar took oath as the Chief Justice of the Odisha High Court.
- 83. a** World's first and India's only hospital train 'Lifeline Express' which is currently stationed in Badarpur, Assam.
- 84. b** India will be the co-chair of the IUCN-supported Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP) for three years and it would, in this capacity, assist other Asian countries in managing their protected areas.
- 85. c** Argentine filmmaker Pablo Cesar to head 51<sup>st</sup> IFFI's International Jury.



- 86. a** Migrant workers' Cell has been created by Surat Municipal Corporation for the first time in the Country under the 'National Urban Livelihood Mission Scheme'
- 87. c** State-run Bank of Baroda announced the launch of banking services on messaging platform Whatsapp.
- 88. b** The National Atomic Timescale generates Indian Standard Time with an accuracy of 2.8 nanosecond.
- 89. d** The world's richest person made the single-largest charitable contribution in 2020, according to The Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual list of top donations, a \$10 billion gift that is intended to help fight climate change.
- 90. b** Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a celebratory day observed on 9 January by the Republic of India to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India.
- 91. a** Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the 306 Kilometer New Rewari - New Madar Section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor. He will also flag off the world's first Double Stack Long Haul 1.5 Kilometer long Container Train hauled by electric traction from New Ateli -New Kishangarh during the event.
- 92. b** Shivalik Small Finance Bank (SSFB) has become the first Urban Cooperative Bank (UCB) in India to transition to a Small Finance Bank under the voluntary transition scheme.
- 93. a** In Madhya Pradesh, 'Launch Pad Scheme' is being started for boys and girls coming out of child care institutions and having completed 18 years of age.
- 94. c** The government has set up a high-level group headed by former Union power secretary and tasked it with helping build a South Asia-focused energy security architecture.
- 95. c** The first batch of over 100 women disaster combatants and rescuers has been inducted into the country's federal calamity force NDRF.
- 96. c** The long-pending demand of experts to reduce the level of trans fats in food items has been met, with India's top food regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) reducing it to 3%. The current permissible limit is 5%.
- 97. c** Five new countries — India, Mexico, Norway, Ireland and Kenya — formally joined the U.N. Security Council at a time of growing polarization in the body charged with keeping world peace and security.
- 98. a** A committee set up under the chairmanship of former union secretary G K Pillai to fix ceiling rates under a duty refund scheme - RoDTEP - for exporters is expected to submit the complete report in the next few weeks.
- 99. b** Kerala declares Bird flu as a State disaster as thousands of domestic birds were found to be infected by H5N8 virus.
- 100. a** Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and Union Minister for Textiles and Women & Child Development Smriti Zubin Irani jointly launched the Toyathon 2021.
- 101. d** Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have become the first group of states to complete three out of the four citizen-centric reforms stipulated by the Ministry of Finance.
- 102. a** Irdai to introduce standard home insurance policy Bharat Griha Raksha.
- 103. a** The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between Indian and Japan on a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to 'Specified Skilled Worker'.

- 104. b** Railway Minister Piyush Goyal launched a Freight Business Development Portal as one stop solution for all the needs of freight customers.
- 105. b** The bottom surface of North Atlantic Ocean has a series of sub-aquatic tunnels, linking the uneven islands that feature the Faroe Islands archipelago.
- 106. a** Micro-finance institutions have made a pitch for issuance of tax-free social bonds for five years by SIDBI/NABARD to exclusively provide debt to the sector operating in semi urban, rural areas or aspirational districts.
- 107. a** A new approach for surveying African elephants using satellite imagery and artificial intelligence (AI) could help in solving some of the present challenges in the conservation of the species. The survey method was developed by an international team of researchers led by University of Oxford.
- 108. b** China will complete a new national crop germplasm bank this year to boost the country's capacity to develop new crop varieties and enhance food security.
- 109. c** Australia's Claire Polosak becomes the first female match official in a men's Test match when she takes up the fourth umpire's role in the third Test between India and Australia starting.
- 110. b** New Zealand grabbed the number one position in the ICC Test rankings for the first time in history after decimating Pakistan by an innings and 176 runs in the second Test in Christchurch.
- 111. b** 7-year-old Abhijita Gupta, the world's youngest author, has become the first Indian child to sign a deal with the Invincible for her four upcoming books and she has already received a part of the royalty payment for the first 10,000 copies of her book.
- 112. b** India's first indoor ski park will come up at Kufri in Shimla with the objective of making Himachal Pradesh a favourite tourist destination in the country, besides providing tourists world class amenities in the state.
- 113. d** Punjab National Bank (PNB), the country's second largest public sector bank, has announced an alliance with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur and FIRST (Foundation for Innovation & Research in Science & Technology), to jointly establish the Punjab National Bank - IIT Kanpur Innovation Centre at the IIT campus.
- 114. a** India's economy is showing decisive signs of a 'V-shaped' recovery in 2021 with the return of consumer confidence, robust financial markets, an uptick in manufacturing and exporters braving it out in the global market with never-say-die spirit.
- 115. c** In US the amendment was ratified in 1967, created a legal mechanism for designating a head of state when the president is disabled or dead.
- 116. a** The World's largest repatriation exercise Vande Bharat Mission have been brought back more than 44.7 lakh people since May 2020.
- 117. b**
- 118. a** Indian Railways has started the New Year by achieving a landmark to enhance the maximum speed to 130 kilometres per hour for 1,280 km length out of 1,612 Km in Golden Quadrilateral - Golden Diagonal route. The route covers the entire GQ-GD route over the South Central Railway zone, except the Vijayawada - Duvvada section.
- 119. b** While the WEF annual meeting for 2021 will be held on May 13-16 in Singapore, the high-profile summit will return to Davos in 2022.

- 120. c** Deepika Padukone was the latest Indian awarded with the Crystal Award at the World Economic Forum 2020.
- 121. c** Indian cricket team coach Ravi Shastri is all set to come up with his first-ever book in which the former player will share the never-before-revealed anecdotes and insights of his life in cricket.
- 122. c** Forest Minister Awangbow Newmai launched the website [www.cosfom.mn.gov.in](http://www.cosfom.mn.gov.in) for the Community-based Sustainable Forest Management for Water Resource Conservation in Manipur (COSFOM) at Sanjenthong in Imphal.
- 123. a** Union Minister for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan dedicated the new coastal research vehicle ‘Sagar Anveshika’ to the nation at Chennai port.
- 124. b** India’s largest fuel retailer Indian Oil has now teamed up with SBI, India’s largest lender, to launch the SBI-Indian Oil Co-branded RuPay Debit Card.
- 125. a** The Centre has decided to form a committee under Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy to find a solution to issues associated with preservation of Ladakh’s land, culture and language apart from demands from the region to be included under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
- 126. b** State-run NHPC has signed an agreement with the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) for assistance in setting up renewable energy (RE) projects.
- 127. a** NCAVES India Forum 2021 is being organised by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- 128. b** Indian-American Dr Raj Iyer has taken over as the first Chief Information Officer of the US Army, after the Pentagon created the position in July 2020.
- 129. a** Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar launched Government’s Digital Calender and Diary App in New Delhi.
- 130. b** Curacao Prime Minister Eugene Rhuggenaath and New Zealand minister Priyanca Radhakrishnan were among 30 NRIs, and Indian-origin people and organisations who were conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award.
- 131. d** An all-women pilot team of Air India will fly over the North Pole on the world’s longest air route as the carrier’s first non-stop service between San Francisco and Bengaluru will start.
- 132. b** Elon Musk, the outspoken and envelope-pushing chief executive of Tesla, overtook Amazon boss Jeff Bezos to become the world’s wealthiest person.
- 133. b** During the inaugural session, President of the Republic of Suriname and Chief Guest, Chandrikapersad Santokhi will address the participants.
- 134. d** Tarun Chhabra, who has been appointed senior director for Technology and National Security, is a senior fellow at the Centre for Security and Emerging Technology at Georgetown University.
- 135. c** The National Internet Exchange of India, NIXI has announced that it will offer a free Internationalized Domain Name, IDN in any of the preferred 22 official Indian language along with every IN domain booked by the registrant.
- 136. c** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up an academic advisory council with former deputy governor N S Vishwanathan as the chairperson to advise the full-time director of the central bank’s College of Supervisors (CoS).

- 137. b** India will chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee of UNSC in 2022.
- 138. a** A six-year study conducted by The Nature and Butterfly Society (TNBS) has identified Siruvani hills in Coimbatore district as a butterfly super-hotspot.
- 139. b** In Manipur, the Cherry Blossom Mao Festival was held at Senapati district marking the beginning of pink season in the district.
- 140. c** Bhavesh V Patel, an Indian-American top executive of a multinational chemical company, has been appointed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas to its Houston branch's board of directors.
- 141. a** Home Minister Amit Shah launched the 'Single Window Clearance System', an online platform to obtain clearances for smooth operationalisation of coal mines.
- 142. c** Alok Sharma, one of the Indian-origin ministers in U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Cabinet, relinquished his role as Business Secretary in a mini-reshuffle to take sole charge as President of COP26 – the United Nations climate summit scheduled for Glasgow, Scotland, in November.
- 143. a** The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is organizing a week long National Youth Festival in the country commencing from the 12<sup>th</sup> of this month. Every year, the festival is being held to commemorate the birth anniversary of youth icon Swami Vivekananda.
- 144. b** A High Level Committee, headed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been constituted to commemorate the 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in a befitting manner.
- 145. a** Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the National Youth Parliament Festival - 2021.
- 146. a** The Embassy of Israel in India has appointed Joyshree Das Verma as Honorary Consul in the region with jurisdiction over the States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim.
- 147. c** US President Donald Trump has been permanently suspended from social network app Twitter due to the risk of further incitement of violence.
- 148. a** The Biden-Harris transition team announced the appointment of Indian American Sumona Guha to the role of Senior Director for South Asia at the National Security Council.
- 149. d** Bhanapur, a remote village in Koppal district, is poised to attain star status with the Karnataka government the laying foundation stone for the country's first toy manufacturing cluster in the village.
- 150. b** Bollywood star Shilpa Shirodkar has become the first Indian celebrity to get a vaccination against the deadly coronavirus.
- 151. c** The Kuno-Palpur wildlife sanctuary, which was upgraded to a national park in 2018, has been designated the new habitat of the fastest animal on land, which can sprint at speeds of 80-128 km per hour.
- 152. b** Prarambh, the Startup India International Summit, which is being held on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of this month is one such opportunity. He urged the youth to be a part of it.
- 153. b** Indian Navy coordinated the second edition of largest coastal defence exercise Sea Vigil-21



- 154. d** At present, India has a network of 903 Protected Areas in the country covering about five per cent of the total geographic area of the country.
- 155. a** Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari will be launching an innovative new paint developed by Khadi and Village Industries Commission. The eco-friendly, non-toxic paint, called “Khadi Prakritik Paint” is a first-of-its-kind product, with anti-fungal, anti-bacterial properties.
- 156. b** The Centre has merged J&K cadre for all India Services Viz; IAS, IPS and IFS officers with that of Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram and Union Territory (AGMUT), also called the Union Territory cadre, through an ordinance.
- 157. a** Bangladesh is the country of focus at the 51<sup>st</sup> International Film Festival of India (IFFI) starting at Goa on January 16, 2021.
- 158. c** Third rank Indonesia, and India, which ranks number four in momentum, have displayed increasing digital momentum suggesting the potential to rapidly digitalise for both post-COVID economic recovery and longer-term transformation.
- 159. a** Banks’ gross non-performing assets may rise to 13.5% by September 2021, from 7.5% in September 2020 under the baseline scenario, according to Financial Stability Report (FSR) released by the Reserve Bank of India.
- 160. c** World Hindi Day is celebrated every year on January 10. Hindi is not only the country’s most-spoken language, but it is the third most-spoken language in the world with 615 million speakers after English, Mandarin, according to the UN.
- 161. a** In Leh, the first ever Ice climbing festival was celebrated in Nubra valley. The Seven Day event was organized by Nubra Adventure Club. Ice climbing is a popular winter sport abroad.
- 162. c** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to introduce the Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) system for all payment transactions of value Rs 50 crore and above undertaken by entities (non-individuals) using the Reserve Bank-run Centralised Payment Systems with effect from April 1.
- 163. a** The United States has designated Cuba as a “state sponsor of terrorism”, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced.
- 164. a** India decided to set up one million dollar facility for academic collaboration with the Arab World in a step that will have far reaching impact on people to people contacts between Delhi and its extended neighbours.
- 165. d** The French-led One Planet Summit, backed by the United Nations and the World Bank, saw more than 50 nations support a plan to create protected areas covering 30 percent of global lands and oceans.
- 166. a** FSS (Financial Software and Systems), a leading payment processor and provider of integrated payment products, has partnered with India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) to promote financial inclusion among underserved and unbanked segments.
- 167. c** Total 11 private Indian firms have made it to the list of 500 most valuable companies across the world, and the country is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> on the chart, as per a report.
- 168. d** Japan tops the list of being the most powerful passport in the world for the year 2021, according to the latest report by the Henley Passport Index.
- 169. b** Bug experts blamed the dwindling populations on climate change, herbicides, invasive species, insecticides, along with changes in how we use land. Owing to such changes, Earth is losing 1 to 2 per cent of insects ever year.

- 170. c** The government had launched a National Initiative ‘Kayakalp’ on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015 to ensure hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness in Public Health Facilities in India.
- 171. b** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the ‘Fire Park’, a first of its kind initiative in the country, to bring awareness on fire safety measures.
- 172. d** The committee is chaired by Joint Secretary Preeti Pant and includes experts from medicine and nutrition. There are also State programme officers from Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.
- 173. c** The new Foreign Trade Policy-FTP will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 for a period of five years.
- 174. a** Donald Trump has become the first US president to be impeached twice.
- 175. c** Estonia’s prime minister has handed in his resignation to the Baltic country’s president after a corruption scandal investigated by the police and prosecutors in his Center Party.
- 176. a** In his government’s first admission yet of Indian involvement in developing a container terminal at the strategically coveted Colombo Port, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said 49% of the investment will come from the “Adani Group and other stakeholders”.
- 177. b** Paradip Refinery has won First prize under the 30<sup>th</sup> National Energy Conservation Awards-2020 in the “Petroleum Refinery Sector”.
- 178. a** A first of its kind genome sequencing laboratory is being launched at the New Delhi international airport for testing samples of all travellers arriving into the country who test positive for Coronavirus disease (Covid-19).
- 179. c** Odisha took home Janaagraha’s Best State and the Best Civic Agency award.
- 180. a** Yes Bank has announced its partnership with Aditya Birla Wellness Private Limited to launch the ‘YES BANK Wellness’.
- 181. a** A major-rank Indian Army officer, Anoop Mishra has indigenously developed the world’s first universal bulletproof jacket ‘Shakti’ which can be used by both male and female combatants.
- 182. d** Indian Armed Forces Veterans Day is being observed. This day is celebrated on 14<sup>th</sup> of January every year to honour services rendered by veterans of the Army.
- 183. a** National Informatics Centre and Central Board of Secondary Education, CBSE jointly launched CollabCAD Software to provide a total engineering solution for students and Faculty of Engineering Graphics Curriculum.
- 184. b** Archaeologists have discovered the world’s oldest known cave art — a life-sized picture of a wild pig that was painted at least 45,500 years ago in Indonesia.
- 185. b** Three top corporate leaders, including Milind Pant, CEO of Amway and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, executive chairperson, Biocon, have joined the 2021 Global Board of Directors of US India Business Council (USIBC) as vice chairs.
- 186. b** State Bank of India has provided a major relief to farmers under its loan settlement schemes. Many farmers in Maharashtra are benefiting from this Rin Samadhan Yojna.
- 187. b** PayPal Holding Inc has become the first foreign operator with 100% control of a payment platform in China.

- 188. b** Climate activist Greta Thunberg is to feature on a set of stamps issued by Sweden's postal service.
- 189. a** The tribute section of the festival will be dedicated to the legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray to commemorate his birth centenary.
- 190. c** The Union Cabinet approved a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on scientific and technical cooperation between the Ministry of Earth Sciences and the National Centre of Meteorology of the UAE.
- 191. c** The working group consists of both internal and external members. The internal members include Jayant Kumar Dash, Executive Director, RBI (Chairman); Ajay Kumar Choudhary, Chief General Manager in-charge, Department of Supervision, RBI; S.P. Vasudevan, Chief General Manager, Department of Payment and Settlement Systems, RBI; and Manoranjan Mishra, Chief General Manager, Department of Regulation, RBI (Member Secretary).
- 192. a** Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar inaugurated air taxi services from Chandigarh to Hisar from Chandigarh Airport under UDAN scheme of the central government.
- 193. b** The combined market capitalisation of all listed companies in India has crossed the country's GDP for the first time in more than 10 years. The current ratio is, however, much lower than the all-time high of 149.4 per cent in December 2007.
- 194. d**
- 195. b** North Korea has unveiled a new submarine-launched ballistic missile described as the world's most powerful weapon. Pyongyang unveiled the missile during a military parade.
- 196. b** The UN Human Rights Council elected Fiji's ambassador as its president in 2021, following an unprecedented secret ballot after a diplomatic stand-off blocked the usual consensus decision.
- 197. b** In a first for India, the local administration in Bhopal has started issuing ID cards to people from the third gender to help them avail the benefits of the state government's welfare schemes.
- 198. b** India has the largest diaspora population in the world with 18 million people from the country living outside their homeland in 2020.
- 199. b** Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda virtually received SKOCH Challenger Award conferred to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for e-Governance.
- 200. d** International Day of Education is an annual international observance day held on January 24 and is dedicated to education.
- 201. c** India's first Labour Movement Museum, showcasing the history of world labour movement, will be launched in Kerala's houseboat tourism hub, Alappuzha.
- 202. b** Kevadiya station is India's first railway station with a Green Building Certification.
- 203. d** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled the country's first indigenously designed and developed Driverless Metro Car at the BEML manufacturing facility in Bengaluru.
- 204. d** The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has released the 2020 Adaptation Gap Report.
- 205. b** The first foreign funded project in Maldives in 2021 that was backed by India was inaugurated.

- 206. c** Uganda's Yoweri Museveni has won a sixth term in office, extending his 35-year rule after an election which took place under heavy security and an Internet blackout.
- 207. c** U.S. President-elect Joe Biden has been sworn in as the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the U.S
- 208. b** ICICI Bank has tied up with Niyo, a new age fintech, to issue prepaid cards to workers of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- 209. c** Union Minister for Earth Sciences, Health and Family Welfare and Science and Technology Dr Harsh Vardhan after virtual inauguration of First Doppler Weather Radar (DWR) installed at Kufri, Shimla and at Mukteshwar, Nainital in Uttarakhand on the occasion of 146<sup>th</sup> India Meteorological Department Foundation Day.
- 210. b** Pakistan felicitated a team of 10 Nepali climbers for making history by becoming the first to scale in winter the world's second highest mountain K2, considered as the world's most dangerous and challenging peak.
- 211. b** As India kicked off the world's biggest Covid-19 vaccination drive, a frontline sanitation worker at Delhi AIIMS, Manish Kumar, received the first jab against the deadly respiratory disease.
- 212. a** The Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry launched month-long mass awareness campaign 'SAKSHAM' to spread awareness about green and clean energy.
- 213. d** Saudi Arabia provides the best technology-driven hazard alert system in the Arab world, according to the road warning hazards index.
- 214. a** India's first indigenous 9 mm machine pistol has been jointly developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Army
- 215. c** Britain will host a G7 summit in June announcing what will be the first face-to-face meeting of the group since the start of Joe Biden's US presidency.
- 216. b** Scientists and government officials sighted 156 endangered Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilika, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon.
- 217. a** Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' was honoured by the Hindi Writers Guild, Canada for his literary work.
- 218. a** Scientists from the ZSI have concluded that India is home to both the (sub) species — Himalayan red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) and the Chinese red panda (*Ailurus styani*) and the Siang river in Arunachal Pradesh splits the red panda into these two phylogenetic species.
- 219. d** Legendary Indian classical musician and Padma Vibhushan awardee Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan died at his residence in Mumbai. He was 89.
- 220. d** Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company has become a signatory to Climate Action 100+, which drives focus on clean energy transition and helps achieve the Paris Agreement's goals. In April 2018, KMAMC became the first domestic asset management company to sign up with the Principles for Responsible Investment supported by the United Nations.
- 221. c** CR's Rajdhani Express became India's first train to run on Push-Pull technology empowering the Government's "Mission Raftar" thus achieving another milestone in Railway history. Indian Railways' first Rajdhani Express which operates on the push-pull technology will run daily from Mumbai to New Delhi.



- 222. d** Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, amusement park Wonderla Bangalore announced that it become the first theme park in the country to secure OV-Safe certification by Bureau eritas India.
- 223. b** The Flint water crisis is an ongoing public health crisis that began in 2014 when the City of Flint in Michigan—which has a population of roughly 100,000—changed its water supply from Lake Huron to the Flint river.
- 224. d** Prime Minister Narendra Modi was unanimously chosen as the next Chairman of Shree Somnath Trust.
- 225. b** Jordan has become the first country in the world to administer the coronavirus vaccine to refugees.
- 226. c** India and Japan signed a Memorandum of Cooperation, MoC a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to Specified Skilled Worker (SSW).
- 227. b** Google has begun to remove money-lending apps that do not comply with the country’s banking regulations from its Android Play Store following directions from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to monitor the glut of fintech applications hosted on the search giant’s platform.
- 228. c** A geographical indication (GI) tag has been sought for one of the costliest mushrooms in the world that grows in Jammu and Kashmir’s Doda district. Locally called Gucchi, or Morel, the mushroom, priced at over Rs.20,000 a kg, is a forest produce collected by local farmers and tribals. Last June, saffron from the State had been granted a GI tag.
- 229. a** Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), Delhi based DRDO laboratory, handed over Rakshita, a bike-based casualty transport emergency vehicle to Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) \ in a ceremony held at CRPF HQ in New Delhi.
- 230. a** The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) and Indian Farm Forestry Development Co-operative Ltd (IFFDC) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work together for tribal livelihood generation.
- 231. b** Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani announced the ‘Horticulture Development Mission’ (Bagayat Vikas Mission).
- 232. c** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has announced collaboration with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to develop a Quantum Computing Applications Lab in the country.
- 233. c** The first India-EU IPR dialogue between the European Union (EU) Commission and Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) was held through a virtual platform.
- 234. a** The 700-megawatt pressurized heavy water reactor of the Kakrapar Atomic Power Station in Gujarat is the first of 16 planned units that will help balance the grid against growing intermittent renewable generation.
- 235. b** India created history by defeating Australia by three wickets in the fourth and final Test at the Gabba in Brisbane and retained the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.
- 236. a** Buddhist studies now can fulfill their wish as Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) in association with Deccan College (Deemed University) has started a post-graduate diploma in Buddhist heritage and tourism.
- 237. b** The Centre for Networked Intelligence at the Indian Institute of Science has got a new state-of-the-art networking lab.
- 238. d** International Day of Education is an annual international observance day held on January 24 and is dedicated to education.

- 239. b** Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has notified Inter Country Transport Vehicles Rules, 2021 which would facilitate and regulate the movement of passenger and goods vehicles between India and neighbouring countries. The permit will remain valid for a period of one year from the date of its issue and it will be renewable for a period of five years on yearly basis.
- 240. b** Madhya Pradesh has taken the lead in undertaking power sector reforms stipulated by the Department of Expenditure of the Ministry of Finance.
- 241. c** In the 2020 ranking, Karnataka retained its first position in the Major States category
- 242. c** The Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL) which created history by becoming the first airport in the world to run fully on solar energy has commissioned one of the biggest floating solar power plants in the state with a capacity of 452-kilowatt hour (KWh).
- 243. b** The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the investment of over Rs 5200 crore for 850 megawatt Ratle Hydro Electric (HE) Project located on Chenab river in Kishtwar in Jammu and Kashmir.
- 244. a** Days before the nation celebrates the 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian Railways renamed the Howrah-Kalka Mail as the 'Netaji Express'.
- 245. a** Road Transport and Highways Ministry and Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen collaboration in the field of technical exchange and co-operation on sustainable geo-hazard management.
- 246. b** Each year the World Economic Forum publishes a report looking ahead to the short term and long term risks facing organizations around the world. The 2021 Global Risks Report has now been published, alongside a call for the world to 'wake up to long term risks'.
- 247. b** ICICI Bank announced the launch of a new mobile application for authorised money changers to help customers of any bank get 'ICICI Bank Forex Prepaid Card' swiftly.
- 248. b** Scientists in Beijing have developed a new gene therapy which can reverse some of the effects of ageing in mice and extend their lifespans, findings which may one day contribute to similar treatment for humans.
- 249. c** Qatar Airways has become the first global airline in the world to achieve the prestigious 5-Star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating by international air transport rating organisation, Skytrax.
- 250. a** Joint exercise of Indian Air Force and Air and Space force of France Desert Night-21 commenced at Jodhpur Airforce station.
- 251. a** Union Minister for Fisheries Dr. Giriraj Singh has said that the Centre has invested 27 thousand crore rupees for schemes relating to blue economy.
- 252. b** Union Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated the first small-scale LNG supply infrastructure of Shell Energy India at its LNG terminal at Hazira in Gujarat.
- 253. b** A large scale Joint Military exercise - Exercise Kavach involving assets of Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and Indian Coast Guard will be conducted in the coming week under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- 254. b** Union Home Minister Amit Shah has said that the Modi Government will provide a home to every citizen of the country by August 2022.

- 255. b** Mongolia's Prime Minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa submitted his resignation to parliament after protests in the capital Ulaanbaatar over the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 256. d** Indian-origin Kamala Harris was sworn in as America's first woman Vice President during a historic inauguration at the West Front of the Capitol. Harris the 49<sup>th</sup> US Vice President.
- 257. a** Spain is by far Europe's busiest subsidy-free photo-voltaic market, and leads the sector's booming growth in the region.
- 258. a** The world's first ammonia fuel-ready vessel is under construction for Greek shipowner Avin International at a Chinese shipyard.
- 259. b** International Holocaust Remembrance Day is an international memorial day on 27 January commemorating the tragedy of the Holocaust that occurred during the Second World War.
- 260. c** India named Jayant Khobragade as its next ambassador to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) secretariat in Jakarta, months after Pakistan declined to accept his posting as the deputy chief of mission in Islamabad.
- 261. c** In Madhya Pradesh, WIPRO group is all set to act as knowledge partner of the State Government.
- 262. b** With the country's premier semi-high speed rapid rail coming up between Delhi and Meerut, India is all set to adopt the European Train Control System (ETCS) in mainline railways for the very first time.
- 263. b** Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Roorkee signed an MoU in New Delhi for continuation of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways Professorial Chair focusing on research and development, teaching and training in the area of Development of Highway Infrastructure.
- 264. c** Ladakh's tableau depicts the iconic Thiksey Monastery located on top of a hill in Thikse in Leh district, and is one of the most-visited tourist sites in the region.
- 265. d** Lloyd J. Austin, a West Point graduate who rose to the Army's elite ranks and marched through racial barriers in a 41-year career, won Senate confirmation to become the nation's first Black secretary of defense.
- 266. a** Madhya Pradesh has become the first state to get additional funds for capital projects for successfully carrying out reforms in various citizen-centric areas.
- 267. c** The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has stepped up to 65<sup>th</sup> position in overall turnover ranking from 125<sup>th</sup> position in last financial year and now is at the top spot among 300 leading cooperatives in the world.
- 268. c** India's largest multi-modal logistic park will come up at Virochan Nagar near Sanand in Ahmedabad district of Gujarat.
- 269. b** India sent 1 million doses of a COVID vaccine to Nepal as a gift under the 'Vaccine Maitri' Initiative.
- 270. d** On 25 January, National Tourism Day is observed every year to raise awareness of the importance of tourism for the country's economy.
- 271. c** Indian mathematician Nikhil Srivastava, has been named winner of the prestigious 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize along with two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison–Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs.
- 272. d** In Kargil of Ladakh Union territory, the Union Tourism Minister Mr Prahlad Singh Patel has inaugurated a branch of Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering (IISM).

- 273. a** Neta Ji was born in Cuttack, Odisha.
- 274. a** A new scheme has been initiated in Sirohi district, Rajasthan to make people aware about importance of nourishment of pregnant women and children. The scheme called Ek Paudha Suposhit Beti Ke Naam or 'A plant on the name of well-nourished daughter' has been started under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme of the union government.
- 275. c** Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society and Dr. Rajendra Kumar Bhandari have been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar for their excellent work in Disaster Management.
- 276. a** Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the Ayushman CAPF health scheme in Guwahati for about 28 lakh personnel of Central Armed Police Forces
- 277. b** The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by the Conference (by a vote of 122 States in favour, with one vote against and one abstention) at the United Nations on 7 July 2017, and opened for signature by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20 September 2017.
- 278. a** Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the Union Budget mobile app even as final stages of FY 2021-22 Budget preparation began with the Halwa ceremony.
- 279. a** Two new species of a rare ant genus have been discovered in Kerala and Tamil Nadu by a team of scientists, the Department of Science and Technology.
- 280. a** The Hawk-i project seeks to equip the trainer jet with combat capabilities through an internally-funded HAL programme.
- 281. c** Making the announcement state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said that Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar inaugurated the initiative at Yerawada Central Jail on the Republic Day.
- 282. b** The state Cabinet cleared the Goa Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill to make retired High Court Judges also eligible for Lokayukta's post.
- 283. b** Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in the country with two airstrips on expressways to facilitate emergency landing and take-off of fighter planes.
- 284. a** Kuwait's emir has reappointed Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah as prime minister, after the cabinet resigned last week in a standoff with parliament over its vote to question the premier.
- 285. c** The report said that 32,716 large dams (55% of the world's total) are found in just four Asian countries: China, India, Japan, and South Korea - a majority of which will reach the 50-year threshold relatively soon.
- 286. b** Reliance Industries Ltd chairman Mukesh Ambani has moved up two spots to become the 11<sup>th</sup> richest person in the world, according to Bloomberg Billionaires Index.
- 287. a** SAIL with the help of the Centre is planning to set up India's first gas to ethanol plant at its ferro alloy plant in Chandrapur in Maharashtra.
- 288. a** Thirty-two children have been awarded the 'Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar' this year for their exceptional abilities and outstanding accomplishments in the fields of innovation, scholastics, sports, arts, culture, social service and bravery.
- 289. a** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed the country's first indigenous machine pistol ASMI.



- 290. c** In order to encourage more young voters to take part in the political process, Government of India has decided to celebrate January 25 every year as “National Voters' Day”.
- 291. a** The Ministry of Tourism organizes Bharat Parv every year since 2016 in front of the ramparts of the Red Fort on the occasion of Republic Day Celebrations.
- 292. c** Nation is celebrating its 72<sup>nd</sup> Republic Day.
- 293. c** Giuseppe Conte resigned as Italian prime minister, hoping to be granted a fresh mandate by the head of state to form a new government after a coalition rupture left him without a majority in the Senate.
- 294. a** Bangladesh Liberation War fighter Lt. Col. (Retd.) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir and well known musicologist, Rabindra Sangeet exponent and academic Sanjida Khatun from Bangladesh have been awarded the Padma Shri for the year 2021. Padma awards are one of the highest civilian awards of the country.
- 295. b** The US Senate has confirmed eminent economist Janet Yellen as the first woman Treasury Secretary of the United States.
- 296. c** “The committee, led by chairman TP Rajendran, former assistant director general of ICAR, is likely to submit its report in three months.
- 297. a** Indian-American Sean Desai has been named new defensive coordinator for Chicago Bears, making him the first National Football League (NFL) Coordinator of South Asian and Indian descent.
- 298. b** A resident of Chhattisgarh’s Durg, Radhe Shyam Barle has been associated with the state’s Panthi folk dance since his childhood.
- 299. c** World Leprosy Day is observed internationally every year on the last Sunday of January to increase the public awareness of Leprosy or Hansen's disease.
- 300. c** Kaushambi district of Uttar Pradesh has been declared Corona free. This is the first district of the state where not a single person has the infection of coronavirus.
- 301. c** The 15-member Cabinet of Prime Minister Kaja Kallas took office after lawmakers in Estonia's parliament approved the government appointed by President Kersti Kaljulaid.
- 302. a** Flight Lieutenant Bhawana Kanth, the first woman in India to qualify for combat mission in a fighter jet became the first woman fighter pilot to participate in the Republic Day fly-past.
- 303. d** India’s first snow igloo café has come up at Gulmarg, one of the Asia’s premier ski resorts situated in the Pir Panjal Range of the Himalayas at an altitude of 2,650 m (8,694 ft) and about 56 km from capital Srinagar.
- 304. a** Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) has conducted the successful maiden launch of Akash-NG (New Generation) Missile from Integrated Test Range off the coast of Odisha.
- 305. c** Japan’s Kawasaki Heavy Industries has announced the completion of the Kobe LH2 Terminal, the world’s first liquefied hydrogen receiving terminal.
- 306. d** In its latest update, the IMF projected a 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021.

- 307. b** Gondwana Theme Park or Gondwana Theme Village will be set up in Nagpur to introduce the culture of Vidarbha tribals to the global tourists along with wild tourism.
- 308. a** Uttar Pradesh will soon have its first sports university in Meerut after the state cabinet approved the State Sports University Bill 2021 draft.
- 309. b** The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Meghalaya was selected for a Special Award for Information Technology applications in Elections by the Election Commission of India (ECI), in the National Best Electoral Practices Awards-2020.
- 310. c** Annually held on January 26, International Customs Day (ICD) recognizes the role of custom officials and agencies in maintaining border security.
- 311. c** The country's first centralised AC railway terminal is all set to come up in Bengaluru.
- 312. b** Electronics, Information Technology and Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad launched a virtual intelligence tool Tejas.
- 313. a** The Textiles Committee of the Ministry of Textiles has signed a Memorandum of Understanding- MoU with Nissenken Quality Evaluation Centre, Japan to boost export of Textile and Apparel to Japanese market.
- 314. b** Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the World Economic Forum's Davos Dialogue through video conferencing.
- 315. a** Chandigarh University has become the first Indian University to have signed Memorandum-of-Understanding (MoUs) with World's Top 306 Universities under its International Academic Alliance (IAA) flagship program.
- 316. c** FDI into India up 37 percent to USD 43.85 billion during April-November 2020
- 317. a** Accenture retained the title of world's most valuable and strongest IT services brand with record brand value of \$26 billion, while IBM continued at the second place with brand value of \$16.1 billion.
- 318. c** Jane Fonda to be honoured with Cecil B. DeMille Award at Golden Globes for her decorated career & 'unrelenting activism.
- 319. a** World's first hydrogen-powered double decker buses go into service in Aberdeen.
- 320. d** The Kerala government is all set to launch Rs 300 crore three-tower first 'Gender Park' in Kozhikode
- 321. a** Uttar Pradesh government will establish the first leather park of the country in Kanpur district. The park is expected to provide employment to 50 thousand people directly and more than 1 lakh 50 thousand people indirectly.
- 322. c** India has joined the world to Light Up Qutub Minar as a sign of unity to combat the Neglected Tropical Diseases.
- 323. a** Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Prakash Javadekar has released Marine Mega Fauna Stranding Guidelines and the National Marine Turtle Action Plan in New Delhi.
- 324. a** For the first time in India, the West Bengal Transport Corporation has introduced a boat library on Hoogly River in association with a heritage book store.
- 325. b** Pakistan has received the Geographical Indicator (GI) tag for its Basmati, paving the way for creating a local registry for the particular strain of rice.

- 326. b** In the US, veteran Indian-American Congressman Ami Bera has been re-elected as chairman of the House Foreign Subcommittee on Asia, Pacific, Central Asia and Non-proliferation.
- 327. c** India's rank has slipped six places to 86<sup>th</sup> among 180 countries in corruption perception index (CPI) in 2020.
- 328. c** The second annual World NTD Day was marked on 30<sup>th</sup> January. The day highlights the global community's commitment to end the NTD. The diseases cause immeasurable suffering among the world's most marginalized communities.
- 329. a** In a major landmark, Telecom major Bharti Airtel announced that it has become the India's first telecom operator to successfully demonstrate and orchestrate LIVE 5G service over a commercial network in Hyderabad city
- 330. c** L&T Construction, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Larsen & Toubro conglomerate, announced the completion of India's first 3D printed two-storey building, as claimed by the company.
- 331. a** Uttar Pradesh was adjudged the best tableau among the 32 tableaux that participated in the Republic Day Parade this year.
- 332. a** The Rs 945 crore Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) will be operational from April 1, 2021, to 2025 as the government looks to boost the ecosystem, providing the crucial capital for young companies.
- 333. d** Uttar Pradesh came at the bottom among the large and mid-sized states when it came to overall delivery of justice, according to the India Justice Report (IJR) 2020.
- 334. c** Five Eyes is a network of five nations – Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the US who collaborated to better respond to increasing threats by North Korea and China.
- 335. d** India has ranked 86<sup>th</sup> in a coronavirus performance index out of 98 countries.
- 336. c** The results of the Peoples' Climate Vote, the world's biggest ever survey of public opinion on climate change are published. It is covering 50 countries with over half of the world's population
- 337. a** Agreement for the financial support of the implementation of Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) project of Ministry of Education was signed between Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) and World Bank along with Ministry of Education.
- 338. a** HDFC Bank and CSC e-Governance Services, announced the launch of EMI Collection Services for CSC-HDFC Bank's business correspondents across the country.
- 339. a** Union Government said that country's V-Shaped Economic Recovery happened due to Mega Vaccination Drive, Robust Recovery in the Services Sector and Robust Growth in Consumption and Investment.
- 340. b** The Lucknow Metro has become the first metro in India to use ultraviolet (UV) rays to sanitise train coaches.
- 341. a** The world's first 'hybrid' air show – Aero India – is organised in Bengaluru from 3 to 5 February.
- 342. c** India and the US are kicked off a major combat exercise in Rajasthan in the first such bilateral wargame after the Biden administration took charge in Washington
- 343. a** A first of its kind arboretum conserving over 210 species of trees found in the Shivalik range of Himalayas was inaugurated in Uttarakhand's Nainital district.

- 344. b** World Wetlands Day is celebrated on the second day of February every year, though it was not originally celebrated until 1997.
- 345. a** The first batch of 15 excited, wide-eyed tourists entered the hallowed portals of the iconic BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) building – the headquarters of Asia’s richest civic body which administers India’s commercial capital – for the inaugural ‘Heritage Walk’.
- 346. b** State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other senior leaders from the ruling party of Myanmar National League for Democracy (NLD) have been detained.
- 347. d** The trade agreement formed in 2018 which includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.
- 348. c** India has been ranked 10<sup>th</sup> among 11 Asia Pacific countries in a newly-launched “Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index‘ by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).
- 349. b** In Cricket, Tamil Nadu lifted the coveted Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy after defeating Baroda by seven wickets in the final at the Sardar Patel Stadium in Ahmedabad.
- 350. d** The Indian Coast Guard is celebrated its 45<sup>th</sup> Raising Day on 1<sup>st</sup> February.

