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PREFACE

This is our special edition of Current Affairs Magazine for UPSC Civil Services Examination & Other Central & State Government Job Examinations, released for the month of December 2020.

The Magazine is divided into three sections:

Section 1: Topic Wise Current Affairs in ShortPage 2 to Page 69

The first section is dedicated for Topic Wise 1 Liner Current Affairs to provide information about all major happenings in this month.

Section 2: Detailed Analysis of important eventsPage 70 to Page 164

The Second Section is dedicated to Civil Services Aspirants and covers some major happenings in this month along with analysis. The Content part has been created as per the present shift in the examination pattern of the Civil Services Examination. The magazine will cover your syllabus of 'General Studies - II & General Studies - III'. The content has been covered from various online & offline sources including reputed newspapers like The Hindu, Indian Express etc. All the news topics have been explained keeping in mind their underlying issues. Every issue has been covered comprehensively. Some of the information provided may not be directly relevant for the examination. As the content is very wide, we have only covered a limited set of issues. You can utilize it smartly along with the Daily Study of News Papers as well as your other sources.

Section 3: Practice Questions.....Page 165 to Page 201

The Third Section contains 100 Multiple Choice Questions based on daily current affairs.

SECTION 1

Topic Wise Current Affairs in short

NATIONAL

Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar Launches Sahakar Pragma initiative with 45 new training module for cooperative sector



- The **Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar**, recently unveiled a new initiative called **Sahakar Pragma**.
- Sahakar Pragma is an initiative of **National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)**, to help in capacity development of cooperative sector in India, through training programme.
- Under this initiative, **45 new training modules** have been developed for the farmers and would be imparted to primary cooperative societies in rural areas of the country by NCDC.
- Narendra Singh Tomar is the Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Rural Development, Panchayat Raj and Food Processing Industries.

Union Minister Arjun Munda e-launches first-ever Virtual Aadi Mahotsav with focus on Madhya Pradesh



- The Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Shri Arjun Munda, launched the **first-ever virtual edition of Aadi Mahotsav – Madhya Pradesh** on 01 December 2020.
- The 10-day long festival, will begin from December 1, 2020.
- It is being hosted on the **Tribes India website – www.tribesindia.com**.
- The main focus of the first virtual Aadi Mahotsav is on the tribal craft and culture of Madhya Pradesh.
- The next focus state of the programme would be Gujarat (from 11th December 2020), followed by West Bengal from the 21st December, 2020.

About Aadi Mahotsav

- Aadi Mahotsav is a national tribal festival and a joint initiative of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED).
- The festival showcases traditional art and handicrafts and cultural heritage of the country.
- The objective of TRIFED is socio-economic development of tribal people in the country by way of marketing development of the tribal products.

Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat Inaugurates Suryadhar Lake in Dehradun



- **Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat** inaugurated the **Suryadhar lake at Doiwala in Dehradun** on 29 November 2020.
- The Suryadhar lake is located at the trijunction of **Haridwar, Rishikesh and Dehradun**, and has been built at a cost of **Rs 50.25 crore**.
- It is 550 metres long, 28 metres wide and 10 metres deep with a capacity of 77,000 cubic metres.

Benefits of Suryadhar lake

- The lake will address the drinking water and irrigational needs of nearly 20 villages around it.
- It would also become a major tourist and water sports destination.
- Farmers of the area will get water from the lake to irrigate their lands for twelve months in a year.
- The lake will recharge the water resources in the area and help build a healthy eco-system which will attract migratory birds.

West Bengal launches massive 'Duare Sarkar' outreach campaign ahead of 2021 assembly polls



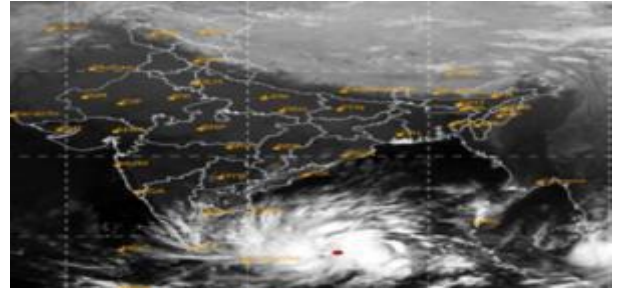
- The **West Bengal** Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has launched a massive campaign titled '**Duare Sarkar**' (**government at doorsteps**) to aware people about the **11 state-run welfare schemes** and help them avail its benefits.
- The two month-long outreach programme has been launched keeping in view the **2021 state assembly elections which are due in April-May**.
- The campaign will continue from **December 1, 2020 to January 30, 2021**, in four phases, with slogan 'jar jekhane darkar, asche apnar duare sarkar' (government will be at your doorsteps whenever you need it).
- The 11 schemes will be made available to the beneficiaries through camps set up for the purpose.

Indian Army Successfully Testfires Anti-Ship version of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile from Andaman and Nicobar Islands



- India successfully test-fired the **anti-ship version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile** from the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory** on 01 December 2020.
- The test was conducted as part of the ongoing trials being conducted by the Indian Navy.
- Recently the land-attack version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was also successfully test-fired from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory on 24 November.
- The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile is the world's fastest operational system in its class.

Cyclonic Storm 'Burevi' lay centered over southwest Bay of Bengal



- The Deep Depression formed over the southeast and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal has intensified into a **Cyclonic Storm 'Burevi'** over **southwest Bay of Bengal**.
- It is about 240 km east-southeast of Trincomalee (Sri Lanka), 470 km east-southeast of Pamban (Tamil Nadu) and 650 km nearly east-northeast of Kanniyakumari (Tamil Nadu).
- The name of Cyclone '**Burevi**' (**बुरेवि**), has been contributed by the **Maldives**.
- This is the second cyclone formed in the southwest region of the Bay of Bengal within a week.
- Cyclone Alert have been issued for **South Tamilnadu and South Kerala** coasts by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath rings bell at BSE for listing Lucknow Municipal Corporation bonds



- **Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** rang the bell at the **Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE)**, on 2nd December 2020, to mark the listing of bonds of **Lucknow Municipal Corporation on the exchange**.
- The bonds of LMC were launched on November 13, with coupon rate of 8.5 percent and had tenure of 10 years. The issuance had garnered 4.5 times subscription.
- Lucknow is the **ninth city in India** and first from UP, to have raised municipal bonds for fund raising.
- It is also the first city to issue municipal bond after the launch of **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) scheme**.
- Also Lucknow Municipal Corporation is the **first civic body from North India** to issue bond on BSE.
- The funds raised through the bond will be invested in various infrastructure schemes, being implemented under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) Scheme, in Lucknow.
- **Ghaziabad** will be the next city of the state to issue a municipal bond and it will be followed by **Pragayraj**,

Varanasi, Agra and Kanpur.

Karnataka's first 11.5 megawatt power plant run on municipal waste being set up at Bidadi



- In **Karnataka**, **Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa** laid the foundation stone for a **11.5 megawatt power plant based on municipal waste in Bidadi, a town in Bengaluru**.
- It is first of its kind power plant in the state being set up by the Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) and will help in converting 600 tonnes of municipal waste into 11.5 megawatt energy.
- This power plant will add 80.59 million units of power to the existing power grid.
- The power plant project is being constructed at a cost of **Rs. 260 crore** and is likely to be operational by **2022**.

IOCL launches India's first 100 Octane Premium Petrol



- The Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel **Shri Dharmendra Pradhan** launched **India's first indigenously developed '100 Octane premium petrol'** through video conferencing on 1st December 2020.
- The high octane premium grade petrol will be marketed under the brand **'XP-100'**.
- It has been developed by **Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)** at its Mathura refinery in Uttar Pradesh.
- XP-100 will be made available in phased manner across the country and in the first phase, it will be made available in **10 cities**.
- The cities are Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, Agra, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad.
- With this launch, India has joined a select league of nations globally that have such superior quality fuel.. Octane ratings are measures of fuel stability that increases engine efficiency.
- Till date, such quality of fuel is available only in **six countries** including USA, Germany, Greece, Indonesia,

Malaysia and Israel.

Ninth edition of International Sand Art Festival & Konark Festival 2020 begins in Odisha



- The **9th edition of the International Sand Art Festival** and the **31st edition of the Konark Festival**, has kicked-off in **Odisha**. The five days event has been organised from **01 December 2020 till 05 December 2020**.
- International Sand Art Festival is being held at the Chandrabhaga Beach of Konark in **Puri district of Odisha**.
- About 70 artists from across the country are taking part in the festival.
- The world-renowned sand artist and Padmashree Awardee, **Sudarsan Pattnaik**, has been appointed as **Chief Curator of the festival**.
- The festival is organised every year as part of the Konark Dance Festival, to provide a platform for both national and international sand artists to showcase their talent. However, in 2020 international artists are not participating due to the ongoing global Covid-19 pandemic.
- Meanwhile, the Konark Festival is organised by Odisha Tourism to showcase the best of India's traditional and classical dance forms, and offer interesting insights into the rich cultural heritage of the country.
- Leading exponents and dance enthusiasts of almost all classical dance forms of India, including Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri, Kuchipudi and Kathak, are participating in the five-day classical dance carnival.

Newly-built Majerhat Bridge in Kolkata Renamed as "Jai Hind Bridge" To Commemorate 125th Birth Anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose



- **West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata**

Banerjee inaugurated the **newly-built Majerhat bridge in Kolkata** on 3rd December 2020.

- However, the bridge has been renamed as **“Jai Hind” bridge** to pay tribute to **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose** on the occasion of his **125th birth anniversary commemoration** (23 January).
- The 650-meter-long new bridge has been built in the place of an old 2-lane bridge that collapsed in September 2018.
- The cost of developing the bridge is around Rs 311.76 crore
- The new bridge is a four lane cable stayed rail over bridge with double capacity, having a weight capacity of 385 metric tonnes
- The bridge lies on the arterial Diamond Harbour Road, and will connect the central part of the city to the southwestern suburbs of Behala and beyond.

Serum Institute's Adar Poonawalla named among 6 'The Straits Times Asians of the Year 2020' to end Covid-19 pandemic



- **Adar Poonawalla**, the Chief Executive of the **Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII)**, has been named among six **“The Straits Times Asians of the Year” for 2020**, by Singapore's leading daily, The Straits Times, for their work in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.
- SII has collaborated with the University of Oxford and the British-Swedish pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca to develop COVID-19 vaccine, **‘Covidshield’**, and is conducting trials in India.
- The SII was founded by Cyrus Poonawalla (Adar Poonawalla's father) in 1966.
- Adar Poonawalla joined the Serum Institute of India in 2001 and became the CEO of the company in 2011.
- The other five Asians of the Year includes:
 - Chinese researcher Zhang Yongzhen
 - China's Major-General Chen Wei,
 - Japan's Dr Ryuichi Morishita
 - Singapore's Professor Ooi Eng Eong
 - South Korean businessman Seo Jung-jin
- The Straits Times has collectively referred these 6 winners as **“the virus busters”**, because they are heroes of a kind, having devoted themselves to the pressing cause of resolving the coronavirus pandemic, each in their own capacity.

Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana Participates in 7th WASH Conclave Concludes



- The **7th WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) Conclave** was organised in virtual mode from 2 to 4 December 2020 by organised by the **UNICEF and the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR)**.
- The theme of the conclave was **“Hygiene Matters”**.
- Andhra Pradesh Governor **Biswa Bhushan Harichandan** was the Chief Guest at the event.
- The event had participants from **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana** to discuss key issues with particular focus on hygiene and create an opportunity for strengthening collaborations and partnerships among institutions including government dealing with WASH and related programs across three states and districts
- The Government of India has set the target to provide access to and use of safe and adequate drinking water to all households within premises by **2024**.

Space-tech start-up 'Pixxel' to launch remote-sensing satellite on ISRO rocket in early 2021



- The **Bengaluru-based space-technology start-up Pixxel**, has signed a pact with the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** to launch its first remote-sensing satellite on Isro's workhorse **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket in early 2021**.
- Earlier, the startup had planned to launch this satellite towards the end of 2020 and on a Russian Soyuz rocket.
- The agreement was signed between Pixxel with **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), a Government of India** company under the Department of Space.
- This agreement with NSIL is first-of-a-kind private earth-observation mission 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 aims to put a constellation of **30 earth observation**

micro-satellites into a sun-synchronous orbit by mid-2023.

- The data through these satellites will help in various sectors, ranging from agriculture to urban monitoring, such as track on air and water pollution levels, forest biodiversity and health, coastal and marine health, and changes in the urban landscape.

PM Modi virtually inaugurates Construction work of Agra Metro project in Uttar Pradesh



- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the construction work of the **Agra Metro project in Agra, Uttar Pradesh** through video conferencing on 7th December 2020
- The Agra Metro project comprises **2 corridors with a total length of 29.4 km.**
- It would connect major tourist attractions like Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Sikandra with railway stations and bus stands.
- The estimated cost of the project will be around **Rs 8,379.62 crore.** It will be completed in **5 years.**
- The Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation (UPMRC) has set the target to complete the first phase of the Agra Metro Rail Project by December 2022.
- Once operational, the project will boost 'Ease of Living' of the 26 lakh population of the city and also cater to more than 60 lakh tourists who visit Agra every year.
- It will also provide an environment-friendly Mass Rapid Transit System to the city.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Wins 2020 King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award of FAO



- The **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**, has won the prestigious International **King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award** for 2020, presented annually by the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** [Headquarter – Rome, Italy].
- The award was conferred to the ICAR on the occasion of World Soil Day, on December 5, through video conferencing.
- ICAR has been conferred the award for its commitment to raising awareness of the importance of healthy soils at the World Soil Day celebration in 2019, which addressed soil

erosion under the motto **"Stop soil erosion, save our future".**

- The programme was organised by Bhopal-based Indian Institute of Soil Science, an autonomous institute for higher learning, established under the umbrella of Indian Council of Agricultural Research.
- ICAR India will officially receive the award by Her Royal Highness, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand, during an event in Bangkok in January 2021.
- The King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award was launched in 2018, to acknowledge individuals or institutions that raise public awareness of soils by organising successful and influential World Soil Day celebrations. The award is sponsored by the Kingdom of Thailand.

PM Modi Inaugurates virtual India Mobile Congress 2020



- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated and addressed the virtual edition of the **India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2020** on 8th December 2020 through video conference.
- The theme for IMC 2020 is **"Inclusive Innovation – Smart, Secure, Sustainable".**
- The three day event will be held from **8th to 10th December 2020.**
- IMC 2020 has been organised by the **Department of Telecommunications**, Government of India, and the **Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).**
- The objective of IMC 2020 is to align with the Prime Minister's vision to promote **'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', 'Digital Inclusivity', and 'Sustainable development, entrepreneurship & innovation'** and drive foreign and local investments, encourage R&D in the telecom and emerging technology sectors.

Gwalior and Orchha Cities of Madhya Pradesh Included in UNESCO World Heritage Cities List



- The historical fort cities of **Gwalior and Orchha in Madhya Pradesh** have been included in the list of **UNESCO's world heritage cities** under its The World Heritage Cities Programme.
- Under the plan UNESCO will suggest best measures and resources for the development and beautification of these places as per the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape

recommendations.

Invest India Wins 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award 2020



- The **Geneva-based United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)** has awarded the **2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award** to **Invest India**, the National Investment Promotion Agency of India.
- The Invest India was declared the winner from among the **180 global Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs)**.
- The response of IPAs to the COVID-19 pandemic was the basis for the evaluation of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.
- The annual award recognizes and celebrates the outstanding achievements and best practices of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) across the globe.

Mt Everest declared 86 cm taller by Nepal and China



- The world's highest mountain peak '**Mount Everest**' has become **taller by 0.86m**, as per a survey conducted jointly by **Nepal and China**.
- The Government of Nepal and China jointly conducted an exercise to measure the world's highest peak.
- The new height of Mt Everest, has been calculated at **8,848.86 metres**, which is 0.86m more than the previous measurement done by India in 1954.
- In **1955**, the height of Mount Everest was measured at **8848 m (29,028 feet) by the Survey of India**.
- In Tibetan language, Mount Everest is known as Mount Qomolangma while in Nepalese language it is famous as Sagar-Matha.

Union Cabinet Approves Historic PM-WANI Scheme



- The Union Cabinet has approved a scheme called the **Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Initiative (PM-WANI)** on 9th December 2020, to improve wireless connectivity and pave the way for free wireless internet in public spaces across the country
- In simple words, the scheme will allow anyone, from an individual in a residential area to a Kirana shop owner to a tea shop vendor, to set up public Wi-Fi hotspot and deliver wifi services.
- It aims to promote the growth of public wi-fi networks in the country.

PM-WANI scheme will be operated by following players

- **Public Data Office (PDO):** It will establish, maintain, and operate only WANI compliant Wi-Fi Access Points and deliver broadband services to subscribers. (tea shop, or kirana shop, individual or any organisation.)
- **Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA):** It will look after functions relating to Authorization and Accounting of PDOs.
- **App Provider:** It will develop an App to register users and discover WANI compliant Wi-Fi hotspots in the nearby area and display the same within the App for accessing the internet service.
- **Central Registry:** It will maintain the details of App Providers, PDOAs, and PDOs. To begin with, the Central Registry will be maintained by C-DoT.

Cabinet approves Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)



- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for **Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)** to boost employment in formal sector by encouraging the businesses to do fresh hiring amid the pandemic.
- ABRY will also incentivize creation of new employment opportunities under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0.
- Cabinet has approved an expenditure of **Rs.22,810 crore for the Scheme**.
- The ABRY will run from **2020-2023**.
- **Rs. 1,584 crore** has been earmarked for the current financial year 2020-21 for the scheme.

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari Inaugurates 1.5 km Koilwar bridge over Sone river in Bihar



- The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the **1.5 km long Koilwar bridge over Sone river in Bihar** through Video Conferencing on 10 December 2020.
- The total cost of setting up this **three-lane bridge is estimated at Rs 266 crore**. The bridge is major road for transport between Bihar and UP.
- This newly inaugurated bridge is a part of the **six-lane bridge** being made in place of existing **two-lane bridge**, for both rail and road traffic, which is 138 years old.
- Once this six-lane bridge is fully operational, the traffic on NH-922 and NH-30 will ease substantially.

First-of-its-kind National Centre for Divyang Empowerment inaugurated in Telangana



- The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, G Kishan Reddy inaugurated the **National Centre for Divyang Empowerment (NCDE)** at the **CRPF Group Centre in Hakimpet near Hyderabad in Telangana** on 10th December 2020.
- The NCDE is first of its kind establishment to re-skill and rehabilitate the Divyang Warriors of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) who suffered life threatening injuries in line of duty.
- Several market driven expertise like computer skills and various sports skills will be imparted on the Divyang Warriors to empower them and enable them to serve the force and the country. All possible assistance and cooperation will be extended for the welfare of the Divyang Warriors.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses International Bharati Festival 2020 Virtually



- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the **International Bharathi Festival 2020** through video conferencing on **11th December 2020**.
- The festival was organised by **Vanavil Cultural Centre in Chennai** to celebrate the 138th birth anniversary of **Mahakavi Subramanya Bharathi**, an eminent writer, poet and journalist from Tamil Nadu.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi also conferred the **2020 Bharathi Award** to the noted writer **Seenil Viswanathan**, who is credited with compiling the voluminous works of Bharathi in chronological order..
- The Bharathi Award is conferred every year since 1994, to eminent persons who have done laudable service in any field of social relevance.

5th India Water Impact Summit Begins



- The **5th India Water Impact Summit (IWIS)** kicked off on 10th December 2020 virtually. The five day programme will conclude on 15 December 2020.
- The event was inaugurated by **Ratan Lal Kataria, Minister of State for Jal Shakti**
- IWIS 2020 has been organised by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** and the **Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga)** to discuss water-related issues and steps taken to save the planet's most precious resource.
- Objective of IWIS 2020 is **Comprehensive Analysis and Holistic Management of Rivers and Water Bodies**.
- Theme of IWIS 2020 is **Arth Ganga : River Conservation Synchronised Development**.
- The conference will have comprehensive analysis and review of river rejuvenation and local river. It will also have deliberation about Arth Ganga, i.e. how river conservation synchronised development can take place.

Lakshadweep Becomes India's First UT to be declared 100% Organic



- The Ministry of Agriculture has declared **Lakshadweep as India's first Union Territory to become 100 percent organic.**
- All farming activity in the UT is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, which provides access to safer food choices and making agriculture a more environment-friendly activity.
- Lakshadweep is **second only to Sikkim**, which was India's first state to be declared completely organic.

BSNL launches World's First Satellite-based Narrowband-IoT Network



- **Bharat Sanchar Nigam (BSNL)** has partnered with **Skylo**, a global machine connectivity solutions company, to launch **satellite-based narrow band-Internet of things (NB-IoT).**
- This initiative is the world's first satellite-based NB-IoT network.
- The new indigenous IoT solution has been developed by Skylo and will connect with BSNL's satellite-ground infrastructure to provide PAN-India coverage, including Indian seas.
- To begin with, the solution will be extended to fishermen, farmers, construction, mining and logistics enterprises.
- The solution is in line with BSNL's vision to leverage technology to provide affordable and innovative telecom services and products across India's core sectors.

BSE launches e-agricultural spot market platform 'BEAM'



- **BSE Ltd.** has launched an **electronic spot platform, BSE E-Agricultural Markets Ltd (BEAM)**, for **agricultural commodities** through its subsidiary **BSE Investments Ltd.**

- BEAM will function as a national level, institutionalised, electronic, transparent commodity spot trading platform in line with the Prime Minister's vision to create a single market.
- With the help of BEAM, farmers in one state will be able to reach out to markets in other states and auction their produce.
- The farmers will be able to discover best prices for their produce based on the quality, as well as build capacity to help intermediaries, processors and exporters procure from states.

NITI Aayog releases 'Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India'



- NITI Aayog has released a white paper titled **'Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India'** on 14 December 2020.
- The 'Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India' is a continuation of the work on **Health Systems Strengthening.**
- Public health surveillance (PHS) is an important function, requiring primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of care.
- The white paper lays out India's vision 2035 for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system into Ayushman Bharat.

Maharashtra Government Introduces Unified Development Control Rules for Real Estate



- The Government of **Maharashtra** has approved the **Unified Development Control and Promotion Regulations, (UDCPR)**, to strengthen and bring uniformity in the real estate construction laws of the state.
- The new set of rules will apply on all municipal corporations, councils and nagar panchayats in the entire state except Mumbai and some neighbouring areas like hill stations, eco-sensitive zones and specified corporation areas.
- This uniform set of regulations will specify everything from height of buildings to the width of roads and size of amenity spaces.
- It will help to increase the stock of affordable housing

projects and improve ease of doing business as well as help the developers to improve their resource management.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson to be 2021 Republic Day of India Chief Guest



- **British Prime Minister Boris Johnson** will be the chief guest at the **2021 Republic Day celebrations of India**, on 26 January 2021.
- This was confirmed by British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, during his bilateral visit to India on 14 December 2020.
- Johnson is the sixth person from the UK to be the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations of India.
- India will be observing **72nd Republic Day** on 26 January 2021.

GRSE Launches 'Himgiri', First of Three Ships under Project 17A



- The **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE)**, Kolkata has launched 'Himgiri', which is the **first of the three ships, being built under Project 17A** at GRSE.
- Himgiri made her first contact with the waters of Hoogly River on 14th December 2020.
- P17A ships are the first gas turbine propulsion and largest combat platforms ever built at GRSE.
- Under the Project 17A program, a total of seven ships are being built with four at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three ships at GRSE.
- These ships will have enhanced stealth features, advanced indigenous weapon and sensor fit along with several other improvements for the Indian Navy.

PM Modi inaugurates world's largest, 30,000 MW renewable energy park in Kutch



- **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi** laid the foundation stone of the **30,000 megawatt (MW) capacity hybrid renewable energy park in Kutch district of Gujarat** on 15 December 2020.
- It will be the largest renewable energy park of its kind in the world.
- It is expected to play a major role in fulfilling India's vision of generating **450 GW (4,50,000 mw) of power by 2030**.

Key features of the renewable energy park

- The park is being constructed between **Khawda and Vighakhot villages** near India-Pakistan border
- The renewable park will have **two dedicated zones**, one each for the **wind energy and solar energy**.
- It will be spread over **72,600 hectares of waste land**, including 49,600 hectares for solar project and 23,000 hectares of land for wind power.

ISRO sets up dedicated control centre 'NETRA' for Space Situational Awareness

- The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has set up a dedicated **Space Situational Awareness (SSA) Control Centre**, at its **ISTRAC campus at Peenya, Bangalore**.
- The ISRO SSA Control Centre '**NETRA**' was formally inaugurated by ISRO Chairman K Sivan on December 14.



What is Space Situational Awareness (SSA)?

- SSA is the science of tracking objects (man-made and natural) that are in orbit and also predicting what they would be at a given point in time.
- Only the **US, Russia and Europe** have similar facility in place to track space objects and share collision warnings.

What is NETRA?

- The "**NETwork for space object TRacking and Analysis (NETRA)**" will monitor, track and protect India's space assets. It will function as a hub of all SSA activities within

India.

- It has been set up as a '**Directorate of Space Situational Awareness and Management (DSSAM)**' aiming to protect high valued space assets from space debris close approaches and collisions.
- The state-of-the-art facility, dedicated to SSA activities, will also help to coordinate between Indian agencies, their foreign counterparts and international bodies.
- The main elements of NETRA would be a **radar, an optical telescope facility, and a control centre.**

ISRO successfully launches India's new communication satellite CMS-01 from Sriharikota onboard PSLV-C50



- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** successfully launched the **new communication satellite CMS-01, from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota**, on 17th December 2020.
- The workhorse rocket PSLV-C50 was used to carry the satellite in the intended orbit in space.

Key features of CMS-01

- The new satellite CMS-01 will replace the ageing telecommunication satellite **GSAT-12**.
- The operational life of CMS-01 is **seven years**.
- GSAT-12 rendered seamless service for over ten years, since its launch in 2011, though having a mission life of eight years.
- CMS-01 is the **42nd communications satellite of India**, and first in the new CMS series of communication satellites.
- The new satellite is expected to provide coverage over the entire country in cases of disaster management and satellite internet connection.

Centre to dedicate a Museum on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in Kolkata on 125th birth anniversary



- The Government of **India** has proposed to set up a **museum dedicated to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, in Kolkata**, as a tribute on his **125th birth anniversary celebrations on 23rd January 2021**.
- The government has also decided to expand the **current museum of Netaji at Red Fort in New Delhi**.
- Apart from this, Centre is also considering to **reprint some of the books written by Subhash Chandra Bose**, and even **start fellowships for students**.
- A large array of historical documents, clippings, photos, videos, memorabilia and other material is available with the families of Bose as well as those of INA members which would be brought together at one place for display and dissemination.

Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad Becomes first zoo in India to get ISO certification from UK



- The **Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad** has received the **ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Standards Certificate from Accreditation Service for Certifying Bodies (ASCB) United Kingdom**.
- With this achievement, the Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad has also become the **first zoo in the country to get this certificate**.
- The assessment of the zoo was conducted in a phased manner by the **HYM International Certifications Pvt Ltd**, an agency accredited by the ASCB.
- The certificate mentioned that it was being accorded to the zoo for, "Conservation of wildlife, particularly endangered species of Deccan through better upkeep, planned breeding, collaborative research and capacity building".

Odisha Government launches Pareshram Portal



- The **Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik** launched a web portal named '**PARESHRAM**' on 17th December 2020, along with 22 other online services of **Labour and Employees' State Insurance (ESI) department**.
- The new portal and online services will help in 'ease of doing business' and contribute significantly to industrial development of the State.

Key features of 'PARESHRAM' Portal

- The 'PARESHRAM' portal will have all the information regarding different labour laws, to help the industries, commercial organisations, small entrepreneurs and the general public.
- It will provide 52 types of services.
- Entrepreneurs can get registration certificate, licence, approval of design of the plant, renewal and other relevant services.
- Application forms for different services and payments will be available

India's first Centre of Excellence for Skill Development in Power Sector inaugurated in Gurugram



- The **Minister of State for Skill Development, Raj Kumar Singh**, inaugurated the first **Centre of Excellence (CoE)** for 'skill development in the power sector' in **Gurugram**.
- The CoE has been established in the campus of National Institute of Solar Energy, Gurugram, Haryana.
- This new centre has been set up by the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of National Education and Youth, Government of France** and **Schneider Electric**.
- It has high-end modern labs designed keeping in mind the future technology, which will further strengthen India and France's relationship in energy sector.
- The centre will design and deliver Training for Trainers,

Instructors, Training of Assessors and other high-end programme in the power and solar sector.

'Varasat' campaign launched in Uttar Pradesh to curb property & land-related disputes in rural areas



- The **Uttar Pradesh** government has launched a special campaign '**Varasat**' (natural succession) to curb property & land-related disputes in rural areas.
- This is a first of its kind campaign in the state which aims to put an end the land-related issues in the rural areas and eradicate the exploitation of the villagers over succession rights by land mafias, who generally target disputed properties..
- The **two-month-long special drive** will continue till 15th February 2020.

Key Feature of Varasat scheme

- Under the arrangements, the villagers will get both online and offline facilities for registering their 'Varasat'.
- For the people who have land in the village but they are living at some other place, a special counter will be opened at the Tehsil-level where they can apply for the same.

Benefits

- People will get proper paper documents of their land property.
- They can even avail loans from banks.
- It would be helpful in minimising disputes and animosity within families and relatives.
- Villagers would also get rid of facing law suits, that sometimes trail for generations.
- All the information related to such land will be uploaded on the website of the revenue board based on which the progress of the scheme will be reviewed.

Government Notifies new "Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020" to give consumers the right to 24x7 supply



- The **Union Power Ministry** has framed the new '**Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules**,

2020, which shall empower the consumers of electricity and give them right to get the reliable services and quality electricity.

- The new Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020, was notified by the **Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Power and New and Renewable Energy, R K Singh** on 21 December 2020.
- These rules provide for **Rights of consumers and Obligations of Distribution licensees**.
- Some key areas covered under the rule includes release of new connection and modification in existing connection, metering arrangement, Billing and Payment among others.
- The distribution licensee shall supply 24x7 power to all consumers. However, the Commission may specify lower hours of supply for some categories of consumers like agriculture.

Union Minister Prakash Javadekar releases 'Status of Leopards in India 2018' report



- The **Union environment minister Shri Prakash Javadekar** released a report titled the '**Status of Leopard in India 2018**'.
- As per the report, the population of leopard in India has increased by **60 percent in four years since 2014**.
- India now has **12,852 leopards as per 2018 estimate**, compared to the previous estimate of 7910 conducted in 2014.
- The States of **Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra** recorded the highest leopard estimates at 3,421, 1,783, and 1,690 respectively.

Dharmendra Pradhan dedicates West Bengal's first and India's 8th oil and gas reserve 'Bengal Basin' to nation



- **Union Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan** dedicated **West Bengal's first oil and gas reserve, 'Bengal Basin', to the nation**.
- The Bengal Basin is explored and owned by **Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)**.

- It is the **eight producing basin of India** by ONGC.
- The other are: Krishna-Godavari (KG), Mumbai Offshore, Assam Shelf, Rajasthan, Cauvery, Assam-Arakan Fold Belt and Cambay.
- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Limited commenced the production of crude oil from the Asokenagar-1 well, Bengal Basin in 24 Paragana district of the state on 20 December 2020.

India successfully test-fires surface-to air missile 'MRSAM' off Odisha coast



- **India** successfully test-fired a **medium range surface-to-air missile (MRSAM)** from **Integrated Test Range (ITR), off Odisha coast**, on 23 December 2020.
- An unmanned air vehicle (UAV), '**Banshee**', was first flown into the air, which was accurately hit by the MRSAM.
- The MRSAM missile has been jointly developed by the DRDO in collaboration with **Israel Aerospace Industries** and has been manufactured by **Bharat Dynamics Ltd.**
- The missile will significantly enhance the combat effectiveness of the defence forces.

Cabinet approves 100% FDI & 20-Year License in DTH broadcasting services sector



The Union Cabinet has approved revised guidelines for **Direct-to-Home (DTH) broadcasting services** on 23rd December 2020.

Key Features of new guidelines

- Allowed **100 percent foreign direct investment (FDI)** in the DTH broadcasting services sector. This FDI cap was limited to 49 percent till now.
- From now on, the DTH services will be issued **licenses for a period of 20 years**, compared to 10 years at the moment. It will also have a renewal provision after every

10 years.

- The license fee has also been revised from 10 percent of gross revenue (GR) to **8 percent of adjusted gross revenue (AGR)**, which will be calculated by deduction of GST from GR.
- The license fee will be collected on **quarterly basis** as against annual basis presently.

India's largest hockey stadium to be set up at Rourkela in Odisha



- A new **world-class hockey stadium** is being set up in **Rourkela city of Odisha**, as announced by the Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.
- The stadium will be constructed in the **Biju Patnaik University of Technology campus, Rourkela**.
- Once operational, the Rourkela city stadium would be the biggest hockey stadium in India.
- It will have a sitting capacity of **20,000 people, spread over 15 acres of land**.
- The stadium will be developed as a benchmark for other hockey stadiums around the world.
- It must be noted that Odisha will be hosting FIH Men's Hockey World Cup for a second consecutive time, in 2034, at two venues, Bhubaneswar and Rourkela.

Niti Aayog Launches Made-in-India Cloud Storage Service 'DigiBoxx'



- **NITI Aayog** has launched indigenously developed **India's first Digital Asset Management and Storage platform**, called '**DigiBoxx**'.
- The home-grown DigiBoxx was launched by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant on 22 December.
- The initiative will give a boost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', as India now has its own cloud storage platform.

- This cloud storage and file sharing service will be available for desktop, iOS, and Android users, including both regular users as well as businesses.
- DigiBoxx offers **free 20GB** cloud storage space, and **100GB** space per month at just **Rs 30**.

US financial body DFC to invest USD 54 million in India to support critical infrastructure projects



- The **United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)** has announced to invest **\$54 million** in India to support the development of critical infrastructure projects in the country in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The DFC will invest this \$54 million in equity for the **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) in India**.
- NIIF will use this capital to support economic growth and address critical development challenges in the country.
- This financing is part of NIIF's final round of fund-raising for the fund.
- DFC is the development finance institution of the United States federal government, primarily responsible for providing and facilitating the financing of private development projects in lower- and middle-income countries.

India's first Lithium refinery to be set up in Gujarat

- **India's first Lithium refinery is soon going to be set up in Gujarat**.
- Manikaran Power Limited, one of the country's largest power trading and renewable energy company will invest around Rs 1,000 crore to set up this refinery.
- The refinery will process Lithium ore to produce battery-grade material.
- The company will import Lithium ore from **Australia** and will be processing in Gujarat.
- Lithium is a rare element and is usually not found in India.

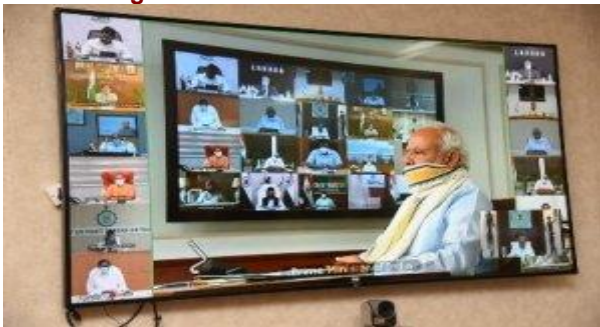
Karnataka Government launches portal 'FRUITS' for farmers

- The Government of **Karnataka** has unveiled an **e-governance portal named 'Farmer Registration and**

Unified beneficiary Information System (FRUITS), for the benefit of the farmers of the state.

- This portal will create a repository of farmland information and farm loan details on a single platform.
- All farmers will be registered and given an identification number on the portal.
- Using this number, banks and other lending institutions can access the land details of farmers as well as details of their existing borrowings and take a quick decision on lending.
- Initially, **Canara Bank** will provide this service under FRUITS on a pilot basis
- If the project is found successful, other financial institutions will be brought on to the portal

PM Modi launches Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY SEHAT to extend coverage to all residents of Jammu & Kashmir



- **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi** has launched a scheme '**Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY SEHAT**' via video-conferencing to extend health insurance coverage to all the residents of **Jammu & Kashmir**.
- Under this scheme, the coverage of Ayushman Yojna will be extended to all the residents of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Currently about 6 lakh families of the state are getting the benefit of Ayushman Bharat Scheme.
- With the SEHAT Scheme, all 21 lakh families will get the benefit of free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh medical expense, on the basis of Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011.
- Apart from this, the treatment under the new scheme will not be limited to government and private hospitals in Jammu and Kashmir only, rather, the treatment can be availed from thousands of hospitals empanelled under this scheme in the country.

India's first tiger reserve hot air balloon safari launched in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve of Madhya Pradesh



- **India's first 'Hot Air Balloon Wildlife Safari'** in a tiger reserve has been launched in the **Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh**.
- It is the first of its type service in any tiger reserve of India. The service is being operated by **Jaipur-based Sky Waltz**.
- Tourists can watch tigers, leopards, Indian sloth bear and other wild animals from a height, and this activity will be restricted to the buffer area.

Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways extends validity of Vehicular documents like DLs, RCs, Permits etc till 31 March 2021



- The **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** has further extended the validity of **vehicular documents** like DLs, RCs, Permits, etc. till **March 31, 2021**, keeping in mind the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Earlier, the ministry had extended the validity of documents, related to Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989, like Fitness Permit (all types), License, Registration or any other concerned document(s), till **31st December 2020**.
- Taking into consideration the need to prevent the spread of COVID-19, these documents would now be valid till 31 March 2021.
- It would cover all documents whose validity has expired since February 01, 2020 or would expire by March 31, 2021.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags off 100th 'Kisan Rail'



- **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi** flagged off the **100th 'Kisan Rail'** on 28th December 2020,

from **Sangola in Maharashtra to Shalimar in West Bengal** via video-conferencing.

- The first Kisan Rail was introduced from Devlali in Maharashtra to Danapur in Bihar on August 7, 2020, which was further extended up to Muzaffarpur.
- Kisan Rail is a mobile cold storage to move perishable things like fruits, vegetables, milk, fish, etc., with complete security.

PM Modi flags off India's first driverless train on Delhi Metro's Magenta Line



- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated **India's first-ever fully-automated driverless train service** on 28 December 2020, **on the Magenta Line of the Delhi Metro**.
- Apart from this, PM also launched fully operational **National Common Mobility Card (NCMC)** on the Airport Express Line of Delhi Metro, to connect DMRC with the NCMC service.
- NCMC, also known as 'One Nation One Card', is an inter-operable transport card that allows the holders all in one service to pay for their travel, toll taxes, parking charges, retail shopping and even withdraw money.

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



- **Indian Space startup, Skyroot Aerospace** has successfully test fired a **solid propulsion rocket engine, named Kalam-5**
- With this, it has become the **first private company of India** to successfully design, develop and test a full solid-fueled rocket stage.
- This crucial propulsion technology will be used for their maiden rocket **Vikram-1**, which is under active manufacturing and is targeted to be launched in December 2021 with the help of ISRO.

- Kalam is a series of five solid-fueled rocket engines with a thrust ranging from 5kN to 1000kN (approx 100Tons).
- The remaining four motors are in various stages of manufacturing and will be tested in 2021.

PM Modi inaugurates New Bhaupur-New Khurja section of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC)



- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** inaugurated the '**New Bhaupur- New Khurja section' of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC)** via video conferencing on 29 December 2020 in Uttar Pradesh.
- The New Bhaupur – New Khurja section of EDFC is **351 km long** and has been built by **TATA Projects Limited**.
- The section will also reduce the congestion level at the existing Kanpur-Delhi mainline and will enable Indian Railways to run faster trains.
- Apart from this, Modi also inaugurated **state-of-the-art Operation Control Centre (OCC) of EDFC at Prayagraj**.
- The Operation Control Centre (OCC) at Prayagraj will act as the command centre for the entire route length of the EDFC.

Union Minister Harsh Vardhan launches first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management 'Digital Ocean' developed by INCOIS

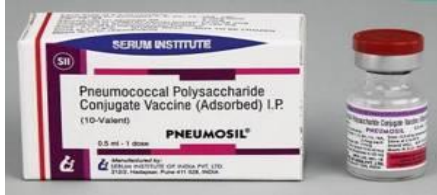


- The **Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Science & Technology, Dr. Harsh Vardhan** virtually inaugurated the web-based application "**Digital Ocean**" on 29 December 2020.
- Digital Ocean is a first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management. It can be accessed at www.do.incois.gov.in.
- It has been developed by **Hyderabad-based Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)** an autonomous organization under M/o Earth sciences.
- Digital Ocean is a step towards Prime Minister's vision of Digital India, to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy
- Digital Ocean will serve as a one stop-solution for all the

data related to ocean.

- It will help to share this knowledge about the ocean with a wide range of users including research institutions, operational agencies, strategic users, academic community, maritime industry and policy makers, as well as general public and the common man that too free of cost..

Harsh Vardhan launches India's first indigenous pneumonia vaccine 'Pneumosil' developed by SII



- The **Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan** launched **India's first indigenously developed vaccine against pneumonia** on 28 December 2020.
- The **Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV)** named '**Pneumosil**' has been developed by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) in collaboration with the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and PATH**, an international, nonprofit global health organization based in Seattle.
- The vaccine will provide protection against 10 variants of pneumococcus bacteria that causes pneumonia, meningitis, ear, and blood infections in children.
- Pneumococcal disease is the largest contributor of **under-five mortality rate** worldwide.

Kerala's 21-yr-old Arya Rajendran becomes India's youngest mayor from Thiruvananthapuram



- Arya Rajendran**, the 21-year-old college student, has been elected the **new mayor of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation**, of Kerala.
- The CPI(M) leader, Arya is the **youngest person in India** to occupy the post of mayor anywhere in the country.
- She won **54 votes out of 99 votes** cast in the civic body polls in Kerala.
- She is also the state president of **Balasangam**, the children's wing of the CPI(M).
- Arya is a second-year student of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) in Mathematics at the All Saints College.

Harsh Vardhan Inaugurates India's highest meteorological centre at Leh in the Union Territory of Ladakh



- The Union Minister of Earth Sciences, **Dr. Harsh Vardhan** inaugurated the **meteorological centre (MC)** of the **India Meteorological Department at Leh in Ladakh** via video conferencing on 29 December 2020.
- The centre would provide localised weather forecasts in the region, which would result in strengthening weather-related early warning system for the region.
- The meteorological centre at Leh is the **second MC located in the Himalayas**. The first such facility is based in **Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh**.
- The facility is located at a height of **3,500 metres, which makes it the highest meteorological centre in India**.
- This new MC will provide short range (three days,) medium range (12 days) and long range (one month) forecast for Leh and Kargil districts of the Union Territory.

Cabinet Approves Export of indigenously-developed Akash Missile System



- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the proposal to export **indigenously-developed Akash Missile System**.
- The Cabinet has also approved to set up of a committee for faster approvals of exports..
- The export version of Akash will be different from System currently deployed with Indian Armed Forces.
- Akash is a **short range Surface to Air Missile with a range of 25 Kms** to protect vulnerable areas and vulnerable points from air attacks.
- It was inducted in IAF in 2014 and in the Indian Army in 2015.

Indian Railways' new Vistadome coach successfully completes 180 kmph speed trial

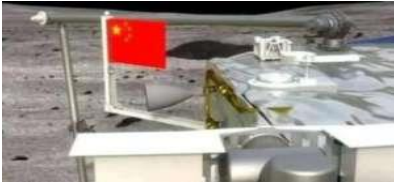


- Recently, the Indian Railways successfully completed the **180 km per hour speed trial of its new design Vistadome tourist coaches**.

- The luxurious tourists coaches have been manufactured by the **Integral Coach Factory in Chennai**.
- These Vistadome coaches will make train journeys memorable for the passengers, as well as give a further boost to tourism
- The **European-style coaches** are made with see-through glass rooftops and wide windows for the indulgent sightseeing experience.
- Currently **13 Vistadome coaches** are being operated on select routes including the Nilgiri Mountain Railway line, Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, Kalka-Shimla Railway, Kangra Valley Railway, Matheran Hill Railway, between Dadar in Mumbai and Madgoan in Araku Valley as well as in the Kashmir Valley.

INTERNATIONAL

China becomes second country after the US to unfurl its flag on Moon



- **China** has become the **second country in the world to unfurl its national flag on the moon** surface.
- Earlier this feat was achieved only by the **USA**, when it planted its flag on the Moon during the Apollo mission in 1969.
- China achieved the historic feat when Chang'e-5 probe of China, which was launched on 24 November to collect soil and rock samples of lunar surface, took off from the moon to return to earth after planting the national flag on 3rd December 2020.
- If the return journey concludes successfully, China become the only third country globally to have samples from the moon.
- Till date, this record is maintained only by the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s.

Bangladesh signs maiden Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) since its independence with Bhutan

Preferential Trade Agreement between Bangladesh and Bhutan

- **Bangladesh** has signed its first **Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Bhutan**, which will allow duty free access to a range of goods between the two countries and hence boost bilateral trade between them.
- This is the **first PTA signed by Bangladesh with any country** in the world since its independence in 1971.
- The PTA was signed on 6th December 2020, to mark 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh

and Bhutan.

- In 1971, Bhutan was the first country in the world to recognise Bangladesh as an independent country.
- Under the PTA, 100 Bangladeshi products will get duty free access to Bhutan, while 34 items from Bhutan will get duty free access into Bangladesh. Further items can be added in the list later on the basis of discussion between the two countries.

World Economic Forum 2021 to be held in Singapore instead of Switzerland



- The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** has decided to host its **2021 annual meeting in Singapore**, which earlier was scheduled to take place in Lucerne-Burgenstock, Switzerland from 13-16 May 2021.
- The decision to shift the annual forum from Switzerland has been taken in view of the Covid-19 situation in Europe.
- This would be the second time since its inception in 1971 that the forum will be held outside Switzerland. In 2002, the forum was held in New York to show solidarity with the American people in the aftermath of 9/11.
- The meeting is generally held in Davos, Switzerland, but amid covid, the meeting was first shifted to Lucerne-Burgenstock, Switzerland in October 2020. Now again the venue has been shifted to Singapore.
- It would return to **Davos, Switzerland, in 2022**.

ADB launches \$9 bn Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX) for Developing Countries



- The Manila-based **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has launched an initiative called, the **Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX)**, for its developing member countries.
- Through APVAX, the ADB will offer rapid and equitable support to its developing members, who need financing to procure vaccines as well as offer appropriate plans and knowledge to be able to safely, equitably and efficiently manage and deliver the COVID-19 vaccine.
- The bank has allocated **USD 9 billion for APVAX**.

UNESCO declares 2021 as 'International Year of Creative

Economy for Sustainable Development' & announces new International Prize in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib



- **UNESCO** has declared the year **2021** as '**International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development**'.
- The decision was taken during the 74th session of the UN General Assembly in November 2019.
- Aim: to raise awareness, promote cooperation and networking, encourage sharing best practices and experiences, enhance human resource capacity, promote an enabling environment at all levels as well as tackle the challenges of creative economy.
- The Paris-based body has now decided to launch an **international prize in the field of 'creative economy' in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**.
- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a Bangladeshi politician, who was called the "**Father of the Nation**" in **Bangladesh**. He served as the first President of Bangladesh.
- The **biennial prize will be given away once in two years, starting from November 2021**. The prize will carry cash reward of **USD 50 thousand**.

Singapore's 'Hawker' Culture serving as 'Community Dining Room' Gets UNESCO Recognition



- The **Hawker Culture of street food in Singapore**, has been inducted by **UNESCO** in its prestigious '**Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**'.
- The Hawker Culture is a popular **Singaporean style of street dining and culinary practices in a multicultural urban environment**.
- Hawker centers are naturally-ventilated premises with stalls selling food from various cultures like Chinese, Malay, Indian, among others.
- The Hawkers of Singapore are known to master a variety of cuisines which they serve at the 'community dining rooms' where people from across all walks of life gather and share their unique experiences.

Myanmar Navy formally commissions INS Sindhuvir submarine, handed over by Indian Navy



- The **Myanmar Navy** has officially inducted the submarine **INS Sindhuvir**, which was handed over by the **Indian Navy to the country in October 2020**.
- INS Sindhuvir was commissioned on 25th December 2020, which marked the **73rd anniversary of the Myanmar Navy**.
- INS Sindhuvir has been renamed as **UMS Minye Theinkhathu** by the Myanmar Navy.
- This is the first submarine in the Myanmar Navy's arsenal.
- It is a diesel-electric Kilo-class submarine, which was in operation in the Indian Navy since 1988.
- The submarine has been refurbished for the Myanmar Navy by state-run defense shipbuilder, Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) in Visakhapatnam.

BANKING & ECONOMY

OECD Projects India's FY21 GDP at -9.9%, & Forecasts Global GDP at -4.2% in 2020



- In its latest economic outlook report, the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** has marginally raised its GDP forecast for India to a **contraction of 9.9% in 2020-21 (FY21)** from its earlier projection of (-)10.2% in September 2020.
- OECD expects the GDP to rebound to **8% in 2021-22 (FY22)** and **5% in 2022-23 (FY23)**.
- In terms of global economy, OECD expects the **world GDP to contract 4.2% in 2020**. This estimate was (-)4.5 percent in September forecast.
- OECD has also projected the world economy to grow by **4.2 percent in 2021** from earlier forecast of 5 percent.
- **For 2022**, Global GDP is projected at **3.7%**.

RBI directs HDFC bank to stop issuance of new credit cards



- The **Reserve Bank of India** has advised **HDFC Bank** to temporarily stop:
 - launch of the digital business activities planned under its **Digital 2.0 program** (to be launched) and
 - issue of new credit cards** to customers
- This step has been taken by RBI in view of repeated outages in the HDFC bank's internet banking/ mobile banking/ payment utilities over the past two years. The latest such event occurred on November 21, 2020. The reason given by HDFC bank for this was power failure in its primary data centre.
- RBI in its order to HDFC bank, has advised the Bank's Board to examine the lapses and fix accountability.

RBI keeps repo rate unchanged at 4%; Predicts GDP for FY21 at -7.5%



- The Reserve Bank of India in its **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meet held between December 2-4, 2020 has kept the policy rates unchanged as under:**
 - Policy Repo Rate- 4.00%
 - Reverse Repo Rate- 3.35%
 - Marginal Standing Facility Rate- 4.25%
 - Bank Rate- 4.25%
 - CRR- 3%
 - SLR- 18.00%
- The MPC continued with the accommodative stance.
- The MPC has predicted the real GDP growth for FY21 at (-)7.5%.

RBI introduces Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) and Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) for Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)



- The **Reserve Bank of India** has allowed the **Scheduled**

Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) to take part in the **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) and Marginal Standing Facility (MSF)** of RBI for better for liquidity management.

- The following Scheduled RRBs will be eligible for the scheme
 - Implemented Core Banking Solution (CBS)
 - There is a minimum CRAR of nine per cent and
 - Fully compliant with the terms and conditions for availing LAF and MSF issued by Financial Markets Operations Department (FMOD), Reserve Bank of India.

RTGS system to be available on 24*7 basis from December 14, 2020



- The **Reserve Bank of India** has announced that the **Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS)** system will be made available round the clock on all days of the year with effect from **00:30 hours on December 14, 2020.**
- Presently RTGS system is available for customers between **7:00 AM and 6:00 PM.**
- RTGS shall continue to be governed by the **RTGS System Regulations, 2013.**
- RTGS shall be available for customer and inter-bank transactions round the clock, except for the interval between 'end-of-day' and 'start-of-day' processes, whose timings would be duly broadcasted through the RTGS system.
- Intra-Day Liquidity (IDL) facility shall be made available to facilitate smooth operations.

RBI increases limit for Processing of e-mandates for recurring transactions on card transactions



- The **Reserve Bank of India** has increased the limit for **processing e-mandates / standing instructions on cards and Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs)** and **UPI** for recurring transactions without the need of **Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA)** from **Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000.**

- The new limit of Rs 5,000/- per transaction will come into effect from **January 1, 2021**.

RBI enhances limit for Card transactions in Contactless mode to Rs 5000



- The **Reserve Bank of India** has increased the limit allowed for **Card transactions in Contactless mode from Rs 2000 to Rs 5000** without the need of an **Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA)**.
- Transactions beyond this limit can be processed in contactless mode, but with AFA like OTP.
- This will come into force from January 01, 2021.

Axis Bank Partners Rupifi to Launch co-branded Credit Card for MSMEs



- Private sector lender **Axis Bank** has launched an exclusive business credit card '**Axis Bank Rupifi Business Credit Card**' for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector.
- The co-branded credit card has been launched in partnership with fintech lending platform Rupifi, that provides financial solutions to MSMEs.
- It is powered by **Visa**.
- The card will be applicable only for MSME businesses on Aggregator platforms partnered by Rupifi PAN India.
- The average credit limit offered will be in the range of Rs 1 and 2 lakh per month.

Centre Launches QRMP scheme for GST payers with turnover up to Rs 5 cr



- The Central Government has launched '**Quarterly Return filing & Monthly Payment of Taxes (QRMP)**' scheme for small taxpayers under GST system.

Who are eligible for QRMP Scheme?

- Taxpayers with aggregate annual turnover of up to **Rs 5 crore** in the preceding financial year.
- Taxpayers who have filed their **October GSTR-3B (sales) return by November 30, 2020**.

QRMP Scheme

- Persons with aggregate turnover up to Rs 5 crore would be allowed to furnish their GSTR-1 and GSTR-3B returns on quarterly basis, beginning **January-March quarter of 2020-21**.
- Quarterly GSTR-1 and GSTR-3B can also be filed through an SMS.
- Taxpayers can also make GST payments **every month, through challan**, with effect from January 1, 2021.
- This can be done either by self-assessment of monthly liability or 35% of net cash liability of previous filed GSTR-3B of the quarter.

Punjab National Bank launches 'LenS' Solution to speed up loan delivery



- India's one of the leading public sector **Punjab National Bank (PNB)** has launched a tech-based loan management solution called '**LenS-The Lending Solution**', to speed up online loan processing and sanctioning of credit proposals as well as maintain accuracy.
- Key objective of PNB LenS-The Lending Solution
 - Standardise the system, process and appraisal formats for loan processing
 - Speed up the process of credit sanctions
 - Auto-generate loan documents, among others.
- This system will be implemented in a phased manner for all kinds of loans including MSME, agriculture, retail and other credit.
- The LenS system will be now used for processing and sanction of credit proposals up to **Rs 10 lakh** under the Mudra scheme, including MSME loans (fresh, renewal, enhancement and review with effect from **December 1, 2020**).

ICICI Bank Launches iMobile Pay to offer Payments & Banking Services For All

- The private lender **ICICI Bank** has launched a new version of its mobile payment app called **iMobile Pay**, to offer payment and banking services to customers of any

bank.

- The latest version of the app is interoperable and will now allow payments and other banking services to even those **customers who do not hold an ICICI Bank account**.
- Using the app, the customers of other banks can link their bank account, generate a UPI ID and start paying, shopping, transfer funds to any bank account or to any other payment apps or digital wallets; or bill payments and online recharges, among others.
- It also offers instant banking services such as savings account, investments, loans, credit cards, gift cards, and travel cards, among others.



Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Launches India's First International REIT Fund of Funds



- **Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company (Kotak Mutual Fund)**, has launched **Kotak International REIT Fund of Funds, India's first diversified REIT Mutual Fund**.
- *REIT stands for Real Estate Investment Trust.*
- The new MF scheme is an open-ended mutual fund scheme that will have a diversified investment portfolio comprising listed REITs, which will invest in realty projects in the residential, office, data centre, warehousing, retail and hospitality segments.
- The Kotak International REIT Fund of Funds will invest in units of Japan-based SMAM Asia REIT Sub Trust Fund.
- The SMAM Asia REIT Sub Trust Fund is one of the largest Asia Pacific (Ex Japan) REIT funds investing in listed REITs in the Asia Pacific region.
- It is managed by Sumitomo Mitsui DS Asset Management Company, which has a significant portfolio of listed Real Estate Investment Trusts in Singapore, Australia and Hong Kong.

RBI to set up 'Automated Banknote Processing Centre' in Jaipur for receipt, storage and dispatch of notes

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to set up

an **Automated Banknote Processing Centre (ABPC)** in **Jaipur** for receipt, storage and dispatch of currency notes.

- The decision to set up ABPC was felt to automate the handling of banknotes for receipt, storage, retrieval, processing and destruction, in line with the global changes, adopting modern technology.

Key functions of ABPC

- Automated receipt and storage of fresh banknotes received from the printing presses
- Automated retrieval and dispatch of fresh banknotes to the identified issue offices (IOs)/CCs.
- Processing of banknotes received from currency chests (CCs) and bank branches
- Destruction of soiled banknotes in an automated manner

CRISIL slows contraction rate for India at -7.7% in FY21 against -9% in September



- Rating agency **CRISIL** has lowered the contraction rate of **India's GDP**, and now expects the growth rate of Indian economy to **contract 7.7% in the ongoing fiscal 2020-21**, compared to the 9% forecast in September 2020, due to "faster-than-expected" recovery in the second quarter.
- For the fiscal **2021-22 (FY22)**, **CRISIL expects the growth to bounce back to 10%.**

S&P revises India's GDP contraction forecast in FY21 to 7.7% from 9% earlier



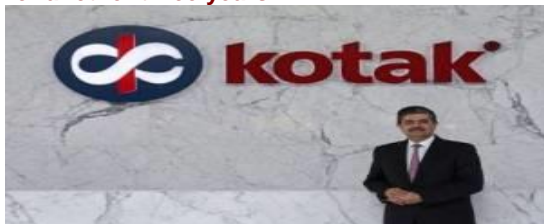
- **S&P Global Ratings** has raised **India's GDP growth projection for the FY21 (2020-21) to (-) 7.7 percent** from (-) 9 percent estimated earlier.
- The lower contraction rate is based on rising demand and falling COVID infection rates.
- The US-based S&P rating agency has projected India's growth to rebound to **10 percent in the next fiscal, i.e. 2021-22 (FY22)**

India Post Payments Bank unveils new digital payment app 'DakPay'.



- The **India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)** along with **Department of Posts (DoP)** launched a digital payment application called '**DakPay**' on 15 December 2020, in an effort to provide Digital Financial inclusion at the last mile across India..
- The app 'DakPay' will facilitate the customers of the DoP and IPPB in easy digital transactions and other banking and postal services.
- The app was launched by Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology and Law & Justice **Ravi Shankar Prasad**.
 - Some key features provided by the app are:
 - Sending money to others (Domestic Money Transfers – DMT),
 - Scan QR code and make payment for services/merchants digitally (Virtual debit card & with UPI),
 - Enabling cashless ecosystem through biometrics,
 - Providing interoperable banking services to the customers of ANY BANK (AePS) and Utility Bill Payment services.

RBI re-appoints Uday Kotak as MD of Kotak Mahindra Bank for another three years.



- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has approved the re-appointment of **Uday Kotak** as Managing Director of **Kotak Mahindra Bank** for a further period of **three years**, with effect from **January 1, 2021**.
- Kotak is founder managing director and promoter of the bank.
- RBI has also approved the appointment of part-time chairman Prakash Apte and Dipak Gupta as Joint MD of the bank for a period of three years.

Canara Bank launches "FX 4 U" for forex remittance using Internet Banking.



- Public sector lender **Canara Bank** has launched a new facility "**FX 4 U**" for its **internet banking users** to help them manage and handle their **forex transactions seamlessly**.
- Currently the facility is active for outward remittances module, while the remaining modules will be activated soon.
- Transactions which are submitted through internet banking will flow seamlessly to CPCFT (Centralised Process Centre – Forex Transactions) where compliance and accounting is done and transmitted through SWIFT.

RBI extends restrictions on PMC Bank for 3 months till 31 March 2020



- The **Reserve Bank of India** has further extended the restrictions on crisis-ridden **Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank** by three months till **31 March, 2021**.
- The bank has also received **four Expression of Interest (Eoi)** for its revival. To examine them, the bank would need some more time.
- These proposals will be examined by the bank with regard to their viability and feasibility taking into account the best interest of the depositors.
- As per the Expression of Interest, the bank wants to identify a suitable equity investor/ group of investors willing to take over management control so as to revive the bank and commence regular day-to-day operations.
- The PMC bank was placed under Directions by RBI with effect from the close of its business on September 23, 2019 and superseded the bank's board due to a huge fraud perpetrated by the promoter of a real estate group and some bank officials.
- The Directions for PMC Bank were last extended for a further period of six months from June 23, 2020, to December 22, 2020

Central Bank of India ties up with NPCI to launch 'RuPay Select' Contactless Debit Card



- The **Central Bank of India** has launched a **unique variant of a contactless debit card under the name 'RuPay Select'**, in association with the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
- This RuPay Debit Select Card will focus on customers' lifestyle, fitness, rejuvenation, nutrition and personal care.
- Central Bank RuPay Select Debit cardholders will be able to avail complimentary membership and concessional access to golf courses, gyms, spas and restaurants.
- The card comes with features such as airport lounge access to over 20 domestic and more than 500 international lounges.
- The card will also facilitate offline transactions in both transits as well as retail purchases.
- Apart from this, the cardholders would also be entitled to discounted health check-ups with this National Common Mobility Debit Card (NCMC).
- Additionally, it comes up with an **accidental and permanent disability insurance cover up to 10 lakh** at no extra cost to customers.

NCAER projects India's GDP to contract 7.3% in FY21



- The **National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)** has projected the Indian economy to contract **7.3 percent in FY21**, compared to -12.6% forecast in September 2020.
- The **Delhi** based economic think tank, released its mid-year review of the Indian economy virtually on 21 December 2020.

ICICI Bank launches online portal 'Infinite India' for foreign firms expanding in India



- The **ICICI Bank** has launched an **online platform 'Infinite India'** to support foreign companies to establish or expand business in India.
- The one-stop portal will offer banking solutions as well as value-added services such as incorporation of a business entity, corporate filings, licences and registrations, HR services, compliances and taxation among others.
- Through this initiative, ICICI bank aims to strengthen its position in the multinational corporations (MNC) segment.

ADB announces Rs 2100 crore loan to Tripura for urban & tourism development



- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has announced to provide **Rs 2,100 crore loan** to the **Tripura** government for the **development of urban areas and tourism** in the northeastern state.
- From the total fund of Rs 2,100 crore, Rs 1600 crore will be for urban development and Rs 500 crore for the tourism sector.
- Under this, all 20 urban local bodies in Tripura would be covered and in the tourism sector, all tourism destinations, roads leading to them and tourist facilities would be covered.

Bank of Baroda signs MoU with defence forces for new Military Salary Package



- Public sector lender **Bank of Baroda (BoB)** has renewed its existing memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Indian Army, titled '**Baroda Military Salary Package**', to offer customised banking services to account holders.
- The package will include facilities such as: free Personal Accidental Insurance cover, Permanent Total Disability cover, Partial disability Cover and Air Accident Insurance Cover of sizeable amounts, Higher Education Cover and Girl Child Marriage Cover on death in case of serving personnel.
- It also include unlimited free ATM transactions at all bank ATMs, waivers or concessions on various service charges in retail loans, free remittance facility through RTGS/NEFT, free Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque, substantial discount in locker rentals, and various additional benefits in the usage of Cards.
- The services under 'Baroda Military Salary Package' will be offered to serving as well as retired personnel of Indian Armed Forces.
- BoB has also signed the MoU with Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard to offer customised services along with a host of facilities to account holders.

RBI cancels the Licence of the Subhadra Local Area Bank, Maharashtra

- The **Reserve Bank of India** has cancelled the banking licence issued to **Subhadra Local Area Bank Ltd., Kolhapur, Maharashtra** to carry on banking business in India w.e.f December 24, 2020.
- The Reserve Bank cancelled the licence of the Subhadra Local Area Bank Ltd as it had breached the minimum net worth requirement for two quarters in the financial year 2019-20. The affairs of the Subhadra Local Area Bank Ltd. were conducted in a manner detrimental to the interests of its present and future depositors.
- After this, there are only two Local Area Banks operational in India, i.e. – **Coastal Local Area Bank Ltd and Krishna Bhima Samruddhi LAB Ltd.**

Ind-Ra revises India's FY21 GDP contraction to 7.8% from 11.8% earlier



- India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra)** has revised **India's GDP estimate** for the current financial year **2020-21 (FY21) to -7.8 percent** from -11.8 percent estimated earlier.
- This lower contraction rate is mainly due to the easing of COVID-19 curbs and better-than-expected recovery in the second quarter.
- Ind-Ra has also estimated the GDP to grow by **9.6% in 2021-22 (FY22).**

ICICI Bank to acquire 9.09% stake in ed-tech platform Myclassboard Educational Solutions



- Private sector lender ICICI Bank** has announced to acquire **9.09 percent stake in educational technology platform Myclassboard Educational Solutions Pvt Ltd (MESPL)** for cash value of **Rs 4.5 crore.**
- The acquisition is expected to be completed by end of **February 2021.**
- MESPL is an educational technology company set up in December 2009, which offers an online school management platform.
- It reported turnover of Rs 12 crore in FY 2020.

ICICI Bank and Google Pay collaborate to digitally issue FASTag



- Private sector lender ICICI Bank** has collaborated with

payment app, **Google Pay**, to issue FASTag to users digitally.

- The partnership will allow users to **order, track, and recharge ICICI Bank FASTag digitally through the UPI on the Google Pay itself.**
- The ICICI Bank is the first bank to partner with Google Pay for issuing FASTags.
- This initiative will ensure the safety of users as it will put an end to visiting the merchants in person, or going to toll locations to buy a FASTag, as well as strengthen digital payments for FASTag.

YES Bank appoints Niranjan Banodkar as new CFO



- The private sector lender **Yes Bank** has appointed **Niranjan Banodkar** as its new Group **Chief Financial Officer (CFO).**
- He will take over from **Anurag Adlakha**, who has been designated as the new Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO).
- Both of them will assume the new role with effect from **January 1, 2021.**
- Banodkar, who started working with Yes Bank in April 2006 is currently Group President & Head of Strategy, Sustainability & Investor Relations.

BUSINESS

Ola to set up world's largest scooter factory in Tamil Nadu at Rs 2,400 cr



- The SoftBank-backed mobility platform **Ola** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Tamil Nadu** government, to set up its first factory in the state, at an investment of **Rs 2,400 crore.**
- Upon completion, the Ola factory in Tamil Nadu will be

the **largest scooter manufacturing facility in the world.**

- Initially, the factory will have an annual manufacturing capacity of 2 million units.
- The factory is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of an AtmaNirbhar Bharat, and will make India a manufacturing hub for two-wheeler electric vehicles.
- The new factory will also reduce dependence of India on import of electric vehicles, boost local manufacturing, create jobs and also improve the technical expertise in the country.

DEFENCE

Indian Navy Undertakes Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with Russian Federation Navy in Eastern Indian Ocean Region



- The **Indian Navy (IN)** and the **Russian Federation Navy (RuFN)** are undertaking **Passage Exercise (PASSEX)** in the **Eastern Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** from 4 to 5 December 2020.
- The exercise will help in enhancing interoperability, improving understanding and imbibing best practices between both the friendly navies.
- It involves advanced surface and anti-submarine warfare exercises, weapon firings, seamanship exercises and helicopter operations.
- IN is being represented by indigenously constructed guided missile frigate **Shivalik** and anti-submarine corvette **Kadmatt** along with integral helicopters.
- RuFN includes guided missile cruiser **Varyag**, large anti-submarine ship **Admiral Panteleyev** and medium ocean tanker **Pechenga.**
- The PASSEXs are conducted regularly by IN with units of friendly foreign navies.

India-Indonesia Navies undertake 35th coordinated patrol (CORPAT)



- The **35th edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT)** was held between the Indian Navy and the Indonesian Navy along their international maritime boundary line on December 17 and 18, 2020.
- The Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kulish, an indigenously built missile corvette, along with P8I Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) participated from Indian side and the Indonesia was represented by Naval Ship KRI Cut Nyak Dien, a Kapitan Pattimura (Parchim I) class corvette and an MPA of the Indonesian Navy
- The CORPAT is being conducted between the two navies along the line since 2002 to ensure safety and security of shipping and international trade in the region.
- It facilitates measures to prevent and suppress illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing as well as drug trafficking, maritime terrorism, armed robbery and piracy.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh hands over 3 DRDO high-tech systems to chiefs of 3 armed forces



- The Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** recently handed over three indigenously developed high technology systems to chiefs of the three armed forces: the Indian Army, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force.
- The three systems namely, Border Surveillance System (**BOSS**), **Indian Maritime Situational Awareness System (IMSAS)** and **ASTRA Mk-I Missile**, have been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Border Surveillance System (BOSS)

- BOSS is an all-weather electronic surveillance system. It was handed over to Army Chief General M M Naravane.
- BOSS has already been deployed in Ladakh against the Chinese troops for day and night surveillance.
- It has been designed and developed by Instruments Research & Development Establishment (IRDE), Dehradun and is being produced by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Machilipatnam.
- The system facilitates monitoring and surveillance by automatically detecting the intrusions in harsh high-altitude sub-zero temperature areas with remote operation capability.

Indian maritime situational awareness system (IMSAS)

- It was handed to Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh.
- The IMSAS is state-of-the-art high performance intelligent software system that provide Global Maritime Situational Picture, Marine planning tools and Analytical capabilities to Indian Navy.
- The product is jointly conceptualised and developed by Centre for Artificial Intelligence & Robotics (CAIR), Bengaluru and Indian Navy, while it is being produced by

BEL, Bengaluru.

Astra Mk-1 missile system

- It was handed over to Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhaduria.
- This missile is the first indigenously developed beyond visual range (BVR) missile that can be launched from Sukhoi-30, Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), Mig-29 and Mig-29K.
- ASTRA weapon system has been developed by Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL) and production by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) Hyderabad.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh inaugurates advanced Hypersonic Wind Tunnel test facility in Hyderabad



- The **Union Minister of Defence Shri Rajnath Singh** inaugurated the advanced **Hypersonic Wind Tunnel (HWT) test facility** of the DRDO in Hyderabad on 19 December 2020.
- The state-of-the-art HWT Test facility has made India as the only **third country in the world, after the US and Russia**, to have such a huge facility in size and capability.
- The indigenously developed HWT Test facility is pressure vacuum driven enclosed free jet facility having nozzle exit diameter of 1 metre. This will simulate Mach No 5 to 12 (Mach represents the multiplication factor to the speed of sound)"
- The facility has the capability to simulate hypersonic flow over a wide spectrum and will play a major role in the realization of highly complex futuristic aerospace and defence systems

Indian Coast Guard Commissions Interceptor Boat C-454 Indigenously-built by L&T



- The indigenously-built **interceptor boat C-454**, was commissioned in the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in Hazira of Surat district of Gujarat** recently.
- The C- 454 has been built by **Larsen and Toubro (L&T)** at its Hazira plant.
- The vessel will operate from Gujarat and is the **54th** such

boat built by L&T for ICG.

- The vessel is a part of ongoing efforts of Indian Coast Guard to strengthen coastal security of Gujarat maritime borders.

Goa Shipyard Limited developed ICGS Sujeet successfully commissioned in Goa



- The **Indian Coast Guard ship 'ICGS Sujeet'**, was commissioned in Goa on 15 December 2020, which will enhance the operational capability of Indian Coast Guard to discharge multifarious maritime tasks.
- ICGS Sujeet is **second in the series of 5 OPV**, being designed and built indigenously by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) for the Indian Coast Guard.
- The 105 metres **OPV (off-shore patrol vessel)** is fitted with advanced technology, navigation and communication equipment, sensors and machinery.

India-Vietnamese Navy Conducts passage exercise PASSEX-2020 in South China Sea



- The **Indian Navy and Vietnamese Navy** undertook the naval passage exercise **PASSEX** in the **South China Sea** from December 26-27, 2020.
- The two-day exercise was conducted as part of efforts to boost maritime cooperation between the two countries.
- The **Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kiltan** took part in the exercise.
- INS Kiltan, reached **Vietnam's Nha Rong Port in Ho Chi Minh City**, carrying humanitarian assistance to deliver 15 tonnes of relief material for flood-affected people under Mission Sagar-III.
- This mission of INS Kiltan is part of **India's Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) assistance to Friendly Foreign Countries** during the ongoing pandemic.

ECONOMY

Fitch Ratings lowers India's GDP contraction at 9.4% for FY21; 11% for FY22



- Fitch Ratings** has revised the GDP growth rate for India in its Global Economic Outlook, and now expects the economy to **contract 9.4 percent** in the current financial year **2020-21**, as compared to (-)10.5 percent forecast earlier.
- Fitch has also projected the FY22 GDP growth at 11 percent and 6.3 percent growth in FY23.

Nomura Expects India to be fastest growing Asian economy in 2021 at 9.9%

FORECAST: REAL GDP			
	2020	2021	2022
Australia	-2.8	3.8	3.3
China	2.1	9	5.3
Hong Kong	-6.1	4.3	3.2
India	-7.1	9.9	5
Indonesia	-2.3	4.9	5.3
Philippines	-9.8	6.8	7.9
Singapore	-5.2	7.5	4.6
South Korea	-0.8	3.6	2
Thailand	-6.9	3.2	5.3
Asia ex-Japan, Aus.	-1.1	8.1	5.1

All figures in %; Source: Nomura Asia Outlook 2021 report

- The Japanese research and brokerage house **Nomura** has projected India to be the fastest growing Asian economy in 2021.
- Nomura has estimated the **gross domestic product (GDP) growth of India for the calendar year 2021 (CY21) at 9.9%**.
- For calendar year **2020 (CY20)**, **Nomura expects GDP growth at 7.1 percent**.
- Apart from this, the Nomura expects GDP at **-8.2 percent in FY21, and 11.9 percent in FY22**.

ADB Projects GDP of India at -8% in 2020, 8% in 2021



- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has projected India's economy to **contract 8 percent in 2020**, as against (-)9.0 percent previously forecast.
- In its latest Asian Development Outlook report released on 10 December 2020, ADB also expects the GDP of India to bounce back with growth of **8.0 percent in 2021**.

SBI Ecowrap Report Projects India GDP to contract 7.4% in FY21; 11% in FY22



- The **SBI**, in its research report 'Ecowrap' has revised the **GDP growth of India at (-) 7.4 percent in FY21**. Earlier this forecast was (-) 10.9 percent.
- The SBI research report has also forecast **India's GDP growth in FY22 at 11 percent**.

ICRA Projects Indian economy to contract 7.8% in FY21



- Domestic rating agency **ICRA Ratings** has projected the GDP of India to contract to **7.8% in the financial year 2020-2021**.
- Earlier this rate was 11 percent.

SPORTS

Lewis Hamilton wins Bahrain Grand Prix 2020



- **Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes-Great Britain)** has won the **2020 Bahrain Grand Prix**, held on 29 November 2020.
- The race was the fifteenth round of the 2020 Formula One World Championship.
- This is the 11th victory for Hamilton of the season, and 95th F1 win of his career. Also, Hamilton now holds the records for the most wins (95), in Formula One history.
- Red Bull Racing teammates Max Verstappen (Netherlands) and Alexander Albon (Thailand) were second and third respectively..

New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson retires from international cricket



- **New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson**, has announced his retirement from **New Zealand cricket**, as he confirmed to quit from international cricket.
- Anderson rose to fame after **scoring fastest 100 in the history of One Day International cricket (ODI)**, in 36-ball against West Indies in January 2014.
- However this record was broken by AB de Villiers, in January 2015 who scored the fastest ODI century against the West Indies in Johannesburg in 31 balls.
- The 29-year-old, Anderson has played 13 Tests, 49 ODIs and 31 T20Is for New Zealand, scoring 2277 runs with two hundreds and 10 half-centuries and 90 wickets.
- Anderson has signed a **3-year contract with Major League Cricket (MLC)** in the USA, where he will serve in the Major and Minor League Cricket and coaching ventures at the cricket academies that come under the MLC.

Sri Lanka to host Asia Cup in 2021 while Pakistan gets

hosting right for 2022 edition



- As per the information given by **Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB)**, **CEO, Wasim Khan**, **Sri Lanka** will host the **Asia Cup in June 2021** while **Pakistan** has earned the rights to host the tournament in **2022**.
- As per the original schedule, the tournament was supposed to be hosted by Pakistan in 2020, however it got postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Now the event has been moved forward to June 2021, with Sri Lanka Cricket taking the hosting rights from PCB.
- As compensation, PCB has got the hosting rights for the 2022 edition.

Sergio Perez Wins Sakhir Grand Prix 2020



- **Sergio Perez (Mexico-Racing Point-BWT Mercedes)**, won the **2020 Sakhir Grand Prix**, held on 6 December 2020, at the Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir, Bahrain.
- The race was maiden edition of the Sakhir Grand Prix and sixteenth race of the 2020 Formula One World Championship.
- This is the first Formula One win for Perez. He is also the first Mexican Formula One driver to win a race since Pedro Rodríguez won the 1970 Belgian Grand Prix.
- Esteban Ocon (Renault-France) secured second position, followed by and Lance Stroll (Racing Point-BWT Mercedes-Canada) at third place.

Jehan Daruvala Becomes first Indian To Win Formula 2 Race



- **Jehan Daruvala** created history on 6th December 2020, as he became the **first Indian to win a Formula 2 race** at the **2020 Sakhir Grand Prix**.
- This was the final race of the F2 season.
- The 22-year-old Jehan Daruvala is currently a member of the Red Bull Junior Team and competes for Carlin Motorsport..
- His Japanese teammate, Yuki Tsunoda came second while Britain's Daniel Ticktum was in a third spot
- Racing legend Michael Schumacher's son **Mick Schumacher** was crowned as the overall F2 champion of the season.

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju Launches 2nd edition of Fit India Cyclothon



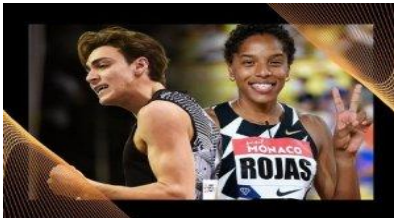
- **Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju** launched the **second** edition of **Fit India Cyclothon** through virtual platform on 7th December 2020.
- The mega cycling event will run for **25 days, beginning from 7th December till 31st December 2020**.
- The event has been organised across the country in each district. The citizens can participate by registering on Fit India website.
- The participants can cycle daily for a distance of their choice, and share their images and videos on social media.
- They may also tag @FitIndiaOff and use the hashtag – FitIndiaCyclothon and #NewIndiaFitIndia.

Parthiv Patel announces retirement from all forms of cricket



- India's **wicketkeeper-batsman Parthiv Patel** has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket.
- Parthiv, the 35-year old, left-hand batsmen has featured in 25 Tests, 38 ODIs and two T20Is for India.
- In domestic cricket, he featured in 194 first-class matches for Gujarat.
- Patel made his international debut in 2002 at the age of 17 in Test series against England. He last played for India in 2018 during a Test match against South Africa in Johannesburg.

Yulimar Rojas and Mondo Duplantis crowned 2020 World Athletes of the Year



- World record breakers **Mondo Duplantis**, Swedish pole vaulter and **Yulimar Rojas**, Venezuelan triple jumper have won the **2020 Male and Female World Athletes of the Year** respectively.
- The 20-year-old Duplantis is the youngest ever winner of the Male Athlete of the Year Award. He broke the world record in the pole vault twice, (6.17m and 6.18m) in February 2020, and has also produced the highest outdoor vault in history (6.15m) in September 2020.
- The 25-year-old Rojas, who broke the world indoor triple jump record with a leap of 15.43m, finished the 2020 season undefeated in four triple jump competitions indoors and outdoors.
- The World Athlete of the Year award is presented by the **World Athletics** (formerly IAAF) to athletes participating in events within the sport of athletics including track and field, cross country running, road running, and racewalking.

England's Zena Wooldridge appointed as World Squash Federation President



- **Zena Wooldridge from England** has been elected as the new **President of World Squash Federation (WSF)** [Headquarter-Hastings, United Kingdom].
- She replaces outgoing President Jacques Fontaine, from France, who was elected President in 2016.
- Wooldridge is the 10th WSF President, since the inception of the federation in 1967, and will serve for minimum four-year term.
- She is also the second female to be elected for the post after New Zealand's Susie Simcock.
- Before this, Wooldridge served as President of the European Squash Federation between 2013-2019.

Former Swedish Golfer Annika Sorenstam elected President of International Golf Federation



- Former world number one and ten-time major winner on LPGA tournaments, **Annika Sorenstam**, has been elected as the new **President of the International Golf Federation (IGF)** [Headquarters: Lausanne, Switzerland]
- The 50-year-old Sweden-based golfer will succeed outgoing **Peter Dawson**, who is stepping down after 10 years in charge.
- She will take over the charge with effect from **1st January 2020**.

Madagascar replaces Maldives to host 2023 Indian Ocean Island Games



- The **2023 Indian Ocean Island Games (IOIG)**, will take place in **Madagascar**, instead of **Maldives**.
- The Indian Ocean Island Games Federation has changed the host nation due to concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2023 Indian Ocean Island Games will be the **11th edition of this multi-sport event for athletes** representing the National Olympic Committees of Indian Ocean island

nations.

- Maldives had received the hosting right of the event in 2019.

IOC gives Olympic status to Breakdancing; to debut at Paris in 2024



- The **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** has registered '**Breakdancing**' as the newest entry into Olympics and an **official Olympic sport**, on December 7, 2020, with the aim to attract a new and younger audience.
- Breakdancing will be known as '**Breaking**' in Olympics event.
- Breaking will make its Olympic Games debut at the 2024 Paris Games (2024 Summer Olympics).
- It must be remembered that three new sports, skateboarding, sport climbing, and surfing, will make their Olympic debuts at the Tokyo Games 2021 (earlier 2020 Summer Olympics).

Odisha to host 2023 FIH Men's Hockey World Cup at Bhubaneswar and Rourkela



- The International Hockey Federation (FIH) had announced that the **2023 FIH Men's Hockey World Cup will be hosted in Odisha**, for a second consecutive time.
- The tournament will be held at two venues, **Bhubaneswar and Rourkela**.
- The Men's Hockey World Cup 2018 was also hosted by Odisha.
- The 2023 tournament will be **15th edition** of the Men's FIH Hockey World Cup.
- It will be held at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar and at the Biju Patnaik Hockey Stadium in Rourkela.
- FIH Hockey World Cup is held after every four years.

Doha to host Asian Games 2030



- The capital of Qatar, **Doha** has won the hosting rights for the **2030 Asian Games**.
- Doha beat Riyadh during the election, held on 16 December at the general assembly of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) in Muscat.
- Saudi Arabia's capital city **Riyadh** would host the **2034 edition of the Asian Games**.
- Previously Doha organized the Asian Games in 2006.
- 2030 Asian Games will be the **21st edition** of the multi-sports event, held after every **four years**. It is also known as **Asiad**.

Lucy Bronze and Robert Lewandowski Bags Best FIFA Players for 2020



- The **Best FIFA Football Awards 2020** was announced on 17th December 2020, during a virtual event held at Zurich.
- The **Poland national team captain and FC Bayern München striker Robert Lewandowski** has been named "**The Best FIFA Men's Player**" for 2020.
- Lewandowski has won the title for the first time in his career.
- He is also the first men's winner from a club outside Spain since Ronaldo won the 2008 award as a Manchester United player.
- **Lucy Bronze**, who plays as a right-back for the English club Manchester City and the England national team, bagged "**The Best FIFA Women's Player**" for 2020.

Pakistan pacer Mohammad Amir announces retirement from international cricket



- The 28-year-old **Pakistani fast bowler Mohammad Amir** has announced his retirement from international cricket.
- Mohammad Amir has given 'mental torture' from the **Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB)**, as the reason for his retirement.
- Amir had already announced retirement from Test cricket in 2019.
- Amir played 30 Tests, 61 ODIs, and 50 T20Is in his international career, during which he took 119, 81, and 59 wickets in the three formats respectively.
- His last appearance for Pakistan was in the T20I series against England in August 2020.

Mauritius badminton player Kate Foo Kune banned for two years in doping case



- The **Mauritian badminton player Kate Jessica Foo Kune** has been banned by the **Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) for two years** for an anti-doping violation.
- The ban period of the 27-year-old Kune will apply from **15 December 2020**.
- Foo Kune tested positive for a banned steroid during the 2019 African Badminton World Championships in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Lewis Hamilton wins BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2020 award



- **Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton** has won the **BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2020**.
- This is the second time that the 35-year-old Hamilton has been crowned Sports Personality of the Year. Prior to his he won the award in 2014.

Other award winners at Sports Personality 2020

- Helen Rollason Award: Captain Sir Tom Moore
- Expert Special Panel Award: Marcus Rashford
- Coach of the Year: Jurgen Klopp
- Team of the Year: Liverpool FC
- Unsung Hero: Sgt Matt Ratana
- Captain Tom Young Unsung Hero: Tobias Weller
- Young Sports Personality of the Year: Andrea Spendolini-Sirieix

Sports Ministry Includes four indigenous sports in Khelo India Youth Games 2021



- The **Sports Ministry** has approved the inclusion of **four indigenous Games to be a part of Khelo India Youth Games 2021**, which is scheduled to be held in Haryana.
- The four new games are, **Gatka, Kalaripayattu, Thang-Ta and Mallakhamba**.
- The four selected games represent different parts of the country and will get national recognition with the help of the Khelo India Youth Games 2021.

Place of origin of the newly inducted games

1. **Kalaripayattu** has its origin from Kerala.

2. **Mallakhamba** is practiced in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
3. **Gatka** originates from Punjab. It is a traditional fighting style of the Nihang Sikh Warriors, used both as self-defense as well as a sport.
4. **Thang-Ta** is a Manipur marital art.

Indian Boxers Bag 9 Medals, Including 3 Gold at Cologne Boxing World Cup



- Indian pugilists have bagged **nine medals including three gold, two silver and four bronze** at the **Cologne Boxing World Cup 2020**, held in Cologne, Germany between 17 to 19 December 2020.

List of Medal Winners

- **Gold:** The three gold medals for India were bagged by Amit Panghal (52kg), Manisha Moun (57kg) and Simranjit Kaur (60kg) in their respective categories.
- **Silver:** Silver medals were claimed by Sakshi Choudhary (57kg) and Satish Kumar (91kg).
- **Bronze:** Sonia Lather (57kg), Pooja Rani (75kg) Gaurav Solanki (57kg) and Mohamed Hussamudin (57kg) claimed the bronze medal in their respective categories.
- Overall five women and eight men boxers were registered for the Cologne Boxing World Cup 2020.

Novak Djokovic clinches 2020 ATP Player of the Year 2020 Award for record equalling 6th time



- The Association of Tennis Professionals (**ATP**) **2020 Awards** were announced on 21 December to felicitate the players and others for their performance during 2019-20 season.

- **Novak Djokovic (Serbia) has been awarded with the ATP Player of the Year 2020** award, as he finished the year as No. 1 in the ATP Singles Rankings.
- This is the record sixth time for Djokovic to win the title. This record was till now achieved only by Pete Sampras, who won the title continuously from 1993-98
- **Complete list of Winners**
 - Player of the Year – Novak Djokovic
 - Doubles Team of the Year – Mate Pavic and Bruno Soares
 - Coach of the Year – Fernando Vicente (coached Andrey Rublev)
 - Tim Gullikson Career Coach Award – Bob Brett (Australia)
 - Most Improved Player – Andrey Rublev (Russia)
 - Newcomer of the Year – Carlos Alcaraz (Spain)
 - Comeback Player of the Year – Vasek Pospisil (Canada)
 - ATPTour.com Fans' Favourite – Roger Federer (Switzerland)
 - ATPTour.com Fans' Favourite Team – Jamie Murray and Neal Skupski
 - Stefan Edberg Sportsmanship Award – Rafael Nadal (Spain)
 - Arthur Ashe Humanitarian of the Year – Frances Tiafoe (US)
 - Ron Bookman Media Excellence Award – Kevin Mitchell (A sportswriter for The Guardian)

BCCI approves 10-team IPL from 2022



- The **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** held its **89th Annual General Meeting in Ahmedabad**. In the meeting it was decided that 10 teams will compete in Indian Premier League (IPL) from 2022 against present 8 teams.
- The 2021 season of IPL will be played with the regular 8 teams and bids will be invited for the addition of two new teams from the 2022 season.
- Apart from this, former cricketer **Chetan Sharma** has been appointed as the new chairman of selectors for national men's cricket team by the Cricket Advisory Committee headed by Madan Lal.

MS Dhoni named captain of ICC Men's ODI and T20 Teams of the Decade, Kohli leads Test Team



- The **International Cricket Council (ICC)** announced the ICC Teams of the Decade on 27 December 2020, based on the performances, consistency of players over the period of last 10 years.
- Former Indian captain and wicket-keeper batsman **Mahendra Singh Dhoni** has been named as the **captain of the ICC ODI Team of the Decade**. He has also been named the skipper of the **ICC T20I Team of the Decade**.
- Similarly, **Virat Kohli** has been named the **captain of the ICC Test Team of the Decade**. Ravi Ashwin is the only other Indian in this list.
- List of members in the Men's team**
 - ICC Men's ODI Team of the Decade:** Rohit Sharma, David Warner, Virat Kohli, AB de Villiers, Shakib Al-Hasan, **MS Dhoni (capt, wk)**, Ben Stokes, Mitchell Starc, Trent Boult, Imran Tahir and Lasith Malinga.
 - ICC's T20I Team of the Decade:** Rohit Sharma, Chris Gayle, Aaron Finch, Virat Kohli, AB de Villiers, Glenn Maxwell, **MS Dhoni (c)**, Kieron Pollard, Rashid Khan, Jasprit Bumrah, and Lasith Malinga.
 - ICC's Test Team of the Decade:** Alistair Cook, David Warner, Kane Williamson, **Virat Kohli (c)**, Steve Smith, Kumar Sangakkara, Ben Stokes, Ravi Ashwin, Dale Steyn, Stuart Broad, James Anderson.

Anshu Malik secures silver at Individual World Cup to win India's first medal at the event

- Indian wrestler Anshu Malik** has become the first wrestler of the country to finish on the podium position at the **Individual Wrestling World Cup in Belgrade, Serbia**.
- The 19-year-old won a **silver medal** in the women's 57kg category to claim first international medal of the tournament for the country.
- She lost to Moldova's Anastasia Nichita 5-1 in the final.

BWF Bans Russian badminton player Nikita Khakimov for five years over betting, fixing offences



- The **Badminton World Federation (BWF)** has imposed a **5-year ban on Russian shuttler Nikita Khakimov** for charges of "betting, wagering and irregular match results."

- The 32-year-old Khakimov was found to breach BWF's integrity regulations, including approaching a player and offering money to manipulate a match, betting on badminton games and deliberately destroying evidence of a corruption offence to conceal from the BWF.
- Khakimov was part of the Russian men's team that won the bronze medal at the 2020 European Team Championships.

FIFA postpones 2021 Under-17 and Under-20 World Cups till 2023 due to coronavirus pandemic



- The World football governing body **FIFA** has cancelled **Under-17 and Under-20** football World Cups for the year **2021**, due to a coronavirus pandemic.
- These World Cups will now be played in **2023**.
- Indonesia** will host the Under-20s World Cup and **Peru** will host the Under-17s World Cup as scheduled earlier.

ICC Awards of the Decade 2020



- The winners of the prestigious ICC Awards of the Decade were announced on 28th December 2020.
- The ICC Awards of The Decade** recognise the best players across Cricket over the past 10 years.
- Among women's cricketers Australia's Ellyse Perry clinched the award in all three categories, ICC Women's Player of the Decade, ODI Player of the Decade and T20I Player of the Decade award.

List of Winners

- ICC Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade** – MS Dhoni

ICC Men's Awards

- Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade** – Virat Kohli
- ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Decade** – Virat Kohli
- ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Decade** – Rashid Khan
- ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Decade** – Steve

Smith

- **ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Decade** – Kyle Coetzer

ICC Women's Award

- **Rachael Heyhoe Flint Award for ICC Female Cricketer of the Decade** – Ellyse Perry
- **ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Decade** – Ellyse Perry
- **ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Decade** – Ellyse Perry
- **ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Decade** – Kathryn Bryce

- A centre for fiscal policy and public finance will be established to deepen capacity of the state government officials on public finance management while developing a web-based grievance redress system for transport corporations and urban local bodies will provide a credible citizen-government interface.

India & USA signs MoU on Intellectual Property Cooperation



- The Government of **India and United States of America (USA)** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of **Intellectual Property Cooperation** on 2nd December 2020.
- The Union Cabinet had approved the signing the MoU for the same on 19 February 2020.
- The MoU was signed between Dr. **Guruprasad Mohapatra, Secretary, DPIIT** and Mr. Andrei Iancu, who represented the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry and United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Department of Commerce of the United States of America respectively.
- As a part of this MoU, the two side will develop Biennial Work Plan to implement the MoU which will include the detailed planning for carrying out of the co-operation activities including the scope of action.

AGREEMENTS

ADB & India sign \$132.8 million loan agreement to strengthen power distribution sector in Meghalaya



- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and the Government of India have signed a **USD 132.8 million loan agreement** for **Meghalaya Power Distribution Sector Improvement Project**.
- The project aims to strengthen and modernize the distribution network and improve the quality of power supplied to households, industries, and businesses in the northeastern state of Meghalaya.

ADB and India sign \$50 million loan agreement to boost digital platforms for public finance reforms in West Bengal



- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and the Government of India have inked **\$50 million policy-based loan agreement** on 2nd December 2020 to improve **financial management procedures** and operational efficiencies in **West Bengal**.
- Titled as the 'West Bengal Public Finance Management Investment Programme', the project will help to achieve more fiscal savings, promote informed decision making, and improve service delivery in the state.

ADB Approves \$190 Million Loan to Upgrade Power Distribution System in Bengaluru



- The Manila-based **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has approved a loan of **\$190 million** (approx Rs 1,400 crore) to modernize and upgrade the power distribution system in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- The financial-assistance by ADB will be used for the **Bengaluru Smart Energy Efficient Power Distribution Project**.
- The \$190 million loan includes a \$100 million sovereign loan and a \$90 million non-sovereign guarantee loan to

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (BESCOM).

- BESCOM is one of five state-owned distribution utilities and the largest in Karnataka.
- This combination of sovereign and non-sovereign loans is being deployed by ADB in India on a pilot basis for the first time.

ADB approves USD 2.5 million technical assistance to support advanced biofuel development in India

- The Manila-based multilateral lending agency **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has approved a **USD 2.5 million (about Rs 18 crore)** technical assistance to support advanced biofuel development in India.
- The grant will be funded from the **Asia Clean Energy Fund**, financed by the Government of Japan under the Clean Energy Financing Partnership Facility, and the Republic of Korea's **e-Asia and Knowledge Partnership Fund**.
- The technical assistance (TA) will support development of advanced bioethanol, bio-compressed natural gas, and biodiesel plants to demonstrate the best practices for suitable feedstock, efficient conversion technology, and sustainable biofuel value chain.

PwC India partners with UNICEF and YuWaah to upskill 300 million youths in India over 10 years



- Consulting firm **PwC India** has collaborated with the **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** and **YuWaah (Generation Unlimited in India)** to upskill **300 million young Indians over the next 10 years**.
- This collaboration is part of PwC's global multi-sector partnership with UNICEF and Generation Unlimited to upskill and provide about 1.8 billion youngsters with socio-economic opportunities from school to work by 2030.
- This partnership will focus on three facets to India's digital empowerment for youngsters, which are **education, skilling and entrepreneurship**.

NTPC inks MoU with IIFM-Bhopal for Narmada Landscape Restoration Project



- **NTPC Ltd.**, a PSU under Ministry of Power, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal**, for the implementation of **Narmada Landscape Restoration Project (NLRP)**.
- IIFM Bhopal is an Autonomous Institute under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
- The NLRP Project involves a grant in aid from NTPC Ltd and **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** in equal proportions.
- IIFM-Bhopal will be jointly implementing this project with **Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) [Headquarter-Seoul, South Korea]**, an intergovernmental organization that promotes sustainable and inclusive economic growth in emerging economies.
- IIFM Bhopal will participate in the project with the grant-in-aid from NTPC, Ltd and GGGI will participate with funding support from USAID.

India and Uzbekistan inks 9 Agreements to strengthen strategic partnership



- **Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev** co-chaired the virtual Summit held between the two countries on 11th December 2020, to strengthen strategic partnership among them.
- The Government of India also approved a **US \$448 million Line of Credit** for four developmental projects in Uzbekistan in the fields of road construction, sewerage treatment and information technology.

- India and Uzbekistan signed **nine Agreements and Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs)** in various areas including in the field of:
 1. Solar Energy
 2. Digital Technologies
 3. High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP)
 4. Trade, Economic and Investment Cooperation
 5. Defence and Security
 6. Civil Nuclear Energy
 7. Connectivity
 8. Culture, Education and People-to-People Contacts
 9. Terrorism

India and Austria inks MoU on Technology Cooperation in Road Infrastructure Sector



- The **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of **Austria** on **Technology Cooperation in the Road Infrastructure Sector**.
- Purpose of MoU is to create bilateral cooperation in the field of
 - Road Transportation,
 - Road/Highways infrastructure development, management and administration,
 - Road safety
 - Intelligent Transport Systems
- The MoU will further strengthen ties, promote long standing bilateral relations and enhance trade and regional integration between the two countries.

Norway signs MoU with Clean Ganga Mission for development of sludge management framework in India



- The **Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO)** has signed an MoU with **cGanga**, a think-tank of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) for development of sludge management framework in India.
- The MoU was signed during the 5th edition of the India

Water Impact 2020, held from 10-15 December 2020.

- Through this initiative, Norway intends to deepen relationship with India especially in prevention of climate change and conservation of environment.

India and World Bank sign \$400 million project to protect India's poor and vulnerable from the impact of COVID-19

- The Government of **India** and the **World Bank** have **signed a \$400 million** project to protect vulnerable groups in urban and peri-urban areas across the country impacted by COVID-19.
- Under this project World Bank will support India in its efforts at providing **social assistance to the poor and vulnerable households, severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- This is the second such assistance in the series of two 'Accelerating India's COVID-19 Social Protection Response Programme'
- Under the first operation, \$750 million was approved by World Bank in May 2020.
- The programme will strengthen the capability of state and central governments in India to provide coordinated and adequate social protection to the poor and vulnerable from the shocks triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

India and NDB inks \$1,000 million agreement to support India's economic recovery from COVID-19



- The Government of **India** and the **New Development Bank (NDB)** have signed a loan agreement worth **\$1,000 million** for '**supporting India's economic recovery from COVID-19**'.
- Under the agreement, Shanghai-based NDB will lend financial support for:
 - expenditures on rural infrastructure related to natural resource management (NRM) works, which will facilitate economic activity and
 - rural employment generation under Government of India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to stimulate rural demand, to combat the decline in economic activity.

- The programme will support Indian Government in mitigating the adverse economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic and enable economic recovery in the rural areas.

ADB & India sign \$300 million loan to upgrade power distribution network in Uttar Pradesh



- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has signed **\$300 million loan agreement** with the Government of India to **upgrade rural power distribution networks in Uttar Pradesh**, to provide reliable electricity supply to consumers in the state.
- This is the first tranche of the loan for the Uttar Pradesh Power Distribution Network Rehabilitation Project.
- Overall, the **\$430 million multi-tranche financing facility (MFF)** has been approved for the project constituting two tranches.
- The project envisages conversion of 65,000 kilometers (km) of rural low-voltage distribution lines from bare conductors to aerial bundle conductors (ABC) to create a robust distribution network that will benefit an estimated 70 million people in 46,000 villages.

India and ADB inks USD 4.21 million PRF facility for preparation of infrastructure development projects in Tripura



- The **Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB)** have signed a **US \$4.21 million project readiness financing (PRF) facility** on 18 December 2020.
- This PRF facility will allow the preparation of infrastructure development projects to improve urban amenities and develop tourism infrastructure in Tripura, to help boost economic development.
- This is first PRF facility by ADB for a state in the northeastern region of India.

World Bank approves several projects to support development initiatives in India



- The **World Bank** has approved several projects for India, to support development initiatives that will strengthen India's social protection architecture. These include:
 - Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural and Accelerated Agriculture Growth Project (CHIRAAG);
 - Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project; and
 - Second Dam Improvement and Rehabilitation Project (DRIP-2).

CHIRAAG project

- Amount sanctioned: **USD 100 million**
- CHIRAAG aims at promoting nutrition-supportive agriculture for tribal households in Chhattisgarh
- It will develop sustainable production systems that allow tribal households in remote areas of Chhattisgarh to practice round-the-year production of diversified and nutritious food.
- It will be implemented in the southern tribal-majority region of the state where a large population is undernourished and poor.
- The project will benefit over 180,000 households from about 1,000 villages in eight districts of Chhattisgarh.

Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project

- Amount approved: **USD 68 million**
- It will improve classroom instruction; create opportunities for the professional development of teachers; and build technology systems to provide students and teachers with more access to blended and online learning as well as allow better monitoring of policies and programs. It will enhance overall quality education in the state

DRIP-2

- Financial aid approved: **USD 250 million**
- DRIP-2 will improve the safety and performance of existing dams across various states of India, and strengthen dam safety by building dam safety guidelines; bring in global experience; and introduce newer technologies.

UN Women collaborates with Kerala Government to set up India's first Gender Data Hub



- The **Government of Kerala and UN Women** have collaborated to establish **India's first Gender Data Hub**.
- The unique facilities at the Gender Park will have a **Gender Library, Gender Museum and Training Centre** on sustainable entrepreneurship, social business and markets for women from economically-backward social groups.
- Gender Park will work as a **South Asian hub for gender-related activities** with UN Women.

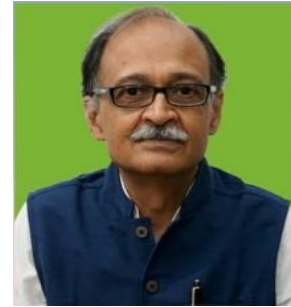
World Bank inks \$500 million pact with Government of India for green, safe highway corridors project



- The **Government of India has inked \$500 million loan pact with the World Bank (WB)** on 22 December 2020, to **develop safe and green national highway corridors** in the states of **Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh**
- Under this Green National Highways Corridors project, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) will be constructing 783 km of highways.
- World Bank will provide support by integrating technology designs such as local and marginal materials, industrial byproducts, and other bioengineering solutions
- Apart from this, disaster risk assessment of about 5,000 km of the national highway network will also be undertaken under the project, to ensure that the infrastructure investments are climate resilient.

APPOINTMENT

Senior IAS Officer Utpal Kumar Singh Appointed as Secretary-General of Lok Sabha



- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has appointed senior IAS officer **Utpal Kumar Singh** as **Secretary General of the Lok Sabha and Lok Sabha Secretariat**.
- His appointment will come into effect from **December 1, 2020**. He will succeed incumbent Snehlata Shrivastava.
- Mr Singh is a 1986 batch IAS officer of Uttarakhand Cadre, and has been appointed as Secretary General of the Lok Sabha in the rank and status of Cabinet Secretary.

Sandeep Kataria becomes first Indian to be appointed as global CEO of Bata



- Footwear major **Bata Shoe Organization** has appointed **Sandeep Kataria** as the new **global Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** on 30 November 2020, with immediate effect.
- Kataria is the first Indian to be appointed to the global role of Bata (Headquarter-Lausanne, Switzerland).
- He takes over from **Alexis Nasard**, who has stepped down after almost five years in the role.
- Before this, Kataria was the **CEO of Bata India** since 2017.
- Under Kataria, Bata India managed to transform into the largest footwear retailer in India within a relatively short span.

Senior IAS officer Varsha Joshi Appointed as Interim Chairperson of NDDB



- The Government of India has appointed **Varsha Joshi** as the **interim Chairperson of National Dairy Development**

Board (NDDB), (NDDB Headquarter: Anand, Gujarat).

- Her appointment will be effective from **December 1, 2020**.
- She replaces incumbent **Dilip Rath**, whose tenure as Chairman of NDDB ended on November 30, 2020.
- Prior to this, Joshi, (an **IAS officer of 1995 batch, AGMUT cadre**), was the Joint Secretary (CDD), Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

AR Rahman roped in as 'BAFTA Breakthrough' India ambassador



- Oscar and Grammy-winning Indian composer **AR Rahman** has been roped in as **ambassador of the BAFTA Breakthrough initiative in India**.
- In 2020, BAFTA will identify and support up to **five exceptional talents** working in film, games or television in India.
- The BAFTA Breakthrough initiative, is part of the Academy's year-long programme to support new talent, coming up in the film, games and television industries in the UK, China, India and the US and gives them access to unique career development and mentoring opportunities.
- It is a unique opportunity for promising artists to be **supported by a world-renowned organisation**, including **connections with other talented creatives** across the world and being **mentored by BAFTA-winners and nominees**.

Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhary takes charge as new Director General of BRO



- **Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhary** has been appointed as the **27th Director General of Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**. His appointment is effective from 1st December 2020.
- Lt Gen Chaudhary succeeds Lt Gen Harpal Singh who has been appointed as the new Engineer-in-Chief of the Indian Army.

- The BRO is responsible for construction and maintenance of all border roads including those along the frontiers with China and Pakistan.

2020 Dronacharya Awardee Kuldeep Handoo from J&K, Appointed as "Fit India Movement" Ambassador



- **J&K-based Kuldeep Handoo**, a wushu coach for team India, has been appointed as the **Ambassador of PM Modi's nation-wide 'Fit India Movement'**.
- Kuldeep Handoo was conferred with the prestigious Dronacharya Award in August 2020 and is the first person from the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir to receive the prestigious Award, which is conferred as a recognition of outstanding sports coaching.
- He is appointed as the **Inspector in Jammu and Kashmir Police Department**.

Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid Re-appointed as PM of Kuwait



- **Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah** has been re-appointed as the **prime minister of Kuwait** following parliamentary polls in the Gulf Arab state.
- He was appointed by Kuwait Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on 8 December 2020
- Sheikh Sabah first assumed the charge as the Prime Minister of the country in late 2019, becoming the 8th PM of Kuwait.
- Prior to that he had been serving as the foreign minister since 2011.

Sukhbir Singh Sandhu gets six months extension as NHAI chairman



- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has extended the tenure of **Sukhbir Singh Sandhu as the Chairman of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** for a period of six months.
- Sandhu, a 1988-batch IAS officer of Uttarakhand cadre, was to retire on January 21, 2021.
- Now he will serve until **July 21, 2021**.
- This is a second six months extension for Sandhu. He had received first extension of six months till January 21, 2021 in July 2019.

Vineet Agarwal takes over as new Assocham President



- **Vineet Agarwal** has been appointed as the new **President of The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham)**.
- He replaces Niranjana Hiranandani, Co-Founder and MD, Hiranandani Group of Companies.
- Vineet Agarwal is the Managing Director of logistics major Transport Corporation of India Limited.
- Apart from this, Sumant Sinha, Chairman and Managing Director of ReNew Power, has been appointed as the new Senior Vice-President of Assocham.

Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan nominated to the Board of 'GAVI', The Vaccine Alliance



- The Union Health Minister **Dr. Harsh Vardhan** has been nominated as the **board member of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI)**.
- The seat is currently held by **Myint Htwe of Myanmar**.
- Dr. Vardhan will represent the **South East Area Regional Office (SEARO)/ Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO)** constituency on the GAVI Board.
- Dr. Vardhan will assume the charge with effect from **January 1, 2021 and serve till December 31, 2023**.

About GAVI

- The vaccine alliance GAVI is an international organisation based in **Geneva, Switzerland**, that provides a forum for balanced strategic decision-making, innovation and partner collaboration.
- It was created in the year 2000 to improve access to new and underused vaccines for numerous vaccine-preventable diseases for children who live in the world's poorest countries.
- The GAVI board is responsible for strategic direction and policy-making, oversees the operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation.

AWARDS

15-yr-old Indian-American Gitanjali Rao, becomes first-ever TIME's "Kid Of The Year"



- The Indian-American young scientist and inventor, **Gitanjali Rao**, has been named as the first-ever **'Kid of the Year'** by the iconic **TIME magazine**.
- This is the first time that the TIME magazine has launched the Kid of The Year award.

- The 15-year-old Gitanjali Rao, was chosen from among more than 5,000 nominees, for her “astonishing work” using technology to tackle issues ranging from contaminated drinking water to opioid addiction and cyberbullying.
- She has created applications named ‘**Kindly**’ to help people, especially kids, fight opioid addiction and cyberbullying.
- TIME magazine had partnered with Nickelodeon and searched social media and school districts across the country to shortlist the most influential child of 2020.

Maharashtra's Ranjitsinh Disale becomes first Indian to win 2020 Global Teacher Prize



- **Ranjitsinh Disale**, a government teacher from Zilla Parishad Primary School, in Paritewadi village, Solapur district of **Maharashtra**, has won the **2020 Global Teacher Prize**.
- He is the first Indian to win this award, which carries a prize money of **\$1 million (Rs 7.4 crore)**.
- The 32-year-old has won the annual Global Teacher Prize 2020 in recognition of his efforts to promote girls' education in his village and trigger a quick-response (QR) coded textbook revolution in India.
 - Disale made efforts and added QR codes to textbooks of primary classes to provide links to audio poems, video lectures, stories and assignments.
 - He also worked towards education for girls and teaching people about the ill-effects of teenage marriage and even helped to achieve 100% attendance of girls.
- Ranjitsinh has also created history by announcing to share half the prize money with the nine finalists from across the world for the award, where each one will receive about \$55,000 each. He also becomes the first winner to share the prize money with the finalists.
- The Global Teacher Prize is an annual prize founded by the Varkey Foundation in 2014 to recognise an exceptional teacher who has made outstanding contribution to the profession. The award is given in partnership with UNESCO.

Raj Kamal Jha wins Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2020



- **Raj Kamal Jha**, the writer and chief editor of '**The Indian Express**', has won the **Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2020** for his book, "**The City and the Sea**".
- This was the 3rd edition of the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize, which carries a cash prize of \$5,000.
- The Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize was founded in 2018 by US-based publisher Bundalo to recognise works towards world peace, literature, art, education and human rights.
- Apart from this, the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for Social Achievement 2020 was conferred to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, the late Sultan of Oman and The People of Oman, and renowned Indian choreographer Sandip Soparrkar for his contribution to the betterment of society through his initiative "Dance for a Cause"

Carolina Araujo of Brazil Wins 2020 Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians



- **Brazilian mathematician Dr. Carolina Araujo**, has been conferred with the **2020 Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians**, for her outstanding work in algebraic geometry.
- Dr. Araujo is the **first non-Indian women mathematician** to receive this prize. Prior to her Ramdorai Sujatha, from India became the first women to receive the award in 2006.
- Dr Araujo is a Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and also the Vice President of the Committee for Women in Mathematics at the International Mathematical Union.

Joe Biden & Kamala Harris jointly named Time's 'Person of the

Year' 2020



- US President-elect **Joe Biden** and Vice President-elect **Kamala Harris** have been jointly named **Time magazine's 2020 "Person of the Year"**.
- The TIME magazine releases the annual list since 1927, to recognise a person or organisation who affected the news or impacted the country and world the most, for better or worse, during the calendar year.
- Apart from this, Time magazine has named the **Korean pop group BTS as its Entertainer of the Year**, and basketball star **LeBron James as Athlete of the Year**.



- Ashraf Patel**, the founder member and Board member of **Pravah and ComMutiny – The Youth Collective (CYC)** has been declared as the winner of the Social Entrepreneur of the Year (SEYO) Award – India 2020.
- It is the **11th edition** of the annual award, instituted by the **Schwab Foundation and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation** in 2010.
- The award was presented by the Union Minister of Women & Child Development & Textiles, **Smriti Zubin Irani**.

UNEP announces 2020 Champions of the Earth Award

Bajrang Punia & Elavenil Valarivan bags FICCI 2020 Sportsperson of the Year awards



- The **Federation of Indian Commerce and Industry (FICCI)** presented the **India Sports Awards 2020**, virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- Wrestler **Bajrang Punia** has won the **2020 Male Sportsperson of the Year award**.
- Shooter **Elavenil Valarivan** has bagged the **2020 Male Sportsperson of the Year award**.

Ashraf Patel Wins Social Entrepreneur of the Year (SEYO) Award – India 2020



- The **UN Environment Program (UNEP)** is presenting the **Champions of the Earth Award** since 2005, to inspire and motivate more people to act for nature.
- The award recognizes outstanding environmental leaders from the public and private sectors, and from civil society for their pioneering initiatives aimed at healing the planet amid natural and man-made threats and whose action have had a positive impact on the environment.
- The Champions of the Earth Award is presented in **5 categories**, including Lifetime Achievement, Inspiration and Action, Policy Leadership, Entrepreneur Vision,

Science and Innovation.

- The 2020 Champions of the Earth Award has been bestowed upon **6 individuals**. The list of winners is given below.
 1. Policy Leadership – Frank Bainimarama, the Prime Minister of Fiji
 2. Inspiration and Action – Yacouba Sawadogo, a farmer from Burkina Faso
 3. Inspiration and Action – Nemonte Nenquimo, an Ecuadorian female green campaigner
 4. Science and Innovation – Fabian Leendertz, a German scientist
 5. Entrepreneur Vision – Mindy Lubber, an American social entrepreneur
 6. Lifetime Achievement Award – Robert D. Bullard, an American scholar

Paul Sein Twa of Myanmar wins 2020 Goldman Environmental Prize for Asia region



- The **31st edition of the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize** was announced recently, which honors one grassroots environmental activist from each of the world's six geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Islands and Island Nations, North America, and South and Central America.

Region-wise winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize 2020

1. Islands and Island Nations – Kristal Ambrose from The Bahamas,
2. Africa – Chibeze Ezekiel from Ghana,
3. South America – Nemonte Nenquimo from Ecuador,
4. North America – Leydy Pech from Mexico,
5. Europe – Lucie Pinson from France,
6. **Asia – Paul Sein Twa from Myanmar**
 - The Goldman Environmental Prize is given annually by the **Goldman Environmental Foundation** headquartered in **San Francisco, California**.
 - The award is dubbed as the **“Green Nobel Prize”**.
 - Asia region winner Paul is the co-founder of the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN), which was established in 2001, which supported Karen indigenous communities in establishing the Salween Peace Park in Myanmar and on the border of Thailand, to conserve the biodiversity.

PM Modi Confers ‘ASSOCHAM Enterprise of the Century Award’ to Shri Ratan Tata



- Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed the **‘ASSOCHAM Foundation Week 2020’** via video conferencing on 19th December 2020.
- The week long Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM) Foundation Week was organised from **15 to 19 December 2020**.
- The theme of the programme was **‘India’s resilience: Atmanirbhar roadmap towards \$5 trillion economy.’**
- As a part of the celebration, PM Modi also presented the **‘ASSOCHAM Enterprise of the Century Award’ to Shri Ratan Tata**, on behalf of the TATA Group, for his distinguished contributions to the country.
- In the last 100 years, ASSOCHAM and the entire Tata group has worked very hard to strengthen India’s economy and help the common Indian.
- It must be noted that Mr. Tata will also be honored with the **‘Global Visionary of Sustainable Business and Peace’** award by the Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce on December 21.
- He will receive the award during the launch of the Federation of Indo-Israel Chamber of Commerce’s international chapter in Dubai, for promoting innovation that supports sustainability and peace in the region, including with the Palestinians.

Union Minister Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad presents Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Telecom Skill Excellence Awards



- The Union Minister of Communications and Electronics & IT, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad presented the **Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Telecom Skill Excellence Awards for the year 2018** along with Shri Sanjay Shamrao Dhotre, Minister of State for Communications and Electronics & IT on 18th December 2020.
- First Prize – Shri. Sreenivas Karanam of Bangalore –**

Rs 50,000

- **Second Prize – Prof. Subrat Kar of New Delhi – Rs 30,000**
- The Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Telecom Skill Excellence Awards scheme was launched in **2017 by DoT.**
- The award was named after Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay ji to commemorate his birth centenary.
- **Purpose :** to reward the successful telecom skilled people for their special contributions in the areas of Telecom Skilling, Telecom Services, Telecom Manufacturing, Telecom Applications in deploying telecom dependent sectoral solutions for different fields such as agriculture, commerce, health, education etc.
- The nominations were called for the first time for year **2018.**
 - **Sreenivas Karanam** received the award for his contribution in developing a cost-effective customized technical solution under the brand 'C mobile', for deep sea communication, operating along the Kerala coast, facilitating communication among fishermen and issue of weather alerts etc
 - **Subrat Kar** was selected for his innovative solution on development & deployment of a large scale sensor network and devices to avoid train-animal collision, which works without interfering with natural movements/behaviour of animals, thereby helping in wildlife conservation.

Indian entrepreneur Vidyut Mohan among UNEP's Seven 'Young Champions of the Earth' for 2020

2020 Winners



- A 29-year-old Indian entrepreneur, **Vidyut Mohan**, has been recognised as one of the seven winners of the prestigious **"Young Champions of the Earth" 2020 prize** given by the UN environment agency, **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** annually.
- The Young Champions of the Earth is given to global change-makers, for using innovative ideas and ambitious action to help solve some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.
- The prize is awarded every year to seven entrepreneurs under the age of 30 with bold ideas for sustainable environmental change.

About Vidyut Mohan

- An engineer by profession, Vidyut Mohan is the co-founder of a social enterprise "Takachar".
- Through his enterprise, Vidyut helped the farmers to turn their farm waste into value-added chemicals like activated carbon on-site, which in turn helped them to earn extra income as well as prevented open burning

of waste farm residues.

Other Winners

- Nzambi Matee from Kenya
- Xiaoyuan Ren from China
- Lefteris Arapakis from Greece
- Niria Alicia Garcia from the US
- Max Hidalgo Quinto from Peru
- Fatemah Alzelzela from Kuwait

Donald Trump Honours PM Modi With Top US Honour 'Legion Of Merit'



- US President Donald Trump has presented **America's highest military decoration, 'The Legion of Merit', to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.**
- The prestigious Legion of Merit was given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership in elevating strategic partnership of the two countries.
- The award was accepted by **India's Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu** on behalf of the prime minister from the US National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien at the White House on 21 December 2020.

About Legion of Merit Medal

- The Legion of Merit Medal was established by the US Congress on July 20, 1942, and is given only to the Head of State or Government. It is also one of the highest military medals that can be awarded to foreign officers.
- It is awarded to members of the US military and foreign military members and political figures who have displayed exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services and achievements.
- The Legion of Merit Medal is a five-rayed white cross, edged with red, resting on a green wreath with a blue centre containing 13 white stars.

Former Union Minister Jairam Ramesh & US Academician Amit Ahuja jointly wins Kamaladevi NIF Book Prize for 2020

- The **2020 Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay New India Foundation (NIF) Book Prize** for the best non-fiction book on contemporary/ modern India has jointly been won by former **Union minister Jairam Ramesh and U.S.-based academician Amit Ahuja.**
- The award carries a citation and a cash prize of **Rs 15 lakh.** This is the **3rd edition of the award.**
- Ahuja has been awarded for his book '*Mobilizing the Marginalized: Ethnic Parties without Ethnic*

Movements' (Oxford University Press). This is the first book of Ahuja, who is an associate professor of political science at the University of California.

- Jairam Ramesh won the prize for '*A Chequered Brilliance: The Many Lives of VK Krishna Menon*' (Penguin Random House), a biography of politician and diplomat VK Krishna Menon.
- Both the authors will share the cash prize.

ICC Awards of the Decade 2020



- The winners of the prestigious ICC Awards of the Decade were announced on 28th December 2020.
- **The ICC Awards of The Decade** recognise the best players across Cricket over the past 10 years.
- Among women's cricketers Australia's Ellyse Perry clinched the award in all three categories, ICC Women's Player of the Decade, ODI Player of the Decade and T20I Player of the Decade award.

List of Winners

- **ICC Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade** – MS Dhoni

ICC Men's Awards

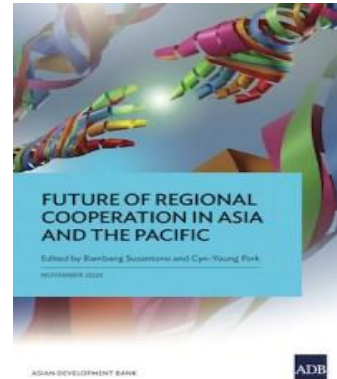
- **Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade** – Virat Kohli
- **ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Decade** – Virat Kohli
- **ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Decade** – Rashid Khan
- **ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Decade** – Steve Smith
- **ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Decade** – Kyle Coetzer

ICC Women's Award

- **Rachael Heyhoe Flint Award for ICC Female Cricketer of the Decade** – Ellyse Perry
- **ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Decade** – Ellyse Perry
- **ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Decade** – Ellyse Perry
- **ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Decade** – Kathryn Bryce

BOOKS AUTHOR

ADB Releases Book Titled 'Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific'



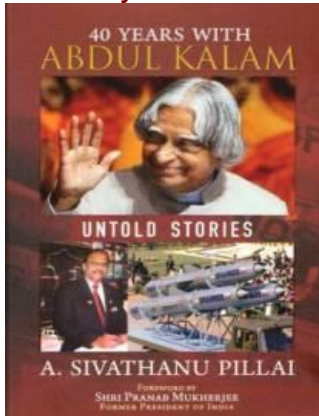
- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has released a new book titled '**Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific**'.
- The book provides insight on how stronger regional cooperation strategies, including in health, trade, finance, and disaster risk, can help governments in Asia and the Pacific accelerate economic growth and robust recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It also explores opportunities for economies in the region to work together to recover and rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ministry of I&B Produces Booklet titled 'PM Modi and his Government's special relationship with Sikhs'



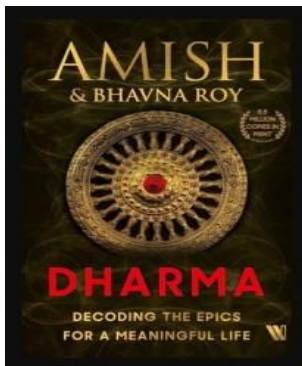
- A booklet titled '**PM Modi and his Government's special relationship with Sikhs**' was released on 30 November 2020, on the occasion of birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji.
- The booklet was jointly inaugurated by the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Shri Prakash Javadekar and Union Minister for Civil Aviation and Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri.
- It has been produced by Bureau of Outreach Communication under **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** and is released in three languages **Hindi, Punjabi and English**.

Venkaiah Naidu Releases Book '40 Years with Abdul Kalam – Untold Stories' by Dr. A. Sivathanu Pillai



- Vice President Venkaiah Naidu recently released a book on former president Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.
- The book titled “40 Years with Abdul Kalam – Untold Stories” has been written by scientist Dr. A. Sivathanu Pillai, a former chief of BrahMos Aerospace.
- In this book, the author has described his life experience where he had the opportunity of working the great soul, KALAM, closely for more than four decades and shared difficulties, failures and successes.
- It discusses many of the interesting events, mostly the untold ones, during this journey, including those at ISRO, DRDO and BrahMos, and interactions with the corridors of power.
- The book has been published by Pentagon Press. It also contains a foreword by Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India.

Amish Tripathi's second non-fiction book, titled 'Dharma: Decoding the Epics for A Meaningful Life', to release on December 28



- The best-selling author Amish Tripathi, has announced his second non-fiction book titled “Dharma: Decoding the Epics for A Meaningful Life”.
- The book will be released on December 28, 2020.
- It is co-authored by Amish's sister Bhavna Roy.
- The publisher of the book is Westland Publications Pvt Ltd
- The book offers practical and philosophical lessons from our Hindu epics (like Ramayana or Mahabharata) that are

relevant in the modern world.

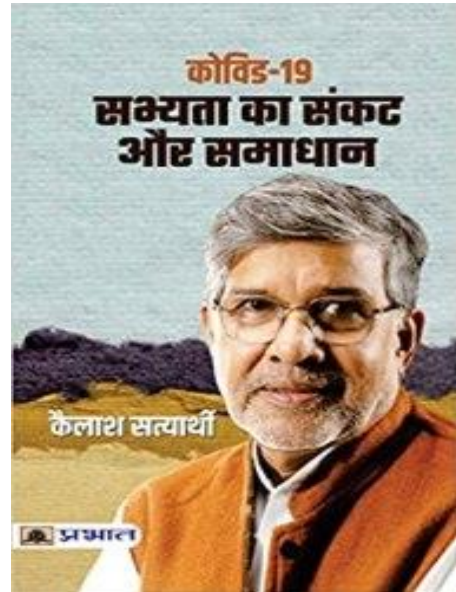
- His previous non-fiction work was ‘Immortal India’, which was released in 2017.

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu inaugurates book titled 'Oh Mizoram' authored by Mizoram Governor Sreedharan Pillai



- The Vice-President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu released a book titled ‘Oh Mizoram’ through video conferencing recently during an event organised at the India International Centre, New Delhi.
- The book ‘Oh Mizoram’ has been written by the Governor of Mizoram, P S Sreedharan Pillai.
- The book is a collection of several English poems and has been published by the Indus Scrolls Press, Hyderabad.
- Oh Mizora, is the 125th book written by Governor Pillai.

Kailash Satyarthi pens new book 'Covid-19 : Sabhyata Ka Sankat Aur Samadhan'



- Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi has come out with his new book titled ‘Covid-19: Sabhyata ka Sankat aur Samadhan’ (Covid-19: Crisis of Civilisation and Solutions).
- The book was launched by former Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra and Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh on 24th December 2020, virtually.
- The book is written in Hindi and is published by Prabhat Prakashan.

- 'Covid-19: Sabhyata ka Sankat aur Samadhan' discusses how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the common way of life including the education system, business, politics, public safety, foreign policy, law, medicine, economy and development of countries. It also suggests solution to deal with the ongoing crisis triggered by the disease.

Union Minister Shripad Naik Releases book

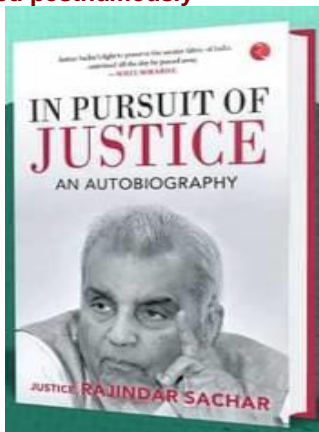
"Sutranivednachi sutra- ek anav" by renowned

Goan Compere Dr Roopa Chari



- **Union Minister of state (I/C) for AYUSH and Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik** released a **Konkani book titled "Sutranivednachi sutra- ek anav"**.
- The book has been written by **Dr Roopa Chari**, a well-known personality in the field of **Compering in Goa**.
- It is published by **Sanjana Publications**.
- This book will help aspiring youngsters, who wish to make a career in the field of Compering.
- Compere (often abbreviated MC or emcee) is a person who introduces the performers or contestants in a variety show and acts as a link between the audience and the speaker.

Justice Rajindar Sachar Autobiography 'In Pursuit of Justice' released posthumously



- The **autobiography** of late **Justice Rajindar Sachar**, titled, **"In Pursuit of Justice: An Autobiography"**, was launched posthumously by Sachar's family on the occasion of his birth anniversary on 29 December 2020.
- The book was launched through virtual platform, in

association with The Indian Society of International Law and The Indian Law Institute.

- The book is a story of a great jurist who was an even a greater human being, as he delivered a lot to the society and did not allowed politics to cloud his judgements.
- Justice Sachar is most remembered for the Sachar Committee report of 2006 which documented the social and economic condition of Muslims in India.

COMMITTEE

Centre constitutes Apex Committee for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (AIPA) headed by Environment Secretary



- The Central Government has set up an **Apex Committee for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (AIPA)** for achieving its goals under the global deal.
- The **17-member Committee** comprise of members from **13 key ministries of the Union Government**.
- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) secretary **R P Gupta** will be the head of this committee and the additional secretary, MoEFCC, **Ravi Shankar Prasad** will be the vice chairperson.
- The Environment ministry has enlisted as many as 16 functions for the AIPA.
- **Key features of AIPA**

Government constitutes High Level Committee headed by Home Minister Amit Shah to commemorate 125th Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose



- The Union Government has decided to **constitute a High Level Committee (HLC) to commemorate the 125th Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose**, which will be observed on 23rd December 2020.
- The High Level Committee will be headed by the **Union Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah**.
- This HLC will decide on the activities for a one year long commemoration beginning 23 January, 2021, as a tribute and mark of gratitude to the contribution made by Netaji in India's freedom struggle.
- The other members of the High Level Commemoration Committee will include experts, historians, authors, family members of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, as well as eminent persons associated with Azad Hind Fauj/INA.

CONFERENCE

PM Modi delivers inaugural address at FICCI's 93rd Annual General Meeting and inaugurates FICCI Annual Expo 2020



- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** delivered the inaugural address at **FICCI's 93rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Annual Convention** on December 12, 2020 via video conferencing.
- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has organised the convention from December 11 to 14, 2020.
- The theme for the FICCI 93rd AGM is **'Inspired India'**.
- FICCI AGM is the annual high-powered flagship event where Cabinet Ministers, Secretaries to Govt of India, Global Industry Captains, Diplomats, Political party leaders, and other thought leaders participate.
- More than 10000 delegates are virtually participating in this mega event from across the globe.
- The Prime Minister also inaugurated the virtual **FICCI Annual Expo 2020**. It will start from 11 December 2020 and will continue for a period of a **whole year**.
- The Expo is one-of-its-kind virtual event in the country focused on manufacturing and services sectors, which will provide an opportunity to exhibitors from across the globe to showcase their products and advance their business prospects.

5th India – Myanmar bilateral meeting on Drug Control Cooperation held virtually



- The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)**, India and the **Central Committee on Drug Abuse Control**, Myanmar conducted the **5th edition of the India- Myanmar Bilateral Meeting on Drug Control Cooperation** virtually on 10th December, 2020.
- The Indian delegation was led by the **Director General Narcotics Control Bureau, Shri Rakesh Asthana**.
- The Myanmar delegation was led by Pol. Brig. Gen. Win Naing, the Commander of the Drug Enforcement Division (DED) cum Joint Secretary of the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control.
- The 6th India – Myanmar Bilateral Meeting on Drug Control Cooperation will be held in India in 2021.

20th IORA Council of Ministers Meeting Held in UAE



- The **20th edition of the IORA Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting** was on December 17 via video conferencing under the **Chairmanship of United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.
- The theme of the meeting was "Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean".
- The COM-20 was inaugurated by Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the UAE.
- The UAE assumed the position of the IORA Chair in November 2019 during the 19th COM, for the period 2019-2021.
- The Indian delegation was led by **Shri V. Muraleedharan, MoS, Ministry of External Affairs**.
- All 22 Member States and 10 Dialogue Partners participated in the virtual meeting to discuss ways in coordinating efforts to achieve IORA's vision for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indian Ocean region as outlined in the Jakarta Concord and IORA Action Plan.
- During the 2020 COM, France was inducted as the 23rd member state of IORA.
- Sri Lanka has assumed the charge of Vice Chair of IORA for the period 2021-23.

About Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

- The IORA is an inter-governmental organisation which was established on March 7, 1997. Headquarter : Ebene, Mauritius
- IORA's apex body is the Council of Foreign Ministers (COM) which meets annually, with the aim of promoting regional cooperation, prosperity, and growth in the Indian Ocean region.
- It comprise of 22 Member states and 10 Dialogue partners.
- The 22 member states are: Australia, Iran, Bangladesh, the Comoros, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- IORA has ten dialogue partners: China, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Turkey, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Dr. S. Jaishankar addresses 5th Annual Global Technology Summit



- The 5th edition of the annual Global Technology Summit (GTS) was organised virtually from December 14 to 18, 2020, by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India in collaboration with Carnegie India (CI).
- The theme of the 2020 GTS was "The Geopolitics of Technology".
- The speakers from included the External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, and Dr. K. VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India.
- The industry experts, policymakers, and scholars from all over the world participated in the five day event to deliberate on five comprehensive sub-themes, which included:
 1. Geopolitics of Technology,
 2. Data: Linking the World,
 3. Digital Payments: The Future of Global Financial Highways,
 4. Digital Inclusion: Taking the Local to the Global, and
 5. Transforming Healthcare for a Post-COVID World.

- GTS is one of the four flagship annual conferences organised by MEA. The other three conferences are the **Raisina Dialogue, the Geo-economic dialogue, and the Indian Ocean Conference.**

12th GRIHA Summit of TERI Concludes



- The 12th GRIHA (Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment) Summit was held virtually from December 15-16, 2020. It was inaugurated by Vice President of India Venkaiah Naidu virtually.
- The theme of the Summit was "Rejuvenating Resilient Habitats".
- It is the annual flagship event organized by GRIHA Council in association with 'key stakeholders in the construction industry' to discuss and deliberate on furtherance of Sustainable Habitat Development in India.
- The Summit provides a platform to deliberate on innovative technologies and solutions to help in creating robust mechanisms for developing sustainable and resilient solutions for the benefit of the entire community.

GRIHA Council

- It is an independent, not-for-profit society jointly setup by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India to promote and administer green buildings in India.
- Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) is the national rating system of India for any completed building construction.
- It has been recognised as India's own green building rating system in India's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

DAYS

World AIDS Day: 01 December



- The **World AIDS Day** is observed across the globe on **1 December** every year since **1988** to raise awareness of the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection
- The theme for the World Aids Day 2020 is '**Ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic: Resilience and Impact.**'

Border Security Force (BSF) Celebrates its 56th Raising Day on December 1, 2020



- The **Border Security Force (BSF)**, is observing its **56th Raising Day** on 01 December 2020.
- BSF was formed on **December 1, 1965** as a unified central agency, after the Indo-Pak and India-China wars, for ensuring the security of the borders of India and for matters connected there with.
- It is one of the five Central Armed Police Forces of the Union of India and stands as the world's largest border guarding force.
- BSF has been termed as the **First Line of Defence** of Indian Territories.
- BSF Director General –**Rakesh Asthana**.

World Computer Literacy Day: 02 December



- The **World Computer Literacy Day** is observed annually on **2nd December** to create awareness and drive digital literacy in underserved communities worldwide.
- The day was originally founded by the Indian computer company **NIIT** to mark its **20th anniversary in 2001**.

Basic objective:

- Encourage the development of technological skills, particularly among children and women in India.
- Improve the teaching of Information Technology
- "Celebration of computers"

National Pollution Control Day: 02 December

- In India, the **National Pollution Control Day** is observed every year on **December 2** to commemorate the life of people lost in the unfortunate incident of **Bhopal Gas Tragedy** that occurred in the year **1984** on the night of 2–3 December.
- The year **2020 marks the 36th anniversary** of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy.
- Through this day, awareness is created about the rising pollution of air, water, and soil, as well as shifts the attention of people with regards to the pollution control acts.



Objectives of the day:

- Spread awareness on managing and controlling industrial disasters
- Prevent the pollution produced by industrial processes or human negligence
- Make people and industries aware about the importance of pollution control acts

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery: 02 December



- The **International Day for the Abolition of Slavery** is observed annually on **2nd December** since 1986 by the United Nations General Assembly.
- **Objective:** Eradicating contemporary forms of slavery, such as trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, the worst forms of child labour, forced marriage, and the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities: 03 December



- The **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** is observed annually on **December 3**.
- The IDPWD day was proclaimed in 1992 by United Nations General Assembly.
- **Aim:** to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development, and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.
- 2020 theme: '**Not all Disabilities are Visible**'

Indian Navy Day: 04 December



- In India, **December 4** is observed as the **National Navy Day** every year, to celebrate the achievements and role of the naval force to the country.
- The Theme of 2020 Navy Day is "**Indian Navy Combat Ready, Credible & Cohesive**".

Why is Indian Navy Day observed?

- The day is marked in recognition of the launch of **Operation Trident** during the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971.
- During Operation Trident, on December 4 in 1971, the Indian Navy sank four Pakistani vessels and also killed over 500 Pakistani Navy personnel, meanwhile, the Indian side suffered no losses.

Extra Points to Remember:

- The Maratha Emperor, **Chhatrapati Shivaji Bhosle** of the 17th century is considered as "**Father of the Indian Navy**".
- The Indian Navy is the marine branch of the Indian Armed Forces and is led by the **President of India as Commander-in-Chief**.

International Day of Banks : 04 December



- The **International Day of Banks** is observed on **4th December** every year in recognition of the vital role of the banking systems in contributing to the improvement of the standard of living.
- It also recognises the significant potential of multilateral development banks and other international development banks in financing sustainable development and providing know-how.
- The **UN General Assembly** adopted resolution to designate the day on **19 December 2019**.

World Soil Day: 05 December



- The **World Soil Day** is celebrated every year on **December 5** to raise awareness of the importance of soil quality for human well-being, food security and

ecosystems

- The 2020 theme – ‘**Keep soil alive, Protect soil biodiversity!**’
- The day was first considered by the International Union of Soil Sciences in 2002.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) officially endorsed the day in June 2013 while the UN General Assembly declared 5 December as the World Soil Day in December 2013.

- In India, the **Armed Forces Flag Day** (also known as the Flag Day of India) is observed annually on **December 7 since 1949** as an honour to the soldiers, sailors and airmen of India who fought on the borders to keep the country safe.
- The three branches of the Armed Forces of India, namely, the **Indian Army, the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy** are remembered on this day.
- The ‘**Armed forces Flag Day Fund**’ (AFFDF) has been constituted by the Government of India for the welfare and rehabilitation of the Ex-Servicemen (ESM) community.

International Volunteer Day: 05 December



- The International Volunteer Day (IVD), also called **International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development** is observed on **5 December every year**.
- **IVD 2020 Theme : “Together We Can Through Volunteering”**
- The IVD international observance was mandated by the UN General Assembly in 1985.
- Purpose: to celebrate the efforts of volunteers and organizations and offer them opportunity to promote volunteerism, encourage governments to support volunteer efforts and recognize volunteer contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local, national and international levels.

Armed Forces Flag Day: 7 December



International Civil Aviation Day: 07 December



- The **International Civil Aviation Day** is celebrated every year on **December 7** to recognize the importance of aviation to the social and economic development of the world.
- The Day was established in 1994 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)** [Headquarter-Montreal, Canada].
- The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the day in 1996.
- The ICAO Council has selected the special collective 5 year theme for 2019-2023: “**Advancing Innovation for Global Aviation Development**”.

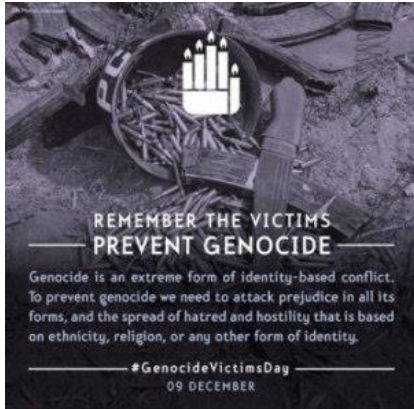
International Anti-Corruption Day: 09 December



- **International Anti-Corruption Day** is observed annually on **9 December** to raise public awareness for anti-corruption.
- The day is observed since the passage of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption on 31 October 2003.
- Theme 2020 –‘**RECOVER with INTEGRITY.**’

- The theme focuses on recovery through corruption mitigation and emphasizes that inclusive COVID-19 recovery can only be achieved with integrity.

International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime: 9 December



- The **International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime** is observed annually on **December 9**.
- It was established by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, to commemorate the anniversary of the adoption of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the "Genocide Convention").
- 2020 marks the **71st anniversary of the Convention**.

World Human Rights Day: 10 December



- Human Rights Day** is celebrated on **10 December** annually across the world.
- 2020 Theme: **"Recover Better – Stand Up For Human Rights"**
- It was on this day in 1948 that United Nations General Assembly adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
- UDHR is a milestone document proclaiming the first ever global enunciation of human rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion,

national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

International Mountain Day: 11 December



- The **International Mountain Day** is observed on **December 11** every year.
- 2020 Theme: **Mountain biodiversity**.
- Purpose:** to create awareness about the importance of mountains to life, to highlight the opportunities and constraints in mountain development and to build alliances that will bring positive change to mountain peoples and environments around the world.
- It was established by the **UN General Assembly in 2003** to encourage sustainable development of mountains.
- United Nations had declared **2002 as the UN International Year of Mountains**.

UNICEF Day: 11 December



- Every year the **UNICEF Day** is observed on **December 11**.
- The United Nations General Assembly created UNICEF on December 11, 1946, as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund to improve the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children devastated due to World War II.
- UNICEF's name was subsequently changed from **United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund to United Nations Children's Fund** though, it continued to be known by the popular acronym based on the previous title.

International Universal Health Coverage Day: 12 December



- **International Universal Health Coverage Day** is a United Nations' recognized international day celebrated every year on **December 12**.
- Objective: to provide access to quality and affordable health care to every person across the globe.
- The day was proclaimed by UN on December 12, 2017.
- 2020 theme is '**Health For All: PROTECT EVERYONE**'
- The theme reflects that to end this crisis (COVID-19) and build a safer and healthier future, we must invest in health systems that protect us all—now.

International Day of Neutrality: 12 December



- **International Day of Neutrality** is a United Nations recognized day held on **December 12** each year to raise public awareness of the value of neutrality in international relations.
- It was officially declared by a UN General Assembly resolution adopted in February 2017 and **first observed on December 12, 2017**.
- Neutrality is defined as the legal status arising from the abstention of a state from all participation in a war between other states, the maintenance of an attitude of impartiality toward the belligerents.

National Energy Conservation Day : 14 December



- The **National Energy Conservation Day** is celebrated every year on **14 December** by **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**, under Ministry of Power.
- **Purpose:** to raise awareness among the general public about the importance of energy conservation and energy efficiency, as well as holistic development for overall effort

towards climate change mitigation.

- The Energy Conservation Act in India was executed by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in the year 2001.
- BEE is a constitutional body that comes under Government of India and helps in the development of policies and strategies in order to reduce the energy use.

International Tea Day: 15 December



- **The International Tea Day** is observed annually on **December 15** since 2005 in tea producing countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Vietnam, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Tanzania and Uganda.
- **Purpose:** draw global attention of governments and citizens to the impact of the global tea trade on workers and growers, and has been linked to requests for price supports and fair trade.
- India is the second largest producer of tea in the World after China.
- It must be noted that the **United Nations recognised International Tea Day is observed on 21 May**.

Nation Observes 49th Vijay Diwas on 16 December 2020



- In India, **Vijay Diwas (also called Victory Day)** is celebrated every year on **December 16**.
- The country is celebrating the **49th Vijay Diwas in 2020**.
- Vijay Diwas is observed to commemorate the service, valour, and sacrifices of the gallant men of the **Indian Armed Forces' victory over Pakistan in 1971 war**.
- On 16 December 1971, the Indian Armed Forces won the 13-day long decisive war against the Pakistan Army and state for the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan.

International Migrants Day: 18 December



- The **International Migrants Day** is observed on **18 December** every year to commemorate:
 - the benefits and contributions, migrants offer their host communities;
 - draw attention to the particular challenges they face and.
 - the need to promote and protect the rights of all migrants.
- The day marks the anniversary of the adoption of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which was adopted by the United Nations (UN) on 18 December 1990.
- The theme of International Migrants Day 2020 is '**Reimagining Human Mobility**'.

UN Arabic Language Day: 18 December



- **UN Arabic Language Day** is observed annually on **December 18**.
- The day was established by the **UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** in **2010** to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as well as to promote equal use of all six of its official languages throughout the Organization.
- December 18 was chosen as the date for the Arabic language as it is "the day in **1973** when the General Assembly approved Arabic as an official UN language".

Minorities Rights Day : 18 December



- **When:** The **Minorities Rights Day** is observed in India every year on **December 18** since 1992.
- **Why:** Protect the existence of the National or Ethnic, Cultural, Religious and Linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.
- The Day was promulgated by United Nations on December 18, 1992 to strengthen the cause of the minorities.

Goa Liberation Day: 19 December



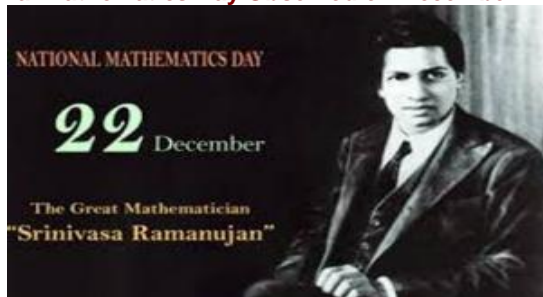
- The **Goa Liberation Day** (गोवामुक्तिदिवस) is observed on **December 19** in India. 2020 marks the **60th** Goa Liberation Day.
- The Day is celebrated to commemorate the great valour of the Indian armed forces in freeing Goa from around 450 years of Portuguese rule.
- Goa was liberated on December 19, 1961.
- The 36-hour military operation, conducted from December 18, 1961, was code-named 'Operation Vijay' meaning 'Operation Victory,' and involved attacks by the Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and Indian Army.

International Human Solidarity Day : 20 December



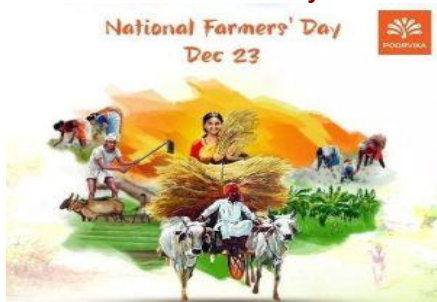
- Every year **International Human Solidarity Day** is observed on **December 20** to celebrate the unity in diversity and raise awareness about the importance of solidarity.
- The day was proclaimed by the United Nations' (UN) General Assembly on December 22, 2005.
- According to the United Nations Millennium Declaration, solidarity is among the fundamental values that are essential to international relations.
- Solidarity is defined as an awareness of shared interests and objectives that create a psychological sense of unity and ties in a society that bind people together as one.

National Mathematics Day Observed on December 22



- India observes the **National Mathematics Day** every year on **22 December** since 2012 to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan**.
- **2020** marks the **133rd birth anniversary of Ramanujan**.
- The day was announced on 26 February 2012 by the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to mark the 125th anniversary of the birth of the Indian mathematical genius Srinivasa Ramanujan (22 Dec 1887- 26 Apr 1920).
- 2012 was also observed as National Mathematics Year.

India Observes National Farmer's Day on December 23



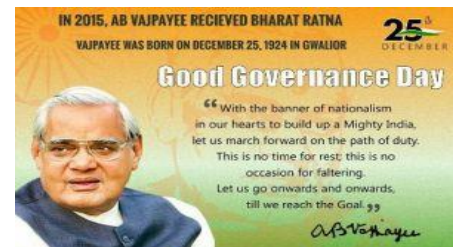
- **National Farmer's Day (Kisan Diwas)** is observed every year on **December 23** in India to remember the role of Indian farmers in the economy.
- The day was first celebrated in 2001.
- The day is observed to mark the birth anniversary of former **Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh**.
- He brought farmer-friendly policies and worked towards the welfare of the farmers.
- Chaudhary Charan Singh was the **fifth Prime Minister of India** and served the country as Prime Minister from 28 July 1979 to 14 January 1980.

National Consumer Day : 24 December



- **National Consumer Day: December 24**
- 2020 Theme: **"New features of Consumer Protection Act, 2019"**.
- It was on this day that the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted.
- The Act aims to provide consumers with effective safeguards against different types of exploitation, such as defective goods, deficiency in services and unfair trade practices.

Good Governance Day: 25 December



- In India, **Good Governance Day (Sushasan Divas)** is observed annually on **December 25** to commemorate the birth anniversary of former **Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee (25 December 1924 – 16 August 2018)**.
- Good Governance Day was established in 2014 by the newly elected administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to foster awareness among the Indian people of accountability in government.

International Day of Epidemic Preparedness : 27 December



- The first-ever **International Day of Epidemic Preparedness** was held on 27 December 2020.
- The day has been officially set up by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to highlight the importance of the prevention of, preparedness for and partnership against epidemics.
- Various education and awareness-raising activities, will be undertaken by member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other global organizations in order to prevent, detect and respond to infectious disease outbreaks.

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Lahore is world's most polluted city, followed by New Delhi: US Air Quality Index



- **Lahore**, the cultural capital Pakistan, has been ranked as the world's most polluted city, according to air pollution data released by the **US Air Quality Index (AQI)** on 30 November 2020.
- Lahore reported a particulate matter (PM) rating of 423.
- **New Delhi** stood second with a PM of 229, while Nepal's capital Kathmandu ranked the third with a PM of 178.

About AQI

- The Air Quality Index (AQI) is released by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to give people an idea of whether it's safe to breathe the air.
- AQI is based on the levels of five major pollutants regulated by the EPA: ground-level ozone, particulate matter (PM2.5), carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide.
- AQI measures air quality by placing it on a scale of 0-500, where air quality is regarded satisfactory if the AQI is under 50.

OBITUARY

Senegal World Cup footballer Papa Bouba Diop passes

away at 42



- **Senegal's** professional **footballer**, **Papa Bouba Diop**, who helped the country win FIFA World Cup match in 2002, has passed away following a long illness. He was of the age of **42**.
- His goal helped Senegal secure historic 1-0 win over the then-world champions France in the opening match of the 2002 FIFA World Cup, and Senegal's first ever match at the FIFA World Cup.
- Diop has won 63 caps for Senegal.

MDH Spices owner Mahashay Dharampal Gulati passes away at 98



- **'Mahashay' Dharampal Gulati**, the owner of spices company 'Mahashian Di Hatti', popularly known as **MDH**, has passed away after he suffered a cardiac arrest. He was 98.
- Gulati was known as the **"The king of spices"**, and fondly called 'dalaji' and 'Mahashayji' by his near and dear ones.
- Dharampal Gulati was born in 1923 in Sialkot, **Pakistan** and moved to India after partition in 1947.
- He officially established his company in 1959 and MDH now has more than 60 products.
- Gulati was honoured with the third highest civilian award, **'Padma Bhushan'**, in 2019.

'World's greatest athlete-turned actor', Rafer Johnson, who acted in a James Bond movie passes away at 86

- American decathlete and film actor, **Rafer Johnson**, who was **1960 Olympic gold medalist in the decathlon**, has passed away. He was 86.
- After he retired from athletics, Johnson turned to acting and appeared in a number of films, including the James Bond film **Licence to Kill** in 1989.

Pizza Hut co-founder Frank Carney passes away from pneumonia at 82



- American entrepreneur **Frank Carney**, who along with his brother Dan, started the **Pizza Hut** empire in the US city of Wichita, has passed away from pneumonia. He was 82.
- Carney had recently recovered from Covid-19, but had Alzheimer's disease for more than a decade and pneumonia is common in Alzheimer's patients.



Former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing passes away of coronavirus at 94



- **Valery Giscard d'Estaing**, the former **President of France** has passed away at the age of 94, from the complications of coronavirus.
- Giscard had served as the **third president of the Republic of France from 1974 to 1981**.

Veteran Bengali actor Manu Mukherjee passes away at 90

- **Veteran Bengali** actor **Manu Mukherjee** has passed away after a cardiac arrest. He was 90-year-old.
- Manu Mukherjee started his film career with Mrinal Sen's *Nil Akasher Niche* (1958).
- The actor is best remembered for his roles in Satyajit Ray's *Joy Baba Felunath* and *Ganashatru*.
- He had also been part of children's fantasy film *Patalghar*.

Veteran Marathi actor Ravi Patwardhan passes away at 84



- **Ravi Patwardhan**, a popular face in **Marathi entertainment industry**, has passed away after suffering from a massive heart attack. He was 84.
- The veteran actor became a household name for his role in Marathi TV series *Agabai Sasubai*.
- Apart from this, Patwardhan has also starred in a few **Hindi movies** namely *Tezab*, *Jhanjaar*, *Bond* and *Yeshwant*.



Narinder Singh Kapany, Father of Fibre Optics, passes away at 94



- Indian-American physicist **Narinder Singh Kapany**, who is considered as the '**Father of Fibre Optics**' has passed away. He was 94.
- Kapany is credited with coining of the term Fibre Optics in 1956.
- He was named as one of the seven "Unsung Heroes" by Fortune in their 'Businessmen of the Century' issue of November 22, 1999.
- DR Narinder Singh Kapany is among the 10 most renowned Sikhs in the world.
- He was the founding chairman of the Sikh Foundation and has been a major funder of its activities for over 50 years.

Italy's 1982 Football World Cup Legend Paolo Rossi passes away at 64



- Italy's legendary footballer, **Paolo Rossi**, who led the country to victory in the **1982 World Cup**, has passed away. He was 64.
- Rossi scored 6 goals to help Italy to win the 1982 FIFA World Cup title against Brazil. This was the third World Cup title for Italy and their **first since 1938**.
- He was awarded the Golden Boot as top goalscorer, and the Golden Ball for the player of the tournament, 1982 Ballon d'Or as the European Footballer of the Year and World Player of the Year in 1982, for his performances.
- Rossi scored 20 goals in 48 appearances for the Italian national side, and is one of Italy's top scorer in World Cup history, with nine goals overall.

Renowned Sanskrit Scholar Vidyavachaspati Govindacharya passes away at 85



- Renowned **Sanskrit scholar Vidyavachaspati Bannanje Govindacharya** has passed away due to age-related illness. He was 85.
- Govindacharya was conferred the **Padma Shri in 2009**.
- He was well versed in Veda Bhashya, Upanishad Bhashya, Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas and had written commentaries on Veda Suktas, Upanishads, Shata Rudriya, Brahma Sutra Bhashya, and Gita Bhashya.
- He had authored around 150 books and translated several texts from Sanskrit to Kannada.

US Pilot Chuck Yeager, first man to fly faster than speed of sound, passes away at 97



- **US Air Force officer and test pilot Chuck Yeager**, who in 1947 became the **first pilot in history to have exceeded the speed of sound** in level flight, has passed away. He was 97.
- (Level flight means flying at a constant altitude, not going up and down.)
- As a test pilot, on October 14, 1947, Yeager became the first human to officially break the sound barrier, when he flew the experimental Bell X-1 aircraft at Mach 1 (speed of sound) at an altitude of 45,000 ft (13,700 m).
- Throughout his life, he flew more than 360 different types of aircraft and went on to break several other speed and altitude records in the following years.
- Yeager had been associated with **World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War** and his three-war active-duty flying career spanned more than 30 years.

Marathi Music Composer Narendra Bhide passes away at 47



- **Veteran Marathi music composer Narendra Bhide** has passed away in Pune due to heart attack. He was 47.
- Bhide was popularly known among his friend circle as Baddya.
- Bhide had composed music for several award winning Marathi films as well as TV shows.
- Some of the films include A Paying Ghost, Bioscope, Harishchandrachi Factory, Sane Guruji, Sarivar Sari and Chi Va Chi Sau Ka among others.

Five-time MP From West Bengal, Radhika Ranjan Pramanik, passes away at 88



- Veteran politician and five-time **MP from West Bengal, Radhika Ranjan Pramanik**, has passed away due to age-related ailments. He was 88.
- He was elected to Lok Sabha five times from Mathurapur on a CPI(M) ticket, beginning 1989.

- Later Pramanik left the CPI(M) to join the TMC during the later phase of his political career.

Eswatini's Prime Minister, Ambrose Dlamini, passes away of Covid-19



- **Ambrose Dlamini**, the **Prime Minister of Eswatini**, a country in Southern Africa, has passed away after contracting coronavirus.
- He was 52.
- Dlamini was appointed as the tenth prime minister of the country in October 2018.
- Eswatini Capitals: Mbabane, Lobamba; Currency: Swazi lilangeni

First 'Hind Kesari' Wrestler Sripati Khanchanale passes away at 86



- Noted **Indian wrestler Sripati Khanchanale**, who won the prestigious '**Hind Kesari**' title in 1959, has passed away.
- He was 86.
- Khanchanale won the 'Hind Kesari' title in 1959, which was the maiden edition of the award.
- The prestigious 'Hind Kesari' title is the highest honour given in the Indian wrestling world.
- He was also a recipient of the Shiv Chhatrapati award, presented by the Maharashtra government.

Aerospace Scientist Shri Roddam Narasimha passes away at 87



- Eminent **aerospace scientist and Padma Vibhushan** awardee **Roddam Narasimha** has passed away due to brain haemorrhage. He was 87.

- Roddam Narasimha had served at the **prestigious Indian Institute of Science (IISc)**, where he taught Aerospace Engineering from 1962 to 1999. He also served as the director of the National Aerospace Laboratories from 1984 to 1993.
- The central government bestowed the second-highest civilian award of India, Padma Vibhushan on him in 2013 for his contribution in the field of aerospace engineering.
- Together with the Missile Man of India and former president **Dr A P J Abdul Kalam**, Prof Narasimha had authored a book – "**Developments In Fluid Mechanics and Space Technology**".

Indian Navy's senior-most Submariner, Vice Admiral Srikant, passes away due to COVID-19 related complications



- **Vice Admiral Srikant**, the top Indian Navy official, has passed away due to Covid-19 related complications
- The vice admiral Srikant was the **seniormost submariner of the Indian Navy** and was due to retire on December 31.
- He was the **Director General of Project Seabird**.

Former Australian Test cricketer all-rounder Eric Freeman passes away at 76



- Former **Australia Test all-rounder Eric Freeman** has passed away. He was 76.
- Freeman made his **Test debut against India** at the Gabba (Brisbane Cricket Ground) in 1968 during which his opening scoring shot was a six, and he became the **first player to achieve the feat**.
- He received the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2002 for his services to sport.
- After retiring from cricket in the 1973-74 season he took up the career as administrator, coach and broadcaster.
- Freeman was also an elite football player, representing Port Adelaide and he topped the club's goalkicking list in all five of his complete seasons.

Senior BJP leader and former Gonda MP Satyadev Singh passes away at 75



- One of the senior-most leaders of the **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)** and **former Gonda MP Satya Dev Singh** has passed away. He was 75.
- He contested from Gonda Lok Sabha constituency on the ticket of Bharatiya Lok Dal for the first time in 1977. Later, he was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Balrampur parliamentary seat as Bharatiya Janata Party MP in 1991 and 1996.
- He also served as the National President of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha from 1980 to 1985.

Veteran Journalist and first official RSS Spokesperson MG Vaidya passes away at 97



- Senior **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue MG Vaidya** has passed away after a brief illness. He was 97.
- Vaidya was a veteran **journalist, a Sanskrit scholar and the first official spokesperson of the RSS.**
- The RSS is the ideological mentor of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).
- Vaidya became a member of the RSS in 1943.

Senior-most Congress veteran Motilal Vora passes away at 93 of post-Covid complications



- **Veteran Congress leader Motilal Vora** has passed away following post-COVID-19 complications. He was 93.

- Shri Motilal Vora Ji was among the **senior-most Congress leaders.**
- Vora was born at Jodhpur in Rajasthan and began his career as a journalist.
- The late Congress leader served as the **chief minister of Madhya Pradesh** twice, once from 1985 to 1988 and then again in 1989 for 11 months.
- Vora also held the office of **Governor of Uttar Pradesh** between 1993 and 1996.
- He had served as a Rajya Sabha member four times and as a Lok Sabha member once from Chhattisgarh.

Veteran Malayalam poet-activist Sugathakumari passes away at 86



- Renowned **Malayalam poet and environmental activist Sugathakumari** has passed away following Covid-19 complications. She was 86.
- Sugathakumari was awarded the first Indira Priyadarshini Vrikshamitra by the Centre, for her contribution to conservation of nature.
- She was honored with the **Padmashri award in 2006.**
- For her contributions to Malayalam literature, Sugathakumari won the **Kerala Sahitya Akademi award** in 1968 for 'Pathirapookal', and the **Kendra Sahitya Akademi** award in 1978 for 'Rathrimazha'.

Legendary Urdu poet Shamsur Rahman Faruqi passes away at 85

- **Legendary Urdu poet and critic Shamsur Rahman Faruqi** has passed away, a month after recovering from COVID-19. He was 85.
- He received **Saraswati Samman in 1996** for his work 'She'r-e Shor-Angez', a four-volume study of the eighteenth-century poet Mir Taqi Mir
- The Government of India awarded him the civilian honour of **Padma Shri in 2009.**

Former England batsman John Edrich passes away at 83

- **Former English first-class batsman John Edrich** has passed away at the age of 83.
- Edrich, a left-handed batsman, was amongst the best players of his generation, during a career that ran from 1956 to 1978
- He played 77 test matches for England, and scored more than 5,000 runs, spanning 13 years between 1963 and 1976.
- He scored a triple-century during a test match in 1965 that is the fifth highest Test score for England.

Former England Bowler And Cricket Commentator, Robin Jackman, Passes away at 75



- The former **England cricketer and commentator, Robin Jackman** has passed away. He was 75.
- Jackman was born in Simla, Punjab, of British India in 1945.
- He had represented England in four Tests and 15 ODIs in his international career between 1974 to 1983, picking 33 wickets
- His domestic career began in 1966 and was spread across 16 seasons, during which he took 1402 first-class wickets in 399 matches at an average of 22.80 and also scored 5681 runs.
- Post retirement, he served as a broadcaster and gave voice to South African cricket for many years.

Former WWE Wrestler Jon Huber, best known by his ring name 'Luke Harper', passes away at 41



- Former professional **wrestler Jon Huber**, who was popularly known by his ring name **'Luke Harper'** in the WWE has passed away, due to a non-COVID-19 related lung issue. He was 41.
- Apart from this, Jon Huber was known by his ring name **Brodie Lee in the All Elite Wrestling (AEW)**.

Padma Shri winning Veteran Dance Historian Sunil Kothari, passes away at 87



- **Padma Shri awardee dance historian and critic Sunil Kothari** has passed away after suffering cardiac arrest. He was 87.

- Kothari was qualified as a Chartered Accountant, before turning to the study of Indian dance forms.
- He authored more than 20 books on the subject of Indian dance forms.
- The noted dance scholar Kothari received numerous titles and awards for his contribution to Indian dance forms. Some of them includes the **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1995)**; the **Padma Shri bestowed by the Government of India (2001)**; and the Life Time Achievement Award of the Dance Critics Association, New York, USA (2011).

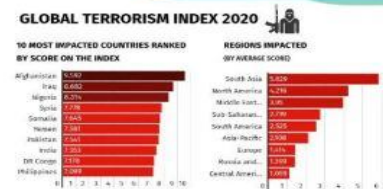
Former Union Minister and MP Kadambur Janardhanan passes away at 91



- **Former Union Minister and senior AIADMK leader Kadambur M. R. Janardhanan** has passed away following age-related ailments. He was 91.
- Janardhanan was elected to the Lok Sabha from **Tirunelveli constituency** for four terms 1984, 1989, 1991 and 1998.
- He had also served as **Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension** with additional charge of Minister of State for Finance in the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee between 1998 and 1999.

RANKING

India Ranks 8th and Afghanistan Tops Global Terrorism Index 2020



- In the **Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2020**, India has been ranked at **8th** spot globally in the list of countries most affected by terrorism in 2019.
- The GTI score of India is 7.353 out of 10.

-
- With a score of 9.592, **Afghanistan** has topped the index as the worst terror impacted nation among the **163 countries**.
- It is followed by Iraq (8.682) and Nigeria (8.314) at second and third place respectively.
- Regionally, South Asia was the most impacted region by terrorism in 2019, recording more deaths than any other region.
- Also, globally the deaths caused due to terrorism fell by 15 percent to 13,286 in 2019 over 2018.
- The Global Terrorism Index is published annually by the **Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)**, headquartered in **Sydney, Australia**, to measure the impact of terrorism on the countries.

Nongpok Sekmai in Manipur Adjudged as India's Top Police Station for 2020



- The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India releases the list of best performing Police Stations across the country every year, to incentivize more effective functioning of police stations and bring healthy competition among them.

Top 5 Police Stations for 2020

State	District	Police Station
Manipur	Thoubal	Nongpok Sekmai
Tamil Nadu	Salem City	AWPS-Suramangalam
Arunachal Pradesh	Changlang	Kharsang
Chhattisgarh	Surajpur	Jhilmili (Bhaiya Thana)
Goa	South Goa	Sanguem

- The top 10 Police Stations were selected from among the 16,671 Police Stations in the country through data analysis, direct observation and public feedback.
- The parameters used were
 - Property offence
 - Crime against women
 - Crime against weaker sections
 - Missing persons, unidentified found person and

unidentified dead bodies.

HCL Tech Chairperson Roshni Nadar tops Kotak Wealth-Hurun wealthy women list 2020



- **Roshni Nadar Malhotra**, Chairperson of **HCL Technologies** topped the list of wealthiest women in India, according to the second edition of 'Kotak Wealth Hurun-Leading Wealthy Women' report.
- The report is compiled by Kotak Wealth Management, a division of Kotak Mahindra Bank, and Hurun India.
- Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw of Biocon and Leena Gandhi Tewari of USV are at the second and third rank respectively in the Kotak Wealth Hurun wealthy women list 2020.
- Shaw is also the wealthiest self-made woman on the list.
- 19 women from this list also feature in the Hurun India Rich List 2020, and 6 women have made it to the Hurun Global Rich List 2020.
- The ranking is based on the net worth of women as on September 30, 2020 and focuses exclusively on women who play an active role in their family business, entrepreneurs and professionals.

Reliance Industries tops Fortune India 500 Ranking 2020



- Oil-to-telecom conglomerate **Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL)** has topped the **2020 Fortune 500 list of Indian companies**, released on 2nd December 2020.
- The revenue of RIL clocked **Rs 615,854.00**, accounting for 7% of cumulative revenues and 11 percent profit of the companies.
- The country's biggest oil firm, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), bagged the second spot, followed by Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) at the third position.
- The list was published by **Fortune India**, which is part of the Kolkata-based RP Sanjiv Goenka Group.

Top 10 companies on the 2020 Fortune India-500 list:

1. Reliance Industries
2. Indian Oil Corporation
3. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation
4. State Bank of India
5. Bharat Petroleum Corporation
6. Tata Motors
7. Rajesh Exports
8. Tata Consultancy Services
9. ICICI Bank
10. Larsen & Toubro

Dawid Malan of England creates history with highest-ever rating points in T20I: ICC T20 Batsmen Ranking



- **Left-handed batsman Dawid Malan of England** has attained the **highest-ever rating points for batsmen** in the MRF Tyres ICC Men's T20I Player Rankings, released on 2nd December 2020.
- The 33-year-old Malan has reached **915 points**, and thus became the first player to cross the 900-point mark in the format.
- Before him, Australia's Aaron Finch reached exactly 900 points in July 2018.
- Babar Azam (871) of Pakistan and Aaron Finch (835) of Australia is second and third in the list.
- India's Lokesh Rahul is at fourth position, while Virat Kohli's rank has dropped to 9th in the list.

India Ranks 10th in the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2021

Rank	Country	Score	Country	Score	Country	Score
1 ^a	–	25	▼ Ukraine	41	▼ Spain	–
2	–	21	▼ Luxembourg	42	▲ Turkey	–
3	–	23	▼ Egypt	43	▲ Algeria	–
4	–	22	▼ France	44	▲ Bulgaria	–
5	–	18	▲ Indonesia	45	▲ Japan	–
6	–	19	▼ Brazil	46	▼ Argentina	–
7	▲ United Kingdom	20	▲ Thailand	47	▼ Czech Republic	–
8	▼ Denmark	27	▼ Italy	48	▲ Poland	–
9	▼ Morocco	26	▲ New Zealand	49	▼ Cyprus	–
10	▲ Norway	24	– Netherlands	50	▼ Hungary	–
11	▲ Chile	25	▲ Romania	51	▼ Slovenia	–
12	▼ India	31	▼ Slovak Republic	52	– Russian Federation	–
13	▼ Finland	30	– Mexico	53	▲ Korea	–
14	▲ Malta	33	▼ China	54	▲ Australia	–
15	▲ Latvia	34	▼ Greece	55	▼ Kazakhstan	–
16	▲ Switzerland	35	▲ Austria	56	▼ Malaysia	–
17	▼ Lithuania	36	▲ Chinese Taipei	57	▲ Chinese Taipei	–
18	▲ European Union (EU)	37	▼ South Africa	58	▼ Canada	–
19	▲ Portugal	38	▼ Estonia	59	▼ Islamic Republic of Iran	–
20	▲ Croatia	39	▲ Ireland	60	– Saudi Arabia	–
21	▲ Germany	40	▼ Belgium	61	▼ United States	–

- **India** is ranked at **10th place** in the '**Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2021**', released on 7th December 2020. The overall score of India is 63.98.
- It is for the second time in a row that India emerged among the top 10 countries with higher climate performance from among 58 economies.
- India was at 9th spot last year in the index.
- Like CCPI 2020, the first three places in 2021 ranking also remains unoccupied, since none of the countries are on

the path compatible with the Paris climate targets, to implement strategies to limit global warming below 2 or even 1.5°C.

- **Sweden (4th)** United Kingdom (5th), Denmark (6th), Morocco (7th), Norway (8th), Chile (9th) were among the top 10 rankers in the index.
- It was also noted that, from the G20 countries, only the EU as a whole, along with the UK and India, ranked among high performers.

FM Nirmala Sitharaman ranks 41 in 2020 World's 100 Most Powerful Women by Forbes, German Chancellor Angela Merkel Tops



- The **Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** has once again entered the **Forbes 2020 list of 'The World's 100 Most Powerful Women'**, for the second year in a row.
- Sitharaman has been ranked at **41st place in the 2020 edition** of the annual ranking. In 2019, the 61-year-old Sitharaman was ranked at 34.
- The list has been **topped** by **German Chancellor Angela Merkel for the 10th year in a row**.
- European Central Bank head **Christine Lagarde** is at second position the second year in a row while US Vice President-elect **Kamala Harris** is at third spot, entering the list for the first time.
- The 2020 edition is 17th annual Forbes Power List and comprises women from 30 countries who were born across four generations.

Sonu Sood Tops UK's '50 Asian Celebrities In The World' list 2020



- Indian actor **Sonu Sood** has topped the first-of-its-kind '**50 Asian Celebrities In The World' 2020 list**, published by **UK based Eastern Eye newspaper**.
- The 47-year-old talented Bollywood star has been

honored for his inspiring philanthropic work throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, especially helping migrant workers reach their hometowns.

- Sonu Sood beat global stars, including from Hollywood, the music industry, television, literature and social media, to be named the number one Asian celebrity on the planet for 2020.
- The top 50 list is based on those who did good work, made a positive impact, broke boundaries, shattered glass ceilings, gave hope, did philanthropic deeds or were just inspiring in their own unique way.

The Human Freedom Index						
Freedom Rank Change (2017-2018)		Country/Territory	Personal Freedom	Economic Freedom	Human Freedom	Freedom Score Change (2017-2018)
Rank						
1	0	New Zealand	9.21	8.53	8.87	▲ 0.01
2	0	Switzerland	9.20	8.43	8.82	▲ 0.01
3	0	Hong Kong SAR, China	8.53	8.94	8.74	▼ 0.02
4	▲ 1	Denmark	9.35	8.10	8.73	▲ 0.05
5	▲ 1	Australia	9.12	8.23	8.68	▲ 0.02
6	▼ 2	Canada	9.00	8.17	8.64	▼ 0.05
7	0	Ireland	9.01	8.13	8.62	▼ 0.02
8	▲ 4	Estonia	9.12	7.96	8.54	▲ 0.04
9	▲ 1	Germany	9.19	7.85	8.52	▼ 0.01
9	▼ 1	Sweden	9.46	7.88	8.52	▼ 0.02
11	▲ 3	Finland	9.21	7.76	8.49	▲ 0.02

Human Freedom Index 2020

- The Human Freedom Index is published by American think tank **Cato Institute and Fraser Institute in Canada**.
- The index ranks a country based on the civil, economic and personal freedom, enjoyed by the resident of that country.
- It has taken into account 76 indicators of personal, civil, and economic freedoms to rank 162 countries.
- These indicators are grouped in 12 major parameters.
- The 2020 Index has taken into account the data from 2008 to 2018.
- The countries get score on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 represents more freedom.

India Ranks 131 in Human Development Index 2020, Norway Tops



- **India** has dropped one spot to be ranked **131 among 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI)** for the year 2019, according to the Human Development Report (HDR) 2020 released by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** on 16 December 2020.
- India was at 130th spot in HDI 2018.
- The HDI score of India for 2019 is **0.645**, which put the country in the medium human development category.
- The Human Development Index (HDI) measures the nation's health, education, and standards of living.
- **Norway** has topped the index with score of 0.957, followed by Ireland, Switzerland, Hong Kong and Iceland.
- **Niger** is the lowest ranked country at 189, placed among **Low human development** category, with a score of 0.394

India Ranks 111 in Human Freedom Index 2020; New Zealand Tops

- **India has been ranked at the 111th spot** out of 162 countries in the **Human Freedom Index 2020**. In 2019, India was ranked 94 on the index.
- The overall human freedom score of India in 2020 was **6.43**.
- **New Zealand (8.87)**, Switzerland (8.82) and Hong Kong (8.74) has bagged the first three spots.
- **Syrian Arab Republic** is the last ranked country with the human freedom score of 3.97 out of 10.

HDFC Bank Ranks Top among 100 BFSI Firms in India



- **HDFC Bank** is the top ranked company among the **100 Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) companies in the country**, as per the **BFSI Movers and Shakers 2020 report by Wizikey**.
- HDFC Bank has topped because of its customer service, monetary management, and innovative offerings amid the coronavirus pandemic.
- **ICICI Bank and State Bank of India (SBI)** are ranked second and third, respectively.
- Other top 10 banks in 2020 Wizikey's BFSI Movers and Shakers report are Yes Bank, PNB, HSBC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bank of Baroda, Deutsche Bank, and IDBI.
- **Wallet and UPI segment** – Google Pay
- **Neo Banks segment** – YONO
- **Payments bank category** – Airtel Payments Bank

SUMMIT

9th Sustainable Mountain Development Summit held in Dehradun



- The **9th edition of Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS)** was organised in virtual mode, on the occasion of International Mountain Day, from December 11 to December 14, 2020.
- The four-day-long summit was organised by **Indian Mountain Initiative (IMI)** and hosted by **Sustainable Development Forum Uttarakhand (SDFU), Dehradun**.
- The theme for 2020 SMDS was **'Emerging Pathways for Building a Resilient Post COVID-19 Mountain Economy, Adaptation, Innovation and Acceleration'**.
- The Summit deliberated on issues such as migration, water security, climate resilience and innovative solutions for the farm sector, and disaster risk reduction in the Indian Himalayas.
- The focus of the summit was on building pathways toward a resilient and sustainable mountain economy in the context of a post COVID-19 scenario and Climate Change.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses 6th Indo-Japan SAMVAD Conference



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the **sixth edition of the India-Japan SAMVAD conference** held on December 21, 2020, via virtual conferencing.

- During the conference, PM proposed to create a **library of traditional Buddhist literature and scriptures in India**.
 - This library will collect digital copies of Buddhist literature from across different parts of the world. The library will then translate these works and make them available for all scholars and monks of Buddhism.
- The first India-Japan conference, Samvad-I, was held in New Delhi in 2015, at Bodh Gaya.
- The purpose of Samvad Conference is:
 - to encourage dialogue and debate on the need to build the future of Asia,
 - to highlight our shared values of democracy, humanism, Ahimsa, freedom and tolerance in Asia,
 - To carry forward our ancient tradition of spiritual and scholarly exchanges.

India and Vietnam signs 7 MoUs during India-Vietnam Leaders' Virtual Summit



- **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Nguyen Xuan Phuc**, jointly addressed the **India-Vietnam Virtual Summit**, held on 21 December 2020, via video conferencing.
- During the Summit, a **'Joint Vision for Peace, Prosperity and People'** document was adopted to guide the future development of the India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- Both leaders agreed to support each other's national development priorities and work together towards the shared objective of a peaceful, stable, secure, free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.
- India and Vietnam signed **seven agreements** during the virtual summit in areas such as defence, scientific research, renewable energy, nuclear energy, petrochemicals, and cancer treatment.

SECTION 2

Detailed Analysis of Important Events

Economics

Cultivation of 'Wild' Arunachal Kiwi

Mains Paper 3: Major Crops & Cropping Patterns

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Arunachal Kiwi

Mains level : Organic farming in India



Recently, the 'Wild' Arunachal Kiwi has received organic certification by the Mission Organic Value Chain Development for the North East Region.

Try this PYQ:

Q.Among the agricultural commodities imported by India, which one of the following accounts for the highest imports in terms of value in the last five years?

- (a) Spices
- (b) Fresh fruits
- (c) Pulses

(d) *Vegetable oils*

Arunachal Kiwi

- The kiwifruit (*Actinidia deliciosa* Chev.) is a deciduous fruiting vine native to Yangtze River valley of south and central China.
- In Arunachal Pradesh, a domesticated variety of kiwi was introduced as a commercial fruit only in 2000.
- The Ziro Valley specifically located at 1,500-2,000 metres above sea level is the most ideal for kiwi.
- It is also called “China’s miracle fruit” and “Horticulture wonder of New Zealand”.

Benefits of certification

- Certification helps producers and handlers; they receive premium prices for the products and have access to fast-growing, local, regional and international markets.

Organic certification in India

- An agricultural practise/product is considered organic when there are no chemical fertilizers or pesticides involved in its cultivation process.
- Such certifications in India can be obtained after a strict scientific assessment done by the regulatory body, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).

1.5x Formula for crops MSP calculation

Mains Paper 3: Issues Related To Farm Subsidies &Msp

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : MSP calculation

Mains level : Fixation of MSP and its legal backing

Talks between farmer unions and the government failed to reach a resolution. The main bone of contention in these talks is the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops, which farmers fear the new laws will do away.

Try this:

Q. There is also a point of view that agriculture produce market committees (APMCs) set up under the state acts have not only impeded the development of agriculture but also

have been the cause of food inflation in India. Critically examine. (CSM 2014)

What is MSP?

- The MSP assures the farmers of a fixed price for their crops, well above their production costs.
- MSP, by contrast, is devoid of any legal backing. Access to it, unlike subsidised grains through the PDS, isn't an entitlement for farmers.
- They cannot demand it as a matter of right. It is only a government policy that is part of administrative decision-making.
- The Centre currently fixes MSPs for 23 farm commodities based on the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) recommendations.

Why in news yet again?

- The Union Budget for 2018-19 had announced that MSP would be kept at levels of one and half times of the cost of production.
- This year the govt. has increased the MSP for all mandated Kharif, Rabi and other commercial crops with a return of at least 50 per cent of the cost of production for the agricultural year 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- This is the ambiguity from where this 1.5 times formula arrived at.

How did the government fix the MSPs of crops before every planting season?

- The CACP considered various factors while recommending the MSP for a commodity, including the cost of cultivation.
- It also takes into account the supply and demand situation for the commodity; market price trends (domestic and global) and parity vis-à-vis other crops; and implications for consumers (inflation), environment (soil and water use) and terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture sectors.

What changed with the 2018 budget?

- The Budget for 2018-19 announced that MSPs would henceforth be fixed at 1.5 times of the production costs for crops as a "pre-determined principle".
- Simply put, the CACP's job now was only to estimate production costs for a season and recommend the MSPs by applying the 1.5-times formula.

How was this production cost arrived at?

- The CACP projects three kinds of production cost for every crop, both at the state and all-India average levels.
- '**A2**' covers all paid-out costs directly incurred by the farmer — in cash and kind —

on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, hired labour, leased-in land, fuel, irrigation, etc.

- 'A2+FL' includes A2 plus an imputed value of unpaid family labour.
- 'C2' is a more comprehensive cost that factors in rentals and interest forgone on owned land and fixed capital assets, on top of A2+FL.

Now try this PYQ:

Q. The economic cost of food grains to the Food Corporation of India is Minimum Support Price and bonus (if any) paid to the farmers plus:

- Transportation cost only
- Interest cost only
- Procurement incidentals and distribution cost
- Procurement incidentals and charges for godowns

Which production costs were taken in fixing the MSPs?

- In 2018, then FM Arun Jaitley's did not specify the cost on which the 1.5-times formula was to be computed.
- But the CACP's 'Price Policy for Kharif Crops: The Marketing Season 2018-19' report stated that its MSP recommendation was **based on 1.5 times the A2+FL costs**.

What are the farmer's demands?

- Farm activists, however, had said that the 1.5-times MSP formula should have been applied on the C2 costs.
- CACP considers A2+FL and C2 costs, both while recommending MSP. It reckons only A2+FL cost for return.
- However, C2 costs are used by CACP primarily as benchmark reference costs (opportunity costs) to see if the MSPs recommended by them at least cover these costs in some of the major producing States.

Himachal wants GI status for five products

Mains Paper 3: Intellectual Property Rights

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : GI tags in news

Mains level : Importance of GI tags

The Himachal Pradesh government is trying to obtain GIs for five products from the state –

KarsogKulth, Thangi of Pangi, Chamba Metal Crafts, ChambaChukh, and Rajmah of Bharmour.

Read more about GIs at:

Which are the five HP products?

- **KarsogKulth:** Kulthi or Kulth (horse gram) is a legume grown as a kharif crop in Himachal Pradesh. Kulth grown in the Karsog area of Mandi district is believed to be particularly rich in amino acids.
- **PangikiThangi:** It is a type of hazelnut which grows in Pangi valley located in the northwestern edge of Himachal. It is known for its unique flavour and sweetness.
- **Chamba metal crafts:** These include items such as metal idols and brass utensils which, historically, were made by skilled artisans in the courts of kings of Chamba. There are efforts to revive the trade, and a plate made from a brass-like alloy and having carvings of gods and goddesses is still popular.
- **ChambaChukh:** It's a chutney made from green and red chillies grown in Chamba, and prepared in traditional and unique ways. The practice has largely declined in rural households of Chamba, but survives to some extent at the small-scale industrial level.
- **BharmouriRajmah:** It's more specifically called the KugtaluRajmah, since it grows in the area around Kugti Pass in the Bharmour region of Chamba district. It is rich in proteins and has a unique flavor.

How many registered GIs does Himachal currently have?

- They are eight in number.
- It includes four handicrafts (Kullu Shawl, ChambaRumal, Kinnauri Shawl and Kangra Paintings).
- There are three agricultural products (Kangra Tea, Basmati and Himachali Kala Zeera) and one manufactured product (HimachaliChulli Oil).
- Kullu Shawl and Kangra Tea were the first to be registered in 2005-06.
- Basmati has been registered jointly from seven states of North India, including Himachal Pradesh.
- Chulli (apricot) oil and kala jeera (cumin), mainly associated with Kinnaur and known for their medicinal properties, were the last to be registered in 2018-19.

How does a GI tag help?

- A GI tag provides a better market for these products and prevents misuse of the name.
- A GI registration is given to an area, not a trader, but once a product gets the registration, traders dealing in the product can apply for selling it with the GI logo.
- Authorised traders are each assigned a unique GI number. For example, Kullu shawl has 135 authorised traders. A shawl made in Ludhiana cannot be sold as a Kullu shawl.
- If any unauthorised trader, even from Kullu, tries to sell a shawl under the name of Kullu shawl, he or she can be prosecuted under The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
- GIs are also expected to boost or revive the items whose production has declined, as is being aimed in the case of ChambaChukh and metal crafts.

Back2Basics: Geographical Indication (GI)

- The World Intellectual Property Organisation defines a GI as “a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin”.

- GIs are typically used for agricultural products, foodstuffs, handicrafts, industrial products, wines and spirit drinks.
- Internationally, GIs are covered as an element of intellectual property rights under the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.
- They are also covered under the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.
- Presently, there are 370 registered GIs in India.

[pib] Better Than Cash Alliance (BTCA)

Mains Paper 3: Indian Economy

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : BTCA

Mains level : Digital banking facilitation measures

The Union Ministry of Finance and UN-Based Better Than Cash Alliance (BTCA) organized a joint Peer learning exchange on fintech solutions for responsible digital payments at the last mile.

Make a note here that it is a BTCA is a global partnership with diverse funding, a UN office as its secretariat and Indian being its member.

Better Than Cash Alliance

- The BTCA is a global partnership of 75 governments, companies, and international organizations that accelerates the transition from cash to digital payments in order to reduce poverty and drive inclusive growth.
- The **United Nations Capital Development Fund** serves as the secretariat. It was created in September 2012.
- The Alliance is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Citi, MasterCard, Omidyar Network, USAID, and Visa Inc.
- By the time it launched, the program was already being rolled out in Peru, Kenya, Colombia, and the Philippines.

India and the BTCA

- India became a member of the alliance in 2015 to digitize payments to achieve financial inclusion and to share success stories from Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, the world's largest financial inclusion program.
- The alliance is working with several state governments towards the goal of building knowledge and programs where people, governments, and businesses can make and receive digital payments.

Significance and History of National Farmers' Day

Mains Paper 3: Issues Related To Farm Subsidies & Msp

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : National Farmers' Day

Mains level : Not Much

National Farmers' Day, or KisanDiwas, is celebrated across the country on December 23 to honour India's farmers.

Do you think that the extraordinary haste with which the farm bills were pushed through both the Houses has created the present crisis?

National Farmers' Day

- It marks the birth anniversary of the nation's fifth PM Choudhary Charan Singh.
- In 2001, the government decided to recognise Choudhary Charan Singh's contribution to the agriculture sector and welfare of farmers by celebrating his birth anniversary as KisanDiwas.
- Since then, December 23 has been observed as National Farmers' Day.
- Generally, awareness campaigns and drives are organised across the country to educate people on the role of farmers and their contribution to the economy.

Who was CCS and what was his connection with farmers?

- Chaudhary Charan Singh, who briefly served as PM between 1979 and 1980, is widely regarded as one of the country's most famous peasant leaders.
- He was known for his pioneering work to promote the welfare of farmers and the agricultural sector.
- Charan Singh was no stranger to the struggles faced by the Indian farmer. He was born into a middle-class peasant family in Uttar Pradesh on December 23, 1902.
- Greatly influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, he took an active part in the fight for independence.
- After that, his political career largely focused on socialism in rural India.

Major legislations

- He was behind several major farmer-forward Bills, including the Land Utilization Bill of 1939 and the Debt Redemption Bill in 1939.
- While serving as agriculture minister in 1952, he led UP in its efforts to abolish the Zamindari system.
- In fact, he went on to draft the UP Zamindari and Land Reforms Bill himself.

- On 23 December 1978, he founded the Kisan Trust — a non-political, non-profit making body — with the aim of educating India's rural masses against injustice, and fostering solidarity among them.

Enviro & Biodiversity

Species in news: Red Sea Turtles

Mains Paper 1: Climatic Change

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Red Sea Turtles

Mains level : Impact of climate changes

Turtle populations in the Red Sea could be turning overwhelmingly female because of a rise in sea temperatures caused due to anthropogenic climate change, a new study has showed.

Try this PYQ:

Q.Consider the following fauna of India:

1. *Gharial*
2. *Leatherback turtle*
3. *Swamp deer*

Which of the above is/are endangered?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) None

Red Sea Turtles

- There are seven extant species worldwide, five of which can be found in the Red Sea: the green turtle, the hawksbill turtle, the loggerhead turtle, the olive ridley turtle and the leatherback turtle.
- In order to maintain a 50:50 ratio of male and female in the population, a temperature of 29.2 degrees Celsius is pivotal.
- Above this, hatchlings would be predominantly female.
- The sand temperatures at four of the sites exceeded 29.2 degrees; leading the team to the conclusion

that 'feminization' of the population could be already happening.

Their significance

- Marine turtles—as all top predators—have a prominent role in maintaining balanced and healthy ecosystems, in particular seagrass beds and coral reefs.
- They also help in transporting nutrients towards naturally nutrient-poor ecosystems (the nesting beaches), and providing food and transportation for other marine species (e.g., barnacles and commensal crabs).
- Marine turtles also play an important role in the economy of the tourism industry.

Revised height of Mount Everest

Mains Paper 1: Geographical Features & Their Location

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Mt. Everest

Mains level : Himalayan Orogeny

Mount Everest

Updated official height: **8,848.86 metres**

❄ Co-announced by China and Nepal (they disagreed before)

❄ Everest is 50 to 60 million years old

❄ Still rises about half a metre per century

❄ Formed out of the collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates

❄ The summit is a dome of snow, with space for 6 people standing

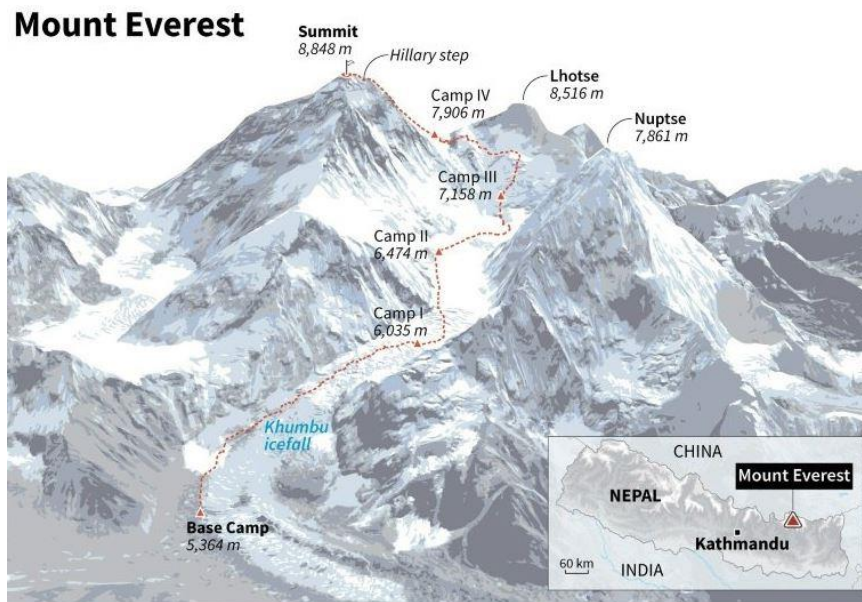


Nepal and China jointly announced the new height of Mount Everest as 8,848.86 meters.

8,848 metres — the answer to one of the most widely popular quiz questions, and a number drilled into the minds of school students around the world for decades, is set for a revision.

Mt. Everest

Mount Everest



- Mount Everest or Sagarmatha, Earth's highest mountain above sea level, is located in the Himalayas between China and Nepal -- the border between them running across its summit point.
- Its current official elevation – 8,848.86m – places it more than 200m above the world's second-highest mountain, K2, which is 8,611m tall and located in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- The mountain gets its English name from Sir George Everest, a colonial-era geographer who served as the Surveyor General of India in the mid-19th century.
- Considered an elite climbing destination, Everest was first scaled in 1953 by the Indian-Nepalese Tenzing Norgay and New Zealander Edmund Hillary.

Try this PYQ:

Q. When you travel to the Himalayas, you will see the following:

1. Deep gorges
2. U-turn river courses
3. Parallel mountain ranges
4. Steep gradients causing land-sliding

Which of the above can be said to be the evidences for the Himalayas being young

fold mountains?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (c) 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Everest's first survey

- The mission to measure the world's highest peak was taken up on a serious note in 1847 and culminated with the finding of a team led by Andrew Waugh of the Royal Surveyor General of India.
- The team discovered that 'Peak 15' — as Mt Everest was referred to then — was the highest mountain, contrary to the then-prevailing belief that Mt Kanchenjunga (8,582 m) was the highest peak in the world.
- Another belief, prevailing even today, is that 8,840 m is not the height that was actually determined by the 19th-century team.
- That survey, based on trigonometric calculations, is known as the Great Trigonometric Survey of India.

Why is the height being revised?

- The height of the summit, however, is known to change because of tectonic activity, such as the 2015 Nepal earthquake.
- Its measurement over the decades has also depended on who was surveying.
- Another debate is whether the height should be based on the highest rock point or the highest snow point.

Mystery illness in Eluru

Mains Paper 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Eia

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Various water borne disease

Mains level : Drinking water issues

Over 550 people in Eluru town of Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district have been suffering from convulsions, seizures, dizziness and nausea.

Try this PYQ:

Q.Which of the following can be found as pollutants in the drinking water in some parts of

India?

1. Arsenic
2. Sorbitol
3. Fluoride
4. Formaldehyde
5. Uranium

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2, 4 and 5 only
(c) 1, 3 and 5 only
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Eluru illness

- The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) has found traces of lead and nickel in blood samples of 25 victims out of the 45 samples sent by the state government.
- The primary suspicion is on water contamination by heavy metals. Scientists suspect that pesticide or insecticide has seeped into drinking water sources.
- Experts from Hyderabad who collected water, blood, and food samples say there are indications of lead contamination but can confirm this only after detailed test reports.

Possible cause: Water contamination

- Eluru receives water through canals from both Godavari and Krishna rivers.
- The canals pass through agricultural fields where runoff laced with pesticides mixes with water in the canals. Many aspects of the mystery illness have baffled scientists.
- People who only use packaged drinking water have also fallen sick.

What is Aurora Borealis?

Mains Paper 1: Geographical Features & Their Location

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Aurora Borealis

Mains level : Aurora and the science behind



Northern Lights, also known as aurora borealis could be visible in regions such as in the northern parts of Illinois and Pennsylvania in the US.

Try this PYQ:

What is a coma, in the context of Astronomy?

- (a) Bright half of material on the comet
- (b) Long tail of dust
- (c) Two asteroids orbiting each other
- (d) Two planets orbiting each other

Aurora

- Auroras occur when charged particles ejected from the Sun's surface — called the solar wind — enter the Earth's atmosphere.
- While flowing toward Earth, the fast-moving solar wind carries with it the Sun's magnetic field, which disrupts the magnetosphere — the region of space around Earth in which the magnetic field of our planet is dominant.
- When the Sun's magnetic field approaches Earth, the protective magnetic field radiating from our planet's poles deflects the former, thus shielding life on Earth.
- However, as this happens, the protective fields couple together to form funnels, through which charged solar wind particles are able to stream down to the poles.
- At the north and south poles, the charged particles interact with different gases in the atmosphere, causing a display of light in the sky.
- This display, known as an aurora, is seen from the Earth's high latitude regions (called the auroral oval), and is active all year round.

Behind the name

- In the northern part of our globe, the polar lights are called aurora borealis or Northern Lights and are seen from the US (Alaska), Canada, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

- In the south, they are called aurora australis or southern lights and are visible from high latitudes in Antarctica, Chile, Argentina, New Zealand and Australia.

Where is it observed?

- Generally, the auroral oval is usually witnessed far up in the Polar Regions or the high latitude regions of Europe, like in Norway.
- But occasionally, the oval expands, and the lights become visible at lower latitudes.
- This happens during periods of high solar activity, such as the arrival of solar storms.
- Solar activities include solar flares, solar energetic particles, high-speed solar wind and Coronal Mass Ejections (CME).

How to measure a Mountain?

Mains Paper 1: Geographical Features & Their Location

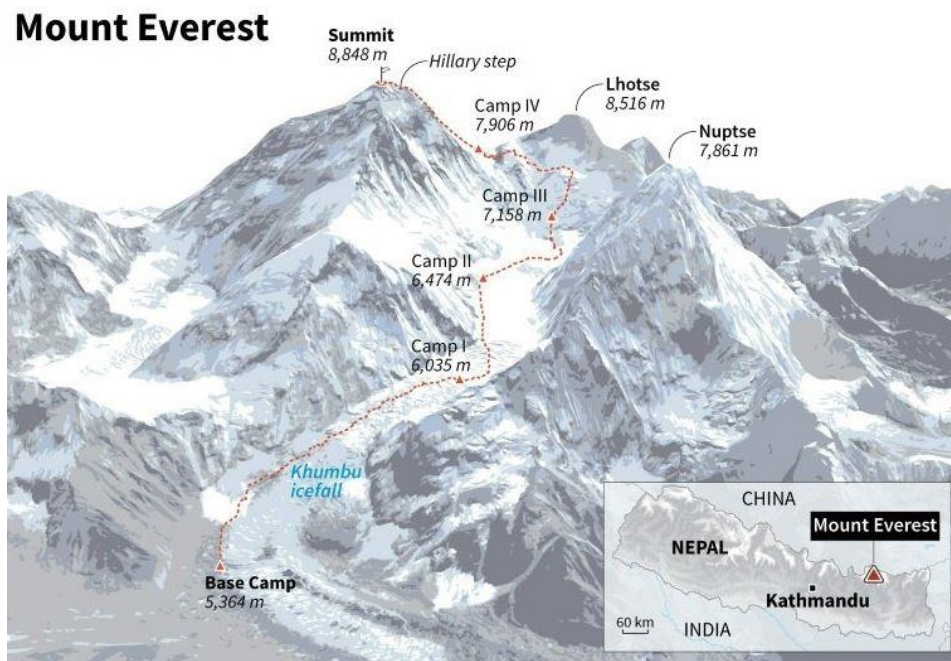
Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Mt. Everest

Mains level : Himalayan Orogeny

Mount Everest



China and Nepal have announced Mount Everest is 0.86 m taller than the 8,848 m accepted globally so far.

Try this PYQ:

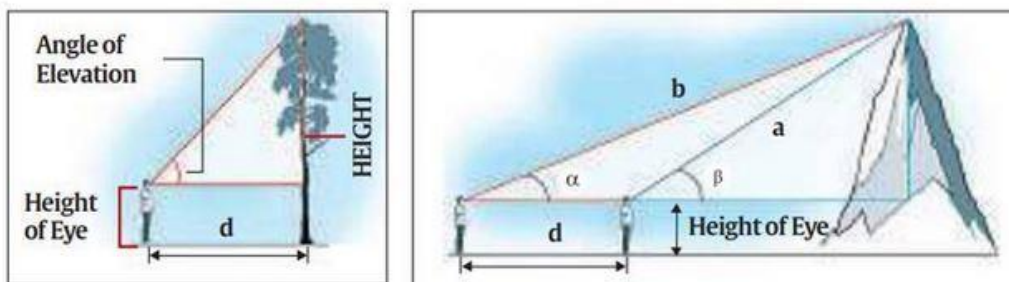
Q. When you travel to the Himalayas, you will see the following:

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- (c) 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Scaling a mountains' height



Measurement with angles: When direct measurement of height is not possible, a surveyor resorts to trigonometry

- The basic principle that was used earlier is very simple and uses only trigonometry which most of us are familiar with, or at least can recall.
- There are three sides and three angles in any triangle. If we know any three of these quantities, provided one of them is a side, all the others can be calculated.
- In a right-angled triangle, one of the angles is already known, so if we know any other angle and one of the sides, the others can be found out.
- This principle can be applied for measuring the height of any object that does not offer the convenience of dropping a measuring tape from top to bottom.

Accuracy issues

- For small hills and mountains, whose top can be observed from relatively close distances, this can give quite precise measurements.
- But for Mount Everest and other high mountains, there are some other

complications.

- These again arise from the fact that we do not know where the base of the mountain is.

Measuring against sea level

- Generally, for practical purposes, the heights are measured above mean sea level (MSL). Moreover, we need to find the distance to the mountain.
- This is done through a painstaking process called high-precision levelling. Starting from the coastline, we calculate step by step the difference in height, using special instruments.
- This is how we know the height of any city from mean sea level.

Adjusting gravitation anomaly

- But there is one additional problem to be contended with — gravity. Gravity is different in different places. It means that even sea level cannot be considered to be uniform at all places.
- So, the local gravity is also measured to calculate the local sea level. Nowadays sophisticated portable gravimeters are available that can be carried even to mountain peaks.

Technology solutions

- These days GPS is widely used to determine coordinates and heights, even of mountains.
- But, GPS gives precise coordinates of the top of a mountain relative to an ellipsoid which is an imaginary surface mathematically modelled to represent Earth.
- This surface differs from the mean sea level. Similarly, overhead flying planes equipped with laser beams (LiDAR) can also be used to get the coordinates.

How accurate are China/Nepal's apprehensions?

- Considering that during 1952-1954, when neither GPS and satellite techniques were available nor the sophisticated gravimeters, the task of determining the height of Mount Everest was not easy.
- Nepal and China have said they have measured Mount Everest to be 86 cm higher than the 8,848 m that it was known to be.
- But these have been explained in terms of geological processes that might be altering the height of Everest. The accuracy of the 1954 result has never been questioned.
- Most scientists now believe that the height of Mount Everest is increasing at a very slow rate. This is because of the northward movement of the Indian tectonic plate

that is pushing the surface up.

- Big earthquake, like the one that happened in Nepal in 2015, can alter the heights of mountains. Such events have happened in the past.

A-68s: Largest floating Iceberg

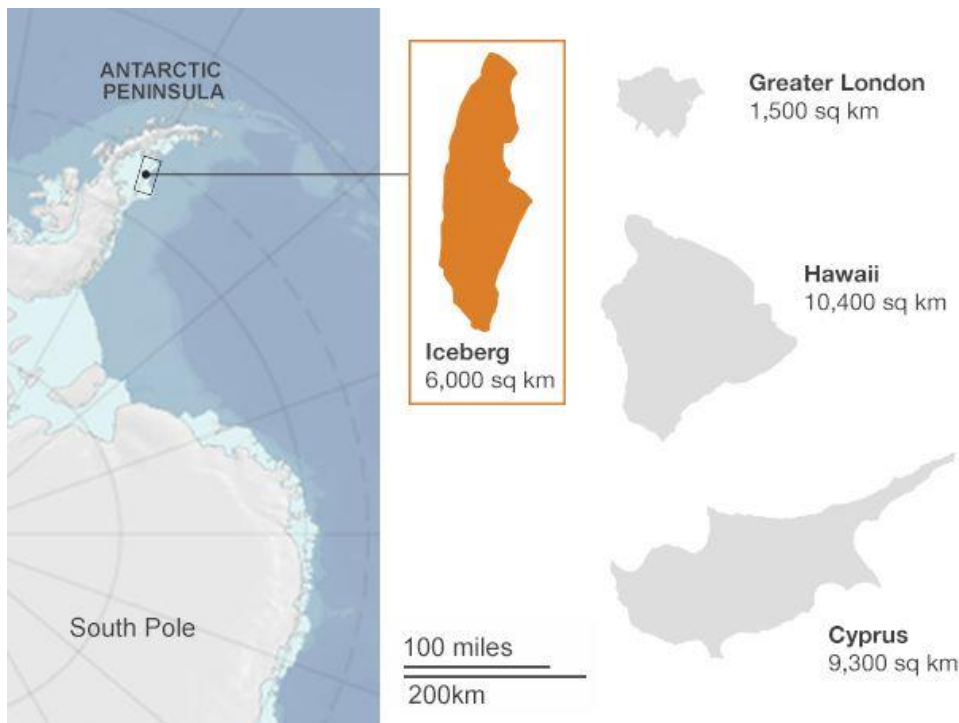
Mains Paper 1: Climatic Change

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Icebergs

Mains level : Impact of climate changes on Cryosphere



A research mission is held to find out the impact of a giant floating iceberg A-68s on the wildlife and marine life on a sub-Antarctic island.

Q. How does the cryosphere affect global climate? (CSM 2017)

What are Icebergs?

- An iceberg is a large piece of freshwater ice that has broken off a glacier or an ice shelf and is floating freely in open (salt) water.

- Small bits of disintegrating icebergs are called “growlers” or “bergy bits”.
- Much of an iceberg is below the surface which led to the expression “tip of the iceberg” to illustrate a small part of a larger unseen issue.
- Icebergs are considered a serious maritime hazard, especially for shipping industries.

A-68s

- The iceberg — named A-68s — is travelling at varying speeds depending on local conditions, but at its fastest was travelling about 20 kilometres a day.
- The huge iceberg — the size of the U.S. state of Delaware — has been floating north since it broke away from Antarctica’s Larsen C ice shelf in 2017.
- It is now about 75 kilometres from the island of South Georgia, and scientists are concerned over the risks it poses to the wildlife in the area if it grounds near the island.
- South Georgia is home to colonies of tens of thousands of penguins and 6 million fur seals, which could be threatened by the iceberg during their breeding season.
- The waters near the island are also one of the world’s largest marine protected areas and house more marine species than the Galapagos.
- Destruction by the iceberg will release this stored carbon back into the water and, potentially, the atmosphere, which would be a further negative impact.

Bihar to change Kosi’s course to save the ancient site

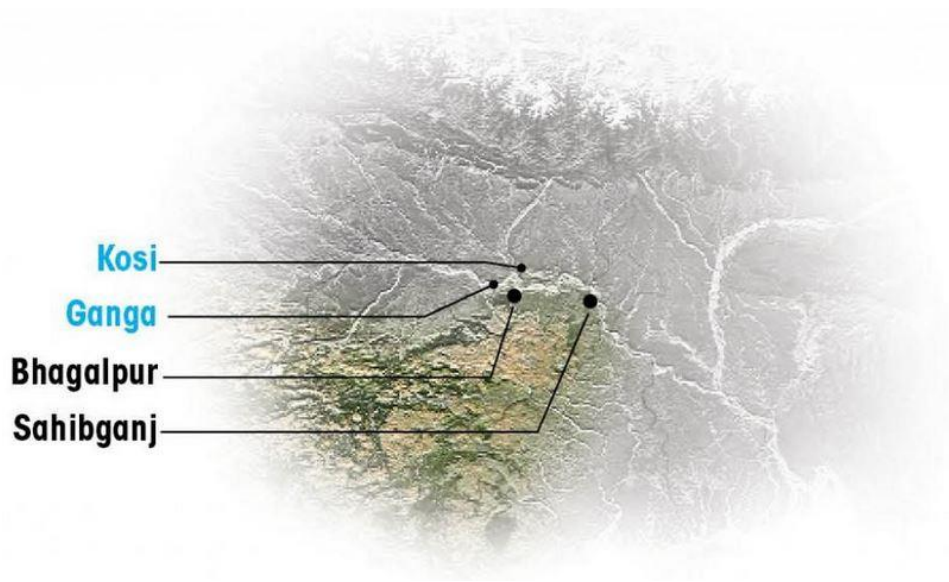
Mains Paper 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Eia

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Kosi River

Mains level : Floods in India



The Bihar government will try to divert the course of the mighty Kosi River in Bhagalpur district to save an archaeological site discovered recently.

Kosi River: The Sorrow of Bihar

- The Kosi is a trans-boundary river which flows through Tibet, Nepal and India.
- The river crosses into northern Bihar, India where it branches into distributaries before joining the Ganges near Kursela in Katihar district.
- Its unstable nature has been attributed course changes and the heavy silt it carries during the monsoon season, and flooding in India has extreme effects.
- It is also known as the “Sorrow of Bihar” as the annual floods affect about 21,000 km² of fertile agricultural lands thereby disturbing the rural economy.

Why change its course?

- Several priceless artefacts have been found at the Guwaradih village in Naugachhia sub-division of Bhagalpur district during the excavation of a mound.
- These items could be 2,500-years-old and could be of interest for historians if conserved.
- The historical sites are facing threats from the Kosi floods.
- The Kosi currently flows around 300-400 metres from the site, while its old course is about two kilometres from the village.

Threats posed by the move

- Environmentalists have warned that changing the Kosi’s course could be disastrous for Bihar as seen in 2008.
- At that time, the river had breached its mud embankments at Kushaha in Nepal.
- The Kosi frequently changes its course naturally. If its course is artificially changed, it will cause floods and erosion in new areas, leading to massive displacement of people.
- It then caused extensive damage to life and property downstream in five densely populated districts of northeast Bihar.

- Some 500 people were killed and four million rendered homeless.

What is Winter Solstice?

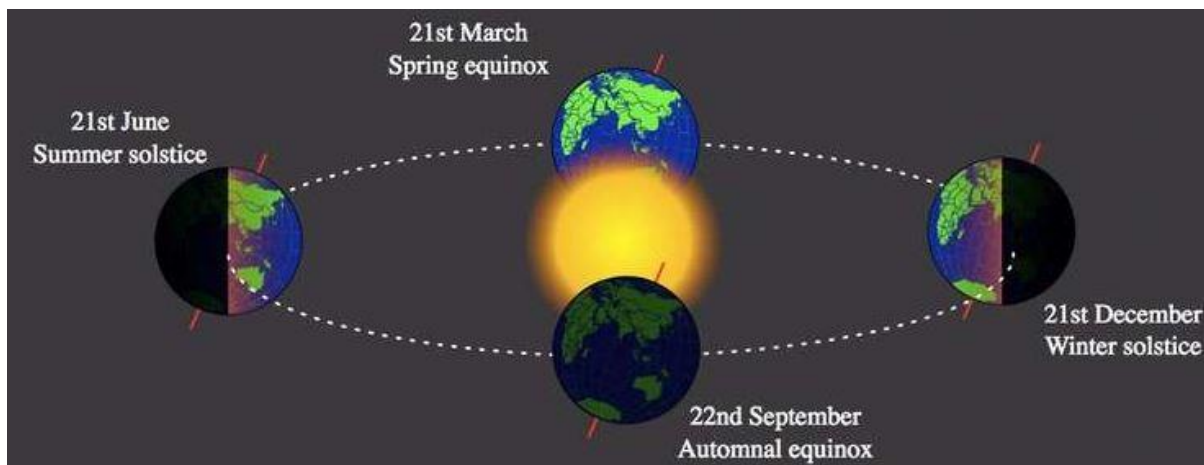
Mains Paper 1: Geographical Features & Their Location

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Winter Solstice

Mains level : Summer and Winter Solstice



Yesterday, December 21, was Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. In the Southern Hemisphere, conversely, it was Summer Solstice, the year's longest day.

Try this MCQ:

Q. On 21st June, the Sun

- Does not set below the horizon at the Arctic Circle
- Does not set below the horizon at Antarctic Circle
- Shines vertically overhead at noon on the Equator
- Shines vertically overhead at the Tropic of Capricorn

Why are the hours of daylight, not the same every day?

- The explanation lies in Earth's tilt.
- And it's not just the Earth — every planet in the Solar System is tilted relative to their orbits, all at different angles.
- The Earth's axis of rotation is tilted at an angle of 23.5° to its orbital plane.

- This tilt — combined with factors such as Earth's spin and orbit — leads to variations in the duration of sunlight than any location on the planet receives on different days of the year.

Impact of the tilted axis

- The Northern Hemisphere spends half the year tilted in the direction of the Sun, getting direct sunlight during long summer days.
- During the other half of the year, it tilts away from the Sun, and the days are shorter.
- Winter Solstice, December 21, is the day when the North Pole is most tilted away from the Sun.
- The tilt is also responsible for the different seasons that we see on Earth.
- The side facing the Sun experiences day, which changes to night as Earth continues to spin on its axis.

Un-impacted regions

- On the Equator, day and night are equal. The closer one moves towards the poles, the more extreme the variation.
- During summer in either hemisphere, that pole is tilted towards the Sun and the polar region receives 24 hours of daylight for months.
- Likewise, during winter, the region is in total darkness for months.

Celebrations associated with the Winter Solstice

- For centuries, this day has had a special place in several communities due to its astronomical significance and is celebrated in many ways across the world.
- Jewish people call the Winter Solstice 'Tekufat Tevet', which marks the start of winter.
- Ancient Egyptians celebrated the birth of Horus, the son of Isis (divine mother goddess) for 12 days during mid-winter.
- In China, the day is celebrated by families coming together for a special meal.
- In the Persian region, it is celebrated as Yalda or Shab-e-Yalda. The festival marks the last day of the Persian month of Azar and is seen as the victory of light over darkness.
- Families celebrate Yalda late into the night with special foods such as ajeel nuts, pomegranates and watermelon, and recite works of the 14th century Sufi poet Hafiz Shirazi.

In Vedic tradition

- In Vedic tradition, the northern movement of the Earth on the celestial sphere is implicitly acknowledged in the Surya Siddhanta.

- It outlines the Uttarayana (the period between Makar Sankranti and Karka Sankranti). Hence, Winter Solstice is the first day of Uttarayana.

Firefly Bird Diverters' to save the Great Indian Bustard (GIB)

Mains Paper 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Eia

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Great Indian Bustard

Mains level : Not Much



Fire Fly Bird diverter installed on power lines | Photo Credit: Anil K.Nair

The Environment Ministry along with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) India has come up with a unique initiative a “firefly bird diverter” for overhead power lines in areas where Great Indian Bustard (GIB) populations are found in the wild.

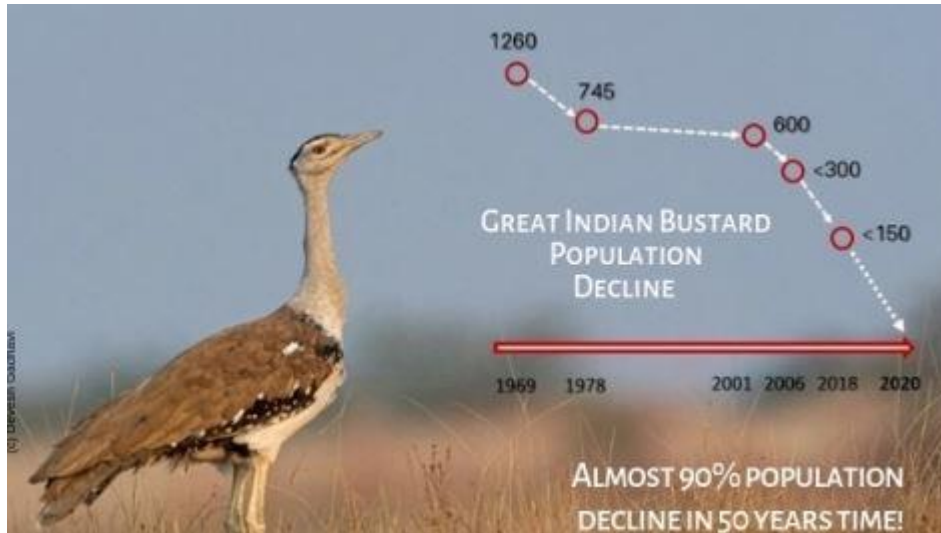
Try this PYQ:

Q. Which one of the following groups of animals belongs to the category of endangered species?

- (a) Great Indian Bustard, Musk Deer, Red Panda, Asiatic Wild Ass
- (b) Kashmir Stag, Cheetah, Blue Bull, Great Indian Bustard.
- (c) Snow Leopard, Swamp Deer, Rhesus Monkey, Saras (Crane)

(d) *Lion Tailed Macaque, Blue Bull, Hanuman Langur, Cheetah*

Great Indian Bustard



- The GIB is one of the heaviest flying birds and can weigh up to 15 kg which grows up to one metre in height.
- In July 2011, the bird was categorised as “critically endangered” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- It is considered the flagship grassland species, representing the health of the grassland ecology.
- For long, conservationists have been demanding to secure this population, warning that the bird might get extinct in the coming decades.
- It would become the first mega species to disappear from India after Cheetah in recent times.
- Till the 1980s, about 1,500-2,000 Great Indian Bustards were spread throughout the western half of India, spanning eleven states.
- However, with rampant hunting and declining grasslands, their population dwindled.

Bird Diverters



- The diverters are called fireflies because they look like fireflies from a distance, shining on power lines in the night.
- GIBs are one of the heaviest flying birds in India. Therefore, when they encounter these wires, they are unable to change the direction of their flight.
- Death in most cases is due to impact with the wires and not due to electrocution.
- The diverter will not only save GIB but other species of large birds, including migratory birds.

Why such a move?

- GIB is one of the most critically threatened species in India, with less than 150 birds left in the wild.
- A report has pointed out that power lines, especially high-voltage transmission lines with multiple overhead wires, are the most important current threat for GIBs in the Thar region.
- They are causing unsustainably high mortality in about 15% of their population.

Why the universe has less 'antimatter' than matter?

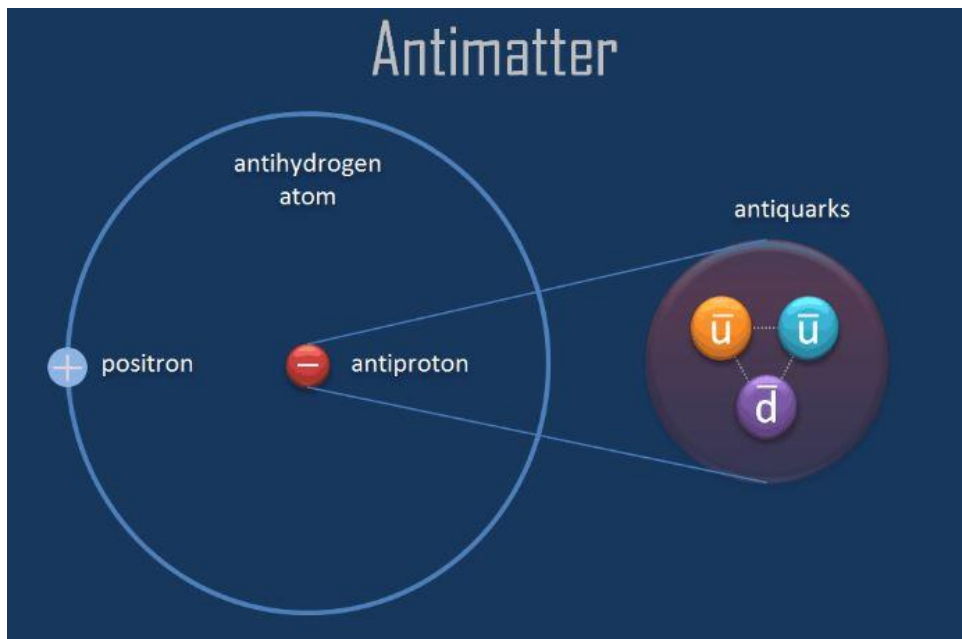
Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Matter, Anti-matter

Mains level : Formation of the universe and the Big Bang



This newscard is an excerpt from the original article published in DownToEarth.

Try this PYQ:

Q. The known forces of nature can be divided into four classes, viz, gravity, electromagnetism, weak nuclear force and strong nuclear force. With reference to them, which one of the following statements is not correct?

- (a) Gravity is the strongest of the four
- (b) Electromagnetism act only on particles with an electric charge
- (c) Weak nuclear force causes radioactivity
- (d) Strong nuclear force holds protons and neutrons inside the nuclear of an atom.

What is Antimatter?

- Antimatter is the opposite of normal matter. More specifically, the sub-atomic particles of antimatter have properties opposite those of normal matter.
- The electrical charge of those particles is reversed.
- Antimatter was created along with matter after the Big Bang, but antimatter is rare in today's universe.
- To better understand antimatter, one needs to know more about the matter.
- The matter is made up of atoms, which are the basic units of chemical elements such as hydrogen, helium or oxygen.

Their existence

- The existence of antimatter was predicted by physicist Paul Dirac's equation

describing the motion of electrons in 1928.

- At first, it was not clear if this was just a mathematical quirk or a description of a real particle.
- But in 1932 Carl Anderson discovered an antimatter partner to the electron — the positron — while studying cosmic rays that rain down on Earth from space.
- Over the next few decades' physicists found that all matter particles have antimatter partners.
- Scientists believe that in the very hot and dense state shortly after the Big Bang, there must have been processes that gave preference to matter over antimatter.
- This created a small surplus of matter, and as the universe cooled, all the antimatter was destroyed, or annihilated, by an equal amount of matter, leaving a tiny surplus of matter.
- And it is this surplus that makes up everything we see in the universe today.

Studying the difference between matter and antimatter

- A Quark is a type of elementary particle and a fundamental constituent of matter.
- Quarks combine to form composite particles called hadrons, the most stable of which are protons and neutrons, the components of atomic nuclei.
- The behaviour of quarks, which are the fundamental building blocks of matter along with leptons, can shed light on the difference between matter and antimatter.
- Since they are unstable, they will “decay” — fall apart — into other more stable particles at some point during their oscillation.

Mapping: Caspian Sea

Mains Paper 1: Climatic Change

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Caspian Sea

Mains level : Ecocides and their impact



The Caspian is actually a lake, the largest in the world and it is experiencing a devastating decline in its water level that is about to accelerate.

Note the countries bordering the Caspian Sea: Kazakhstan, Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkmenistan. Or else remember the acronym 'TARIK(h)' (Hindi word for date).

You can frame a mnemonic statement of your choice. Do similarly for major lakes and inland seas. But dont let it move over TARIK pe TARIK!

Caspian Sea

- The Caspian Sea is the world's largest inland body of water, variously classed as the world's largest lake or a full-fledged sea.
- As an endorheic basin, it lies between Europe and Asia.
- An endorheic basin is a drainage basin that normally retains water and allows no outflow to other external bodies of water, such as rivers or oceans, but converges instead into lakes or swamps, permanent or seasonal that equilibrates through evaporation
- Its level is the product of how much water is flowing in from rivers, mostly the mighty Volga to the north, how much it rains and how much evaporates away.
- At the end of the century, the Volga and other northern rivers will still be there.
- However, a projected temperature rise of about 3°C to 4°C in the region will drive evaporation through the roof.

Now try this PYQ:

Q. Which of the following has/have shrunk immensely/ dried up in the recent past due to human activities?

1. Aral Sea
2. Black Sea
3. Lake Baikal

Select the correct option using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2 only
- (d) 1 and 3 only

Why in news?



- By the end of the century, the Caspian Sea will be nine metres to 18 metres lower. That's a depth considerably taller than most houses.
- The Caspian's surface is already dropping by 7 cm every year, a trend likely to increase.
- It means the lake will lose at least 25 per cent of its former size, uncovering 93,000 sq km of dry land.
- If that new land were a country, it would be the size of Portugal.

Past strides in its level

- The Caspian Sea has a history of violent rises and falls.
- In Derbent, on the Caucasus coast of Russia, submerged ancient city walls testify to how low the sea was in medieval times.
- Around 10,000 years ago, the Caspian was about 100 metres lower.
- A few thousand years before that it was about 50 metres higher than today and even over spilt into the Black Sea.

[pib] Tso Kar Wetland Complex

Mains Paper 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Eia

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Tso Kar Wetland Complex

Mains level : Ramsar wetlands in India



India has added Tso Kar Wetland Complex in Ladakh as its 42nd Ramsar site, which is a second one in the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh. With this, India now has forty-two Ramsar sites.

Try this PYQ:

In which one among the following categories of protected areas in India are local people not allowed to collect and use the biomass?

- (a) Biosphere reserves
- (b) National parks
- (c) Wetlands declared under Ramsar convention
- (d) Wildlife sanctuaries

Tso Kar Wetland Complex

- It is a high-altitude wetland complex, consisting of two principal waterbodies, Startsapuk Tso, a freshwater lake of about 438 hectares to the south, and Tso Kar itself, a hypersaline lake of 1800 hectares to the north.
- It is situated in the Changthang region of Ladakh.
- It is called Tso Kar, meaning white lake, because of the white salt efflorescence

found on the margins due to the evaporation of highly saline water.

Ecological significance

- Wetlands provide a wide range of important resources and ecosystem services such as food, water, fibre, groundwater recharge, water purification, flood moderation, erosion control and climate regulation.
- They are, in fact, a major source of water and our main supply of freshwater comes from an array of wetlands which help soak rainfall and recharge groundwater.
- The Tso Kar Basin is an A1 Category Important Bird Area (IBA) as per BirdLife International and a key staging site in the Central Asian Flyway.
- The site is also one of the most important breeding areas of the Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*) in India.

Back2Basics: Wetlands

- A wetland is a distinct ecosystem that is flooded by water, either permanently or seasonally, where oxygen-free processes prevail.
- The primary factor that distinguishes wetlands from other landforms or water bodies is the characteristic vegetation of aquatic plants, adapted to the unique hydric soil.
- Wetlands provide a wide range of important resources and ecosystem services such as food, water, fibre, groundwater recharge, water purification, flood moderation, erosion control and climate regulation.

What is the Ramsar Convention?

- The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat is a treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of such sites.
- The convention, signed in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar, is one of the oldest inter-governmental accords for preserving the ecological character of wetlands.
- Also known as the Convention on Wetlands, it aims to develop a global network of wetlands for the conservation of biological diversity and for sustaining human life.
- Over 170 countries are party to the Ramsar Convention and over 2,000 designated sites covering over 20 crore hectares have been recognised under it.

[pib] International Blue Flag hoisted at 8 beaches across the Country

Mains Paper 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Eia

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Blue Flag Beaches

Mains level : Coastal conservation



The Environment Minister has virtually hoisted the international blue flags in 8 beaches across the country.

Try this PYQ:

Q. At one of the places in India, if you stand on the seashore and watch the sea, you will find that the seawater recedes from the shoreline a few kilometers and comes back to the shore, twice a day, and you can actually walk on the seafloor when the water recedes. This unique phenomenon is seen at:

- (a) Bhavnagar
- (b) Bheemunipatnam
- (c) Chandipur

(d) *Nagapattinam*

About Blue Flag Certification

- This Certification is accorded by an international agency “Foundation for Environment Education, Denmark” based on 33 stringent criteria in four major heads i.e.
 1. Environmental Education and Information,
 2. Bathing Water Quality,
 3. Environment Management and Conservation and
 4. Safety and Services on the beaches.
- It started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987, and in areas outside Europe since 2001 when South Africa joined.
- Japan and South Korea are the only countries in South and southeastern Asia to have Blue Flag beaches.
- Spain tops the list with 566 such beaches; Greece and France follow with 515 and 395, respectively.

Which are the 8 beaches?

The beaches where the International Blue Flags were hoisted are:

1. Kappad (Kerala)
2. Shivrajpur (Gujarat)
3. Ghoghla (Diu)
4. Kasarkod and
5. Padubidri (Karnataka)
6. Rushikonda (Andhra Pradesh)
7. Golden (Odisha) and
8. Radhanagar (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

Governance

What is the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for Drugmakers?

Mains Paper 2: Health & Education

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Vaccine for COVID

Mains level : Universalization of vaccines and associated challenges in India

The US drugmaker Moderna said it was applying for emergency use authorisation for its vaccine in India.

Practice question for Mains:

Q. What is Vaccine Nationalism? Discuss various ethical issues involved and its impact on vulnerable populations across the globe.

Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA)

- Vaccines and medicines, and even diagnostic tests and medical devices, require the approval of a regulatory authority before they can be administered.
- In India, the regulatory authority is the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).
- The approval is granted after an assessment of their safety and effectiveness, based on data from trials. In fact, approval from the regulator is required at every stage of these trials.
- This is a long process, designed to ensure that medicine or vaccine is absolutely safe and effective.
- The fastest approval for any vaccine until now — the mumps vaccine in the 1960s — took about four-and-a-half years after it was developed.

Exceptions for emergency

- In emergency situations, like the current one, regulatory authorities around the world have developed mechanisms to grant interim approvals.
- However, there should sufficient evidence to suggest a medical product is safe and effective.
- Final approval is granted only after completion of the trials and analysis of full data; until then, EUA allows the medicine or the vaccine to be used on the public.

What is the process of getting a EUA in India?

- India's drug regulations do not have provisions for a EUA, and the process for receiving one is not clearly defined or consistent.
- Despite this, CDSCO has been granting emergency or restricted emergency approvals to Covid-19 drugs during this pandemic — for remdesivir and favipiravir in

June, and itolizumab in July.

Associated risks

- The public has to be informed that a product has only been granted a EUA and not full approval.
- In the case of a Covid-19 vaccine, for example, people have to be informed about the known and potential benefits and risks.

Not a compulsion

- There has been an ongoing debate over whether people have the option of refusing to take the vaccine.
- Incidentally, no country has made vaccination compulsory for its people.
- Initially, all vaccines are likely to be deployed on emergency use authorizations only. Final approval from may take several months, or years.

[pib] E-Sanjeevani Telemedicine Service

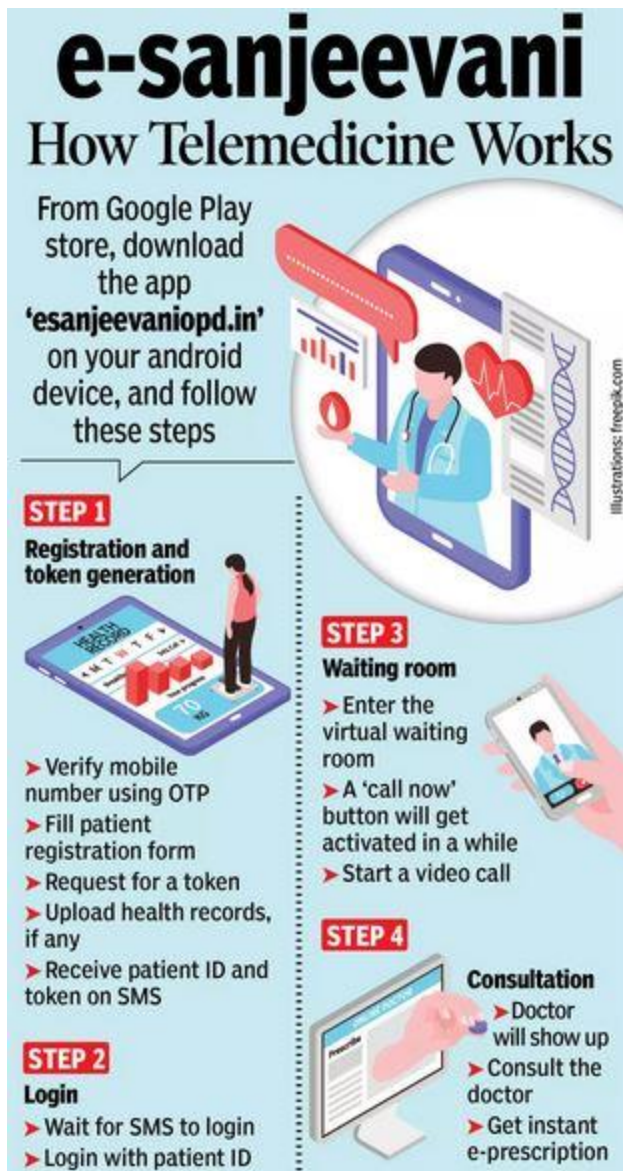
Mains Paper 2: Health & Education

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : E-Sanjeevani

Mains level : Telemedicine and its effectiveness



In a landmark achievement, eSanjeevani, Health Ministry's national telemedicine initiative today completed 9 lakh consultations.

Although telemedicine brings with it many benefits, there are some downsides to it as well. Discuss.

What is E-Sanjeevani?

- Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has launched two variants of eSanjeevani namely – doctor to doctor (eSanjeevani AB-HWC) in the hub and spoke model and patient to doctor (eSanjeevaniOPD).
- E-Sanjeevani OPD (out-patient department) is a telemedicine variant for the public to seek health services remotely; it was rolled out on 13th of April 2020 during the

first lockdown in the country.

- It enables virtual meetings between the patients and doctors & specialists from geographically dispersed locations, through video conferencing that occurs in real-time.
- At the end of these remote consultations, eSanjeevani generates electronic prescriptions which can be used for sourcing medicines.
- Andhra Pradesh was the first state to roll out eSanjeevani AB-HWC services in November 2019.

Benefits of telemedicine

Telemedicine benefits patients in the following ways:

- **Transportation:** Patients can avoid spending gas money or wasting time in traffic with video consultations.
- **No missing work:** Today, individuals can schedule a consultation during a work break or even after work hours.
- **Childcare/Eldercare Challenges:** Those who struggle to find care options can use telemedicine solutions.

Who are the Tharu Tribals?

Mains Paper 2: Laws, Institutions & Bodies Constituted For The Vulnerable Sections

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Tharutribals

Mains level : Tourism development in tribal circuits

The Uttar Pradesh government has recently embarked upon a scheme to take the unique culture of its ethnic Tharu tribe across the world.

The Terai or Tarai is a lowland region in northern India and southern Nepal that lies south of the outer foothills of the Himalayas, the Sivalik Hills, and north of the Indo-Gangetic Plain. This lowland belt is characterized by tall grasslands, scrub savannah, sal forests and clay rich swamps.

Tharu Tribals

- The community belongs to the Terai lowlands, amid the Shivaliks of lower Himalayas. Most of them are forest dwellers and some practised agriculture.
- The word Tharu is believed to be derived from their, meaning followers of Theravada Buddhism.

- The Tharus live in both India and Nepal. In the Indian Terai, they live mostly in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar.
- According to the 2011 census, the Scheduled Tribe population in Uttar Pradesh was more than 11 lakh; this number is estimated to have crossed 20 lakh now.
- The biggest chunk of this tribal population is made up of Tharus.
- Members of the tribe survive on wheat, corn and vegetables are grown close to their homes. A majority still lives off the forest.

Tharu language, food, and culture

- They speak various dialects of Tharu, a language of the Indo-Aryan subgroup, and variants of Hindi, Urdu, and Awadhi.
- In central Nepal, they speak a variant of Bhojpuri, while in eastern Nepal, they speak a variant of Maithili.
- Tharus worship Lord Shiva as Mahadev and call their supreme being “Narayan”, who they believe is the provider of sunshine, rain, and harvests.
- Tharu women have stronger property rights than is allowed to women in mainstream North Indian Hindu custom.
- Standard items on the Tharu plate are bagiya or dhikri – which is a steamed dish of rice flour that is eaten with chutney or curry – and ghonghi, an edible snail that is cooked in a curry made of coriander, chili, garlic, and onion.

What is this scheme about?

- The UP government is working to connect Tharu villages in the districts of Balrampur, Bahraich, Lakhimpur and Pilibhit bordering Nepal, with the homestay scheme of the UP Forest Department.
- The idea is to offer tourists an experience of living in the natural Tharu habitat, in traditional huts made of grass collected mainly from the forests.
- Tharu homeowners will be able to charge tourists directly for the accommodation and home-cooked meals.
- The government expects both domestic and international tourists to avail of the opportunity to obtain a taste of the special Tharu culture by staying with them, observing their lifestyle, food habits, and attire.

History

In new: Annapurna Idol

Mains Paper 1: Arts & Culture

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Annapurna idol

Mains level : Not Much



PM has announced that an ancient idol of the goddess Annapurna, stolen from India about a century ago, is being brought back from Canada.

Annapurna Idol

- Annapurna, also spelt Annapoorna, is the goddess of food.
- This 18th-century idol, carved in the Benares was stolen from a temple of Varanasi and smuggled out around 100 years ago somewhere around 1913.
- Now is part of the University of Regina, Canada's collection at the MacKenzie Art Gallery.

- The idol holds a bowl of kheer in one hand and a spoon in the other.

Cattle meat residue found in Indus Valley vessels

Mains Paper 1: Arts & Culture

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Various IVC sites

Mains level : IVC

A new study has found the presence of animal products, including cattle and buffalo meat, in ceramic vessels dating back about 4,600 years at seven Indus Valley Civilization sites in present-day Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

The Karnataka Assembly has passed the controversial Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill, 2020, amid protests.

Beef politics has always gained traction in India being a cheap source of protein for masses versus religious sentiments of the fundamentalists.

How was the study conducted?

- The study is the first to look into the absorbed lipid residues in pottery from multiple sites, including Rakhigarhi, Farmana and Masudpur.
- Lipids are relatively less prone to degradation and have been discovered in pottery from archaeological contexts around the world.

Key findings

- The high proportions of cattle bones suggest a **cultural preference for beef consumption** across Indus populations, supplemented by the consumption of mutton/lamb.
- The study found little evidence of dairy products. However, there could be regional differences as a recent study of vessels in Gujarat had found evidence of dairy products.
- About 50-60% of domestic animal bones found at Indus Valley sites come from cattle/buffalo.
- It says that at Harappa, 90% of the cattle were kept alive until they were three or three-and-a-half years, suggesting that females were used for dairying production, whereas male animals were used for traction.

Who was Khudiram Bose?

Mains Paper 1: Modern Indian History

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Khudiram Bose

Mains level : Various revolutionary activities



Union Home Minister has visited the native village of Bengali revolutionary Khudiram Bose in Midnapore, West Bengal.

One of the youngest leaders of the Independence movement, Khudiram Bose is highly regarded in Bengal for his fearless spirit. He was just 19 when he was hanged!

Who was Khudiram Bose?

- Bose was born in 1889 at a small village in Midnapore district.
- From his adolescent years, he was drawn towards revolutionary activities, being inspired by a series of public lectures given by Sri Aurobindo and Sister Nivedita, when the duo visited Midnapore in the early 1900s.
- In 1905, when Bengal was partitioned, he actively participated in protests against the British.
- At the age of 15, Bose joined the **Anushilan Samiti**, an early 20th-century organisation that propounded revolutionary activities in Bengal.
- Within a year, he had learnt how to make bombs and would plant them in front of

police stations.

Revolutionary activities

- The deciding moment of Bose's life came in 1908 when he along with another revolutionary, Prafulla Chaki was assigned the task of assassinating the district magistrate of Muzaffarpur, Kingsford.
- Before being transferred to Muzaffarpur, Kingsford was a magistrate in Bengal.
- His tortuous clamping down on revolutionaries had earned him the ire of this young group of nationalists who decided to hurl a bomb on him.

Kingsford's assassination attempt

- There were multiple attempts to assassinate Kingsford.
- Initially, the plan was to throw the bomb in the court. However, after much deliberation, it was decided to avoid the court since a lot of civilians might get injured.
- Thereafter, on April 30, 1908, Bose threw a bomb on a carriage which he suspected was carrying Kingsford.
- But it turned out that it was carrying the wife and daughter of a barrister named Pringle Kennedy, who lost their lives, as Kingsford escaped.

Arrest and execution

- By midnight the entire town was aware of the incident and the Calcutta police were summoned to catch the duo.
- Bose was arrested from a railway station called Waini where he had reached the next morning after having walked 25 miles.
- Chaki on the other hand, killed himself before he could get arrested.
- As Bose was brought handcuffed to the police station at Muzaffarpur, the entire town crowded around to take a look at the teenaged boy.
- On July 13, 1908, he was finally sentenced to death.

History: Visva-Bharati University

Mains Paper 1: Modern Indian History

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Visva-Bharati University

Mains level : Nationalist education during freedom struggle

The Visva-Bharati University established by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore has completed its centenary.

*Do you remember the scheme of education by Gandhi Ji, called **NaiTalim**?*

Visva-Bharati University

- The university was set up by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore in 1921 at Santiniketan, Bolpur in West Bengal's Birbhum district.
- It was founded by Rabindranath Tagore who called it Visva-Bharati, which means the communion of the world with India.
- Until independence, it was a college. Soon after independence, the institution was given the status of a central university in 1951 by an act of the Parliament.

Its establishment

- The origins of the institution date back to 1863 when Debendranath Tagore was given a tract of land by the zamindar of Raipur, the zamindar of Kirnagar.
- He set up an ashram at the spot that has now come to be called chatim tala at the heart of the town.
- The ashram was initially called Brahmacharya Ashram, which was later renamed Brahmacharya Vidyalaya.
- It was established with a view to encouraging people from all walks of life to come to the spot and meditate.
- In 1901 his youngest son Rabindranath Tagore established a co-educational school inside the premises of the ashram.

What makes it special?

- Rabindranath Tagore believed in open-air education and had reservations about any teaching done within four walls.
- This was due to his belief that walls represent the conditioning of the mind.
- Tagore did not have a good opinion about the Western method of education introduced by the British in India; on this subject, Tagore and Gandhiji's opinion matched.
- So he devised a new system of learning in Visva-Bharati. He allowed students to continue their course till the student and his teacher both are satisfied.
- At Visva-Bharati, if a course demanded by a student is not available, then the university will design a course and bring teachers for that course.
- The university would not be bothered by the consideration of whether there is a demand for the course.

Places in news: Rahim's Tomb

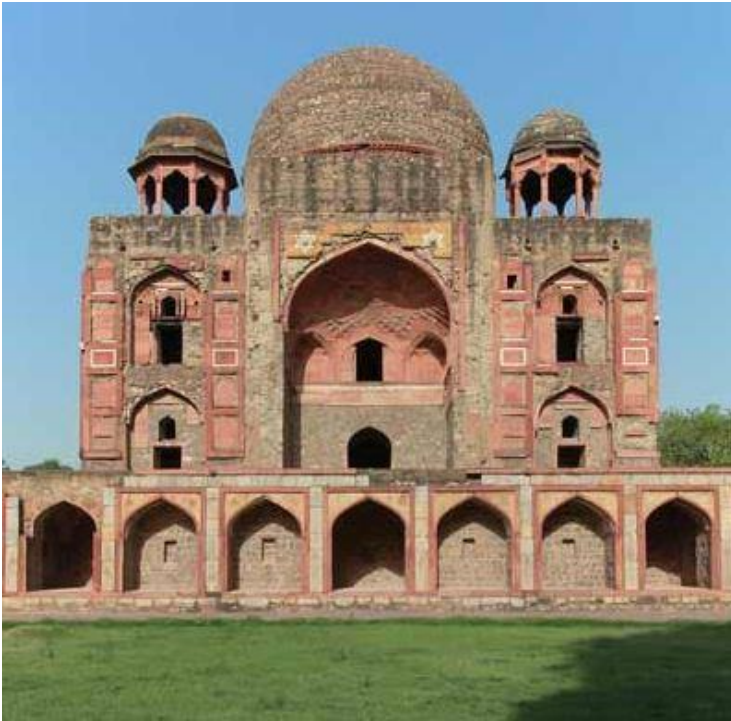
Mains Paper 1: Arts & Culture

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Navratnas of Akbar

Mains level : Medieval arts and culture



This newscard is an excerpt from the original article published in The Hindu.

Try this PYQ:

Q. With reference to Mian Tansen, which one of the following statements is not correct?

- (a) Tansen was the title given to him by Emperor Akbar.
- (b) Tansen composed Dhrupads on Hindu gods and goddesses.
- (c) Tansen composed songs on his patrons.
- (d) Tansen invented many Ragas.

Who was Rahim?

- Dating back to 1598, during the rule of Akbar, Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan was one of the *Navratna* in the court.
- Winning wars with his military training and hearts with his dohas and translated texts — he was a man who survived despite his father Bairam Khan's assassination when he was just four.
- Meant to be a dedication of a husband to his wife, the tomb ended up housing his own remains too when he died in 1627.

His works

- Apart from writing various dohas, Rahim translated Babar's memoirs, Baburnama from Chagatai language to the Persian language, which was completed in 998 (1589–90) AD.
- He had an excellent command over the Sanskrit language.

- In Sanskrit, he wrote two books on astrology, Khetakautukam and Dwatrimshadyogavali.

Why in news?

- The tomb is in a run-down situation but undergoing renovation.
- The historical and cultural significance is more than the archaeological and architectural significance, so restoring the dignity of the burial place has been very important.

Who was freedom fighter Udham Singh?

Mains Paper 1: Modern Indian History

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Udham Singh

Mains level : Jallianwala Bagh massacre and its aftermath



December 26 was the birth anniversary of freedom fighter Udham Singh, who is known for avenging the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919.

Try this PYQ:

Q. The Ghadr (Ghadar) was a –

- (a) Revolutionary association of Indians with headquarters at San Francisco.
- (b) Nationalist organization operating from Singapore
- (c) Militant organization with headquarters at Berlin
- (d) Communist movement for India's freedom with head-quarters at Tashkent

Who was Udham Singh?

- Singh, born in Sunam in Punjab's Sangrur district in 1899, was a political activist

who got associated with the Ghadar Party while in the US.

- The multi-ethnic party was believed to have communist tendencies and was founded by Sohan Singh Bhakna in 1913.
- Headquartered in California, the party was committed to the ouster of the British from India.
- In 1934, Singh made his way to London with the purpose of assassinating O'Dwyer, who in 1919 had been the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab.

Why did he consider O'Dwyer responsible for the massacre?

- O'Dwyer ordered Brigadier Reginald Dyer to Amritsar before the massacre; he was worried that there might be a second Indian mutiny, given the Hindu-Muslim unity and the demonstrations and strikes.
- Instead of Dyer, O'Dwyer is considered to be the actual perpetrator, since Dyer could not have executed it without his permission.
- On March 13, 1940, Udham Singh shot O'Dwyer at a meeting of the East India Association and the Royal Central Asian Society at Caxton Hill.
- He was immediately arrested and held in Brixton prison and was sentenced to death and was hanged on July 31, 1940, at Pentonville Prison.

A legend in India

- For avenging the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Singh is seen by many as a hero. Gandhi, though, had famously called Singh's revenge as an "act of insanity".
- While being on trial, he referred to himself as Mohamed Singh Azad, to symbolise Hindu-Sikh-Muslim unity in the fight for India's freedom.
- In 1974, his remains were sent back to India and he was cremated in his village in Sunam.
- There have been several demands in the past few years for Udham Singh's statue to be installed in Jallianwala Bagh and the Parliament complex.
- In 2018, his statue was installed at Jallianwala Bagh during Baisakhi.
- Udham Singh Nagar district in Uttarakhand is named after the freedom fighter.

International Relations

UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)

Mains Paper 2: Important International Institutions

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : UN ACABQ

Mains level : Success and failures of United Nations

In a significant victory for India at the United Nations, Indian diplomat Vidisha Maitra was elected to the U.N. Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

Try this PYQ:

Which one of the following is not related to the United Nations?

- (a) Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency*
- (b) International Finance Corporation*
- (c) International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes*
- (d) Bank for International Settlements*

About UN- ACABQ

- It is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly. The 193-member Assembly appoints members of the Advisory Committee.
- ACABQ consists of 16 members appointed by the Assembly in their individual capacity.
- Members are selected on the basis of broad geographical representation, personal qualifications and experience.

Its functions

- ACABQ ensures that fund contributions to the U.N. system are put to good effect and that mandates are properly funded.
- It examines, on behalf of the General Assembly, the administrative budgets of the specialised agencies and proposals for financial arrangements with such agencies; and to consider and report to the General Assembly on the auditors' reports on the accounts of the UN and of the specialised agencies.

Why is the seat given to India?

- India has a stellar record of bringing professional auditing experience to the U.N. and contributing outstanding professionals to U.N. bodies.
- With India's rising obligations in both assessed as well as voluntary contributions to

the U.N., India holds key responsibility of administrative and budgetary management of U.N.

Significance of the move

- The victory gives a strong display of support by U.N. member states for India.
- It comes as India gets ready to sit in the U.N. Security Council as a non-permanent member for a two-year term beginning January 2021.

UAE's Golden Visa Program

Mains Paper 2: Effect Of Policies & Politics Of World On India'S Interests

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Not Much

Mains level : Indian diaspora in Gulf region

The United Arab Emirates will extend its “golden” visa system — which grants 10-year residency in the West Asian nation — to certain professionals, specialised degree-holders and others.

Do you know?

India is the world's top recipient of remittances with its diaspora sending a whopping \$79 billion back home in 2018 a/c to the World Bank.

Golden Visa Programme

- The “Golden Card” programme is open to investors and “exceptional talents” such as doctors, engineers, scientists, students and artists.
- The visa categories include:
 1. General investors who will be granted a 10 years visa
 2. Real estate investors, who can get a visa for 5 years Visa
 3. Entrepreneurs and talented professionals such as doctors, researchers and innovators: 10 years Visa
 4. Outstanding students — will also be permitted residency visas for 5 years
- All categories of visas can be renewed upon expiry.

Benefits for India

- The Indian expatriate community is reportedly the largest ethnic community in the UAE, constituting roughly about 30 per cent of the country's population of around nine million.
- Though most of the Indians living in the UAE are employed, about 10 per cent of the Indian

population constitutes dependent family members, according to the Indian Embassy.

Places in news: Luxembourg

Mains Paper 2: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and agreements involving India

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Location of Luxembourg

Mains level : Not Much



Prime Minister has pitched for strengthening ties to further ramp up economic engagement between India and Luxembourg.

Mark the location of Luxembourg. Since it is a landlocked country, there can be a question asking its bordering states.

Luxembourg

- Luxembourg is a small European country, landlocked by Belgium, France and Germany.
- It's mostly rural, with dense Ardennes forest and nature parks in the north, rocky gorges of the Mullerthal region in the east and the Moselle river valley in the southeast.

- Its capital, Luxembourg City, is famed for its fortified medieval old town perched on sheer cliffs

Why Luxembourg?

- Luxembourg is one of the most important financial centres globally.
- Several Indian companies have raised capital by issuing Global Depositary Receipts at the Luxembourg Stock Exchange.
- Luxembourg-based investment funds hold substantial banking and asset management market share in portfolio investments in India.
- It is also the third-largest source of Foreign Portfolio Investments (FPI) in India.

China plans for first downstream dam on Brahmaputra

Mains Paper 2: India & Its Neighborhood - Relations

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Brahmaputra river system

Mains level : Chinese assertions in Arunachal region

A Chinese hydropower company is set to construct the first downstream dam on the lower reaches of the Brahmaputra river, or Yarlung Zangbo as it is known in Tibet.

Yarlung Zangbo Hydropower Project

- China will implement the hydropower exploitation in the downstream of the Yarlung Zangbo River” as part of the new Five-Year Plan (2021-2025).
- China in 2015 operationalised its first hydropower project at Zangmu in Tibet, while three other dams at Dagou, Jiexu and Jiacha are being developed, all on the upper and middle reaches of the river.

Potential of the great bend

- The “Great Bend” of the Brahmaputra and at the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon in Medog county, where the river falls spectacularly over a 2,000 metre-drop and turns sharply to flow across the border into Arunachal Pradesh.
- If built, it could provide 300 billion kWh of clean, renewable and zero-carbon electricity annually.
- The project will play a significant role in realising China’s goal of reaching a carbon emissions peak before 2030 and carbon neutrality in 2060.

Concerns for India

- Indian officials have said the dams are not likely to impact the quantity of the Brahmaputra's flows in India greatly.
- This is because they are only storing water for power generation and the Brahmaputra is not entirely dependent on upstream flows with an estimated 35% of its basin is in India.
- However, India has expressed concerns to China over the four dams on the upper and middle reaches.

Polity

Representation of Women in Judiciary

Mains Paper 2: Executive & Judiciary

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Not Much

Mains level : Women in Judiciary

Attorney-General has told the Supreme Court that more women judges in constitutional courts would certainly improve gender sensitivity in the judiciary.

Q.Women judges could bring a more comprehensive and empathetic perspective of gender sensitivity in the judiciary. Discuss.

Women in Judiciary: A dismal figure

- The Supreme Court has only two women judges as against a sanctioned strength of 34 judges.
- There has never been a female Chief Justice. This figure is consistently low across the higher judiciary.
- There are only 80 women judges out of the sanctioned strength of 1,113 judges in the High Courts and the Supreme Court.
- Only two of these 80 women judges are in the Supreme Court and the other 78 are in various High Courts, comprising only 7.2% of the number of judges.
- There are six High Courts — Manipur, Meghalaya, Patna, Tripura, Telangana, and

Uttarakhand — where there are no sitting women judges.

A short timeline

- The first female Judge appointed in Supreme Court was Justice M. Fathima Beevi from Kerala in 1987.
- She was later followed by Justice Sujata V. Manohar from Maharashtra in 1994 and in the year 2000, Justice Ruma Pal was appointed from West Bengal.
- And in the year 2010, Justice Gyan Sudha Misra from Bihar was appointed.
- In 2014, Justice Ranjana Desai from Mumbai was appointed and currently, Justice R. Banumathi from Tamil Nadu is the only woman judge in Supreme Court.

(Note: This data might be useful for State PSCs or other exams. UPSC aspirants need not remember this.)

What did the A-G say?

- Improving the representation of women could go a long way towards a more balanced and empathetic approach in cases involving sexual violence.
- Judges need to be trained to place themselves in the shoes of the victim of sexual violence while passing orders, said the AG.
- There is a dearth of compulsory courses in gender sensitization in law schools.
- Certain law schools have the subject either as a specialization or as an elective.

Why need more women in Judiciary?

- The entry of women judges into spaces from which they had historically been excluded has been a positive step in the direction of judiciaries being perceived as being more transparent, inclusive, and representative.
- By their mere presence, women judges enhance the legitimacy of courts, sending a powerful signal that they are open and accessible to those who seek recourse to justice.
- They could contribute far more to justice than improving its appearance: they also contribute significantly to the quality of decision-making, and thus to the quality of justice itself.
- Women judges bring those lived experiences to their judicial actions, experiences that tend toward a more comprehensive and empathetic perspective.
- By elucidating how laws and rulings can be based on gender stereotypes, or how they might have a different impact on women and men, a gender perspective enhances the fairness of the adjudication.

Digital Voter ID Card and its benefits

Mains Paper 2: Representation Of People's Act

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Digital Voter ID

Mains level : Election reforms

The Election Commission (EC) is keen to make the Elector's Photo Identity Card or EPIC available in electronic form.

Try this PYQ:

Q.RegardingDigiLocker, sometimes seen in the news, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. It is a digital locker system offered by the Government under Digital India Programme.*
- 2. It allows you to access your e-documents irrespective of your physical location.*

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Digital Voter ID Card

- The digital voter card is not expected to look too different from its physical form.
- It will be available as a PDF file and can be downloaded on one's phone or computer.
- The soft copy may also have a QR code that will carry the voter's enrolment details such as name and date of birth and address.
- This is still just a proposal and needs to be approved by the Election Commission.

How to avail it?

- To avail this facility, an eligible voter will have to provide her mobile number or email address to the EC machinery at the time of applying for enrolment in the voters' list.
- Once her name is included in the electoral roll, she will be intimated through an

SMS or email.

- The new voter can then download the Voter Card through OTP (One Time Password) authentication.
- Existing voters may have to re-verify their details with the EC (similar to the Bank KYC process) and provide their email or mobile phone number to get their cards in the electronic form.

Benefits offered

- An electronic card will help the EC save costs on printing and distributing a hard copy of EPIC.
- The EC feels that voters too will find it useful to have the PDF file of her voter card on her phone.
- This will do away with the necessity of first producing a voter's slip on the day of voting.

Science Tech Art Culture

Zebrafish and its heart regeneration capacity

Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Zebrafish

Mains level : Not Much



Indian scientists have used the Zebrafish model and identified its genes that can promote heart regeneration.

Try this PYQ:

Q. With reference to India's Biodiversity, Ceylon frogmouth, Coppersmith Barbet, Gray-chinned minivet and White-throated redstart are-

- (a) Birds
- (b) Primates
- (c) Reptiles
- (d) Amphibians

Zebrafish

- Zebrafish is a small (2-3 cm long) freshwater fish found in the tropical and subtropical regions.
- The fish is native to South Asia's Indo-Gangetic plains, where they are mostly found in the paddy fields and even in stagnant water and streams.
- The fish become adults at three months and survive 2-3 years in a laboratory condition.
- Its unique characteristics lie in its transparency during its embryonic stages, allowing observing all organs, including beating heart and blood circulation.

Ability to heal their heart

- The ability of Zebrafish to heal their heart after injury makes them an attractive model to investigate mechanisms governing the regenerative process.

- Researchers worldwide are actively working to understand the mechanism behind the heart regeneration in Zebrafish for the last two decades.
- Years of efforts have helped them identify the cellular communication network factor 2a (ccn2a), a gene that can promote heart regeneration by enhancing cardiomyocyte proliferation.
- They have also observed that this gene resolves the transient collagenous fibrotic scar resulting in faster regeneration.

Significance for humans

- Cardiovascular diseases are the number 1 cause of deaths globally, taking an estimated 17.9 million lives each year, according to the World Health Organisation.
- Humans cannot regenerate their hearts upon myocardial damage and a person who suffered a heart attack cannot functionally heal the damaged heart muscle, resulting in reduced pumping efficiency.
- While on the other hand, this unique fish has the full potential to regenerate its heart and restore its function after injury.
- Till now, there is no treatment available to restore the damaged heart function in humans. Hence scientists have sought to decode the heart regeneration processes using this model animal.

Japan's Hayabusa2 Probe

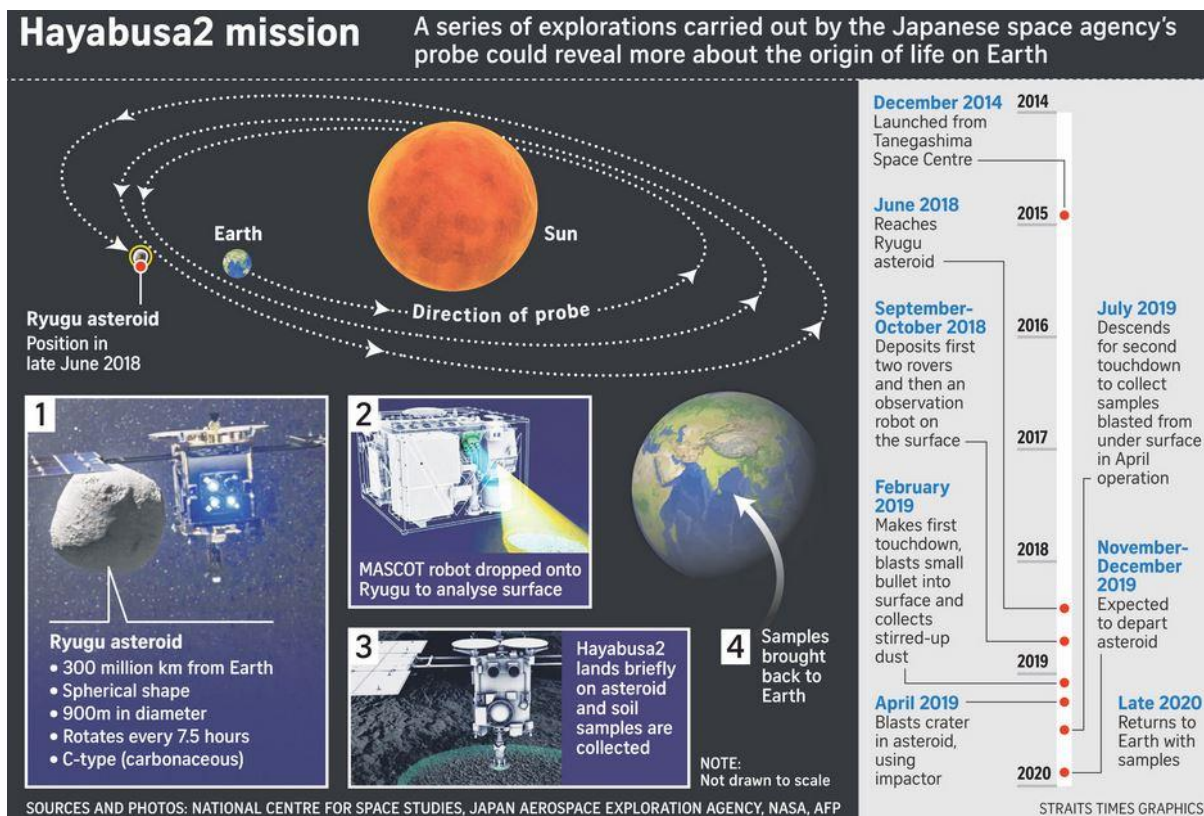
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Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Hayabusa2 Probe

Mains level : Not Much



A Japanese spacecraft is nearing Earth after a yearlong journey home from a distant asteroid with soil samples. It is set to land in Australia.

Try this PYQ:

Which of the following is/are cited by the scientists as evidence/evidence for the continued expansion of the universe?

1. Detection of microwaves in space
2. Observation of redshift phenomenon in space
3. Movement of asteroids in space
4. Occurrence of supernova explosions in space

Codes:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1, 3 and 4
- (d) None of the above can be cited as evidence.

Hayabusa2 Probe

- Hayabusa2 is an asteroid sample-return mission operated by the Japanese space

agency, JAXA.

- It follows on from the Hayabusa mission which returned asteroid samples in 2010.
- It was launched on 3 December 2014 and rendezvoused with near-Earth asteroid 162173 Ryugu on 27 June 2018.
- It surveyed the asteroid for a year and a half and took samples. It left the asteroid in November 2019.
- It carries multiple science payloads for remote sensing, sampling, and four small rovers that investigated the asteroid surface to inform the environmental and geological context of the samples collected.

Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP)

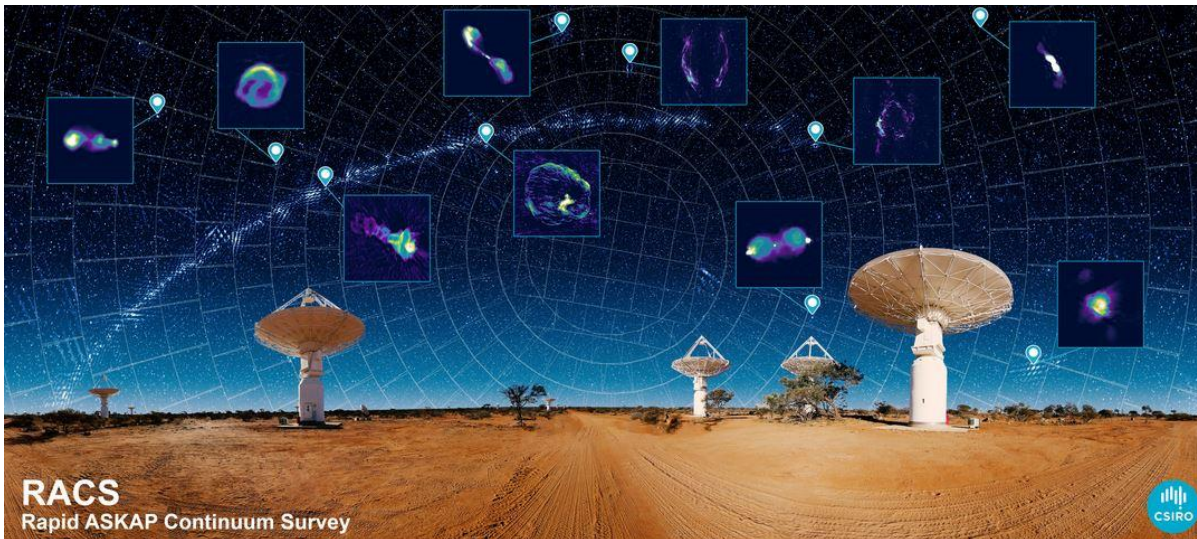
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Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : ASKAP telescope

Mains level : Not Much



A powerful new telescope ASKAP, in Australia has mapped vast areas of the universe in record-breaking time, revealing a million new galaxies and opening the way to new discoveries.

Note all important telescopes in news and their features. Some of them are – Thirty Meter Telescope, Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope, Spitzer, Chandra etc.

What is ASKAP?

- ASKAP is a telescope designed over a decade ago and located about 800 km north of Perth.
- It became fully operational in February 2019 and is currently conducting pilot surveys of the sky before it can begin large-scale projects from 2021 onward.
- ASKAP surveys are designed to map the structure and evolution of the Universe, which it does by observing galaxies and the hydrogen gas that they contain.
- One of its most important features is its wide field of view, because of which it has been able to take panoramic pictures of the sky in great detail.
- The telescope uses novel technology developed by CSIRO- the Australian space agency, which is a kind of a “radio camera” to achieve high survey speeds and consists of 36 dish antennas, which are each 12m in diameter.
- The survey team has been able to observe over 83 per cent of the sky visible from ASKAP’s site in Western Australia.

Significance of the results

- The present Rapid ASKAP Continuum Survey (RACS) taken by the ASKAP telescope is like a “Google map” of the Universe.
- Mapping the Universe on such a scale enables astronomers to study the formation of stars and how galaxies and their supermassive black holes evolve and interact with each other.
- Significantly, the images the telescope has taken are on average deeper and have better spatial resolution compared to those taken during other surveys of the sky.
- The aim of the RACS survey is to generate images that will aid future surveys undertaken using the telescope.

Arecibo Radio Telescope

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Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Arecibo Radio Telescope

Mains level : Not Much



A massive radio telescope at Puerto Rico's Arecibo Observatory — one of the world's largest — collapsed on after sustaining severe damage, following 57 years of astronomical discoveries.

Try this PYQ:

Which of the following is/are cited by the scientists as evidence/evidence for the continued expansion of the universe?

1. Detection of microwaves in space
2. Observation of redshift phenomenon in space
3. Movement of asteroids in space
4. Occurrence of supernova explosions in space

Codes:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1, 3 and 4
- (d) None of the above can be cited as evidence.

Arecibo Telescope

- The Arecibo Observatory, also known as the National Astronomy and Ionosphere

Center (NAIC), was an observatory in Arecibo, Puerto Rico owned by the US National Science Foundation (NSF).

- It was the world's largest single-aperture telescope for 53 years, surpassed in July 2016 by the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Telescope (FAST) in China.
- The second-largest single-dish radio telescope in the world, it had withstood many hurricanes and earthquakes since it was first built in 1963.

Its contributions

- Being the most powerful radar, scientists employed Arecibo to observe planets, asteroids and the ionosphere.
- It made several discoveries over the decades, including finding prebiotic molecules in distant galaxies, the first exoplanets, and the first millisecond pulsar.
- In 1967, Arecibo was able to discover that the planet Mercury rotates in 59 days and not 88 days as had been originally thought.
- In the following decades, it also served as a hub in the search for extraterrestrial life, and would look for radio signals from alien civilizations.
- In 1993, scientists Russell Hulse and Joseph Taylor were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for their work on the observatory in monitoring a binary pulsar.
- It provided a strict test of Einstein's Theory of General Relativity and the first evidence for the existence of gravitational waves.

Surveyor-2 Spacecraft

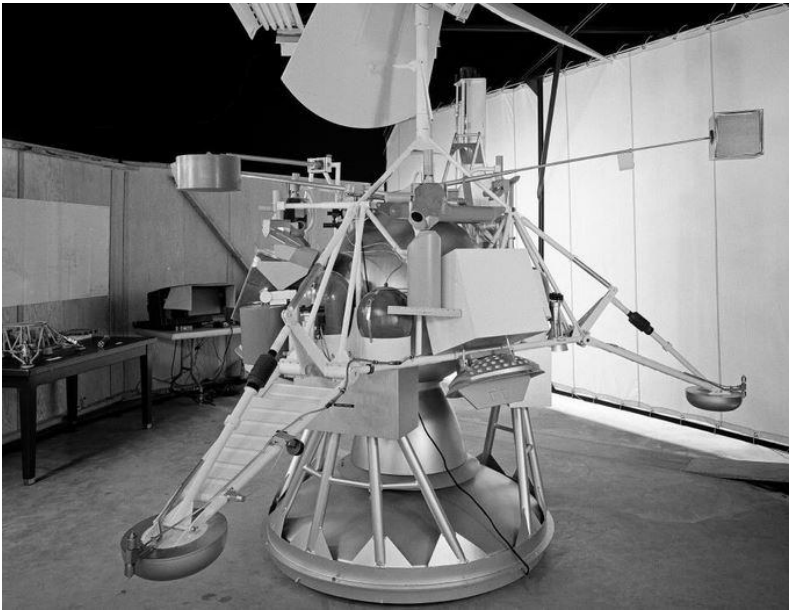
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Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Surveyor-2

Mains level : Not Much



NASA has confirmed that the Near-Earth Object called 2020 SO is the rocket booster that helped lift the space agency's Surveyor spacecraft toward the Moon in 1966.

Try this PYQ:

Consider the following phenomena:

1. Size of the sun at dusk
2. Colour of the sun at dawn
3. Moon being visible at dawn
4. Twinkle of stars in the sky
5. Polestar being visible in the sky

Which of the above are optical illusions?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (b) 3, 4 and 5
- (c) 1, 2 and 4
- (d) 2, 3 and 5

What is Surveyor-2?

- The Surveyor-2 spacecraft was supposed to make a soft landing on the Moon's surface in September 1966, during which time one of the three thrusters failed to ignite.
- As a result of this the spacecraft started spinning and crashed on the surface.
- The aim of the mission was to reconnoiter the lunar surface ahead of the Apollo missions that led to the first lunar landing in 1969.

- While the spacecraft crashed into the Moon's surface, the rocket booster disappeared into an unknown orbit around the Sun.

How was the object determined to be the rocket booster?

- Astronomers track asteroids using telescope to determine if there are potentially hazardous asteroids that pose a threat to the planet.
- Therefore, it is also important for them to be able to distinguish between natural and artificial objects that orbit around the Sun.
- The rocket booster has come "somewhat close" to the Earth in the past few decades.
- One approach to the Earth in late 1966 was so close that the object was thought to have originated from Earth.
- In September, the NASA-funded telescope detected it.

HL-2M Tokamak: The Artificial Sun of China

Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : HL-2M Tokamak, Nuclear fusion and fission

Mains level : Artificial Sun



China successfully powered up its "artificial sun" nuclear fusion reactor for the first time marking a

great advance in the country's nuclear power research capabilities.

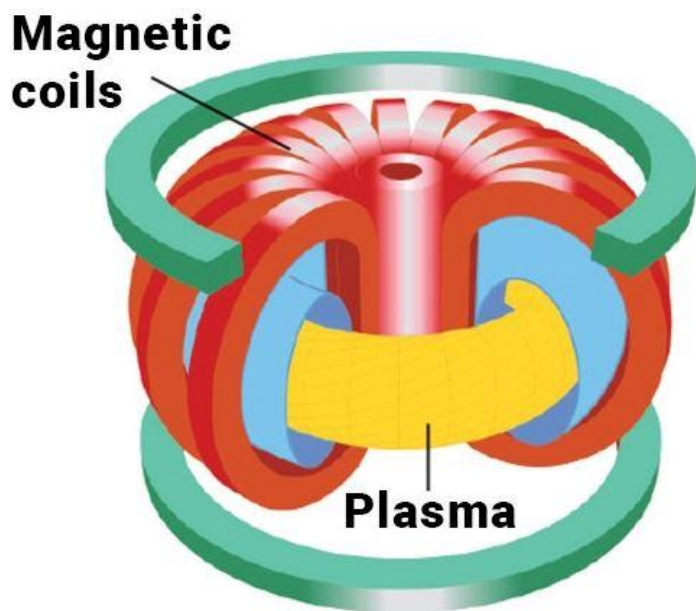
Scratch your school basics to answer this PYQ:

Q. The known forces of nature can be divided into four classes, viz, gravity, electromagnetism, weak nuclear force and strong nuclear force.

With reference to them, which one of the following statements is not correct? (CSP 2012)

- (a) Gravity is the strongest of the four
- (b) Electromagnetism act only on particles with an electric charge
- (c) Weak nuclear force causes radioactivity
- (d) Strong nuclear force holds protons and neutrons inside the nuclear of an atom.

HL-2M Tokamak



- The HL-2M Tokamak reactor is China's largest and most advanced nuclear fusion experimental research device.
- The mission is named Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST).
- Located in Sichuan province and completed late last year, the reactor is often called an "artificial sun" on account of the enormous heat and power it produces.
- It uses a powerful magnetic field to fuse hot plasma and can reach temperatures of over 150 million degrees Celsius- approximately ten times hotter than the core of the sun.
- Scientists hope that the device can potentially unlock a powerful clean energy source.

Back2Basics: Nuclear Fusion

- Nuclear fusion is a reaction in which two or more atomic nuclei are combined to form one or more different atomic nuclei and subatomic particles (neutrons or protons).

- Fusion is the process by which the sun and other stars generate light and heat. It is a nuclear process, where energy is produced by smashing together light atoms.
- It is the opposite reaction of fission, where heavy elements like Uranium and Thorium are split apart.

Nuclear Fusion Reaction

- For a nuclear fusion reaction to occur, it is necessary to bring two nuclei so close that nuclear forces become active and glue the nuclei together.
- Nuclear forces are small-distance forces and have to act against the electrostatic forces where positively charged nuclei repel each other.
- This is the reason nuclear fusion reactions occur mostly in high density, high-temperature environment (millions of degree Celsius) which is practically very difficult to achieve under laboratory conditions.

What is Havana Syndrome?

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Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Havana syndrome

Mains level : Threats of microwave warfare



Nearly four years after a mysterious neurological illness started to affect American diplomats in Cuba, China, and other countries, a report has found “directed” microwave radiation to be its “plausible” cause.

Q. Microwave warfare is the new nuke. Discuss.**The 'Havana syndrome'**

- In late 2016, US diplomats in Havana reported feeling ill after hearing strange sounds and experiencing odd physical sensations in their hotel rooms or homes.
- The symptoms included nausea, severe headaches, fatigue, dizziness, sleep problems, and hearing loss, which have since come to be known as “Havana Syndrome”.
- Cuba had denied any knowledge of the illnesses even though the US had accused it of carrying out “sonic attacks”, leading to an increase in tensions.

Possible factor: Microwave Weapons

- “Microwave weapons” are supposed to be a type of direct energy weapons, which aim highly focused energy in the form of sonic, laser, or microwaves, at a target.
- People exposed to high-intensity microwave pulses have reported a clicking or buzzing sound as if seeming to be coming from within your head.
- It can have both acute and long-term effects — without leaving signs of physical damage.
- These weapons are considered to be the cause of the “syndrome” whose symptoms include nausea, dizziness, fatigue, and cognitive difficulties.

How did researchers deduce that?

- The researchers have examined four possibilities to explain the symptoms — infection, chemicals, psychological factors and microwave energy.
- The experts examined the symptoms of about 40 government employees.
- The report concluded that directed pulsed RF (radio frequency) energy appears to be the most plausible mechanism in explaining these cases among those that the committee considered.

What is Molnupiravir?

Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Molnupiravir

Mains level : Vaccine for covid

A new drug called Molnupiravir has been shown to stop the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in 24 hours.

Molnupiravir

- Molnupiravir is an experimental antiviral drug which is orally active and was developed for the treatment of influenza.
- It is a drug of the synthetic nucleoside derivative N4-hydroxycytidine, and exerts its antiviral action through introduction of copying errors during viral RNA replication.
- Molnupiravir is being developed by the biotechnology firm Ridgeback Biotherapeutics in collaboration with pharmaceutical firm Merck.
- The research team repurposed MK-4482/EIDD-2801 against SARS-CoV-2 and tested it on ferrets.
- This is the first demonstration of an orally available drug to rapidly block SARS-CoV-2 transmission and it can be a game-changer.

Narrow Band-Internet of Things (NB-IoT)

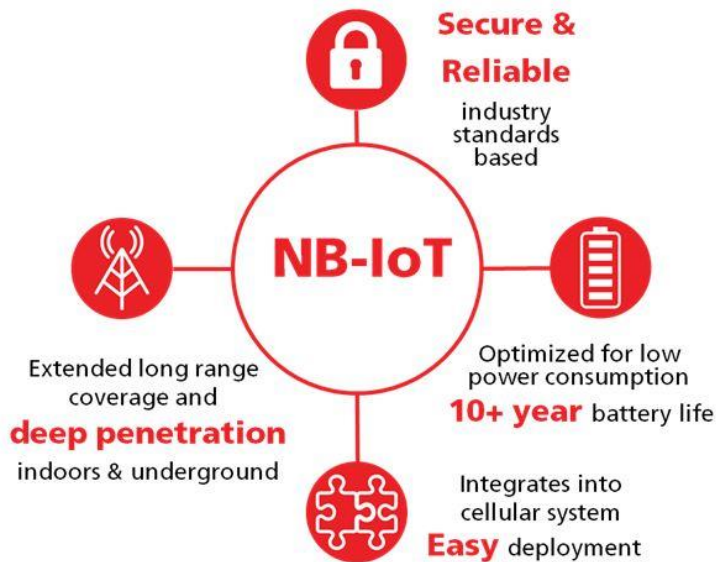
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Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : IoT , AI

Mains level : Internet based applications



In a first, BSNL launches world's largest NB-IoT to provide connectivity for millions of unconnected machines, sensors and industrial IoT devices across the country.

What is NB-IoT?

- NB-IoT is a Low Power Wide Area (LPWA) technology that works virtually anywhere.
- It will connect many more devices to the Internet of Things and make many new applications a reality.
- It is optimized for applications that need to communicate small amounts of data over long periods of time.
- Since it operates in licensed spectrum, it is secure and reliable providing guaranteed quality of service.
- It connects devices more simply and efficiently on already established mobile networks and handles small amounts of fairly infrequent 2-way data, securely and reliably.

And the best is, it provides-

- very low power consumption
- excellent extended range in buildings and underground
- easy deployment into the existing cellular network architecture
- network security & reliability
- lower component cost

Back2Basics: Internet of Things (IoT)

- The IoT describes the network of physical objects—"things"—that are embedded with sensors, software, and other technologies for the purpose of connecting and exchanging data with other devices and systems over the Internet.
- The definition of the IoT has evolved due to the convergence of multiple technologies, real-time analytics, AI, sensors, and embedded systems.
- In the consumer market, IoT technology is most synonymous with products pertaining to the concept of the "smart home", including devices and appliances.
- It supports one or more common ecosystems and can be controlled via devices associated with that ecosystem, such as smartphones and smart speakers e.g. Alexa.

Remember this PYQ?

When the alarm of your smartphone rings in the morning, you wake up and tap it to stop the alarm which causes your geyser to be switched on automatically. The smart mirror in your bathroom shows the day's weather and also indicates the level of water in your overhead tank. After you take some groceries from your refrigerator for making breakfast, it recognises the shortage of stock in it and places an order for the supply of fresh grocery items. When You step out of your house and lock the door, all lights, fans, geysers and AC machines get switched off automatically. On your way to office, your car warns you about traffic congestion ahead and suggests an alternative route, and if you are late for a meeting, it sends a message to your office accordingly.

In the context of emerging communication technologies, which one of the following terms best applies to the above scenario?

- (a) Border Gateway Protocol
- (b) Internet of Things
- (c) Internet Protocol
- (d) Virtual Private Network

Plasmodium Ovale and Other types of Malaria

Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Plasmodium parasite

Mains level : Malaria in India

A not very common type of malaria, Plasmodium Ovale, has been identified in a jawan in Kerala.

Try this PYQ:

Q. Widespread resistance of malarial parasite to drugs like chloroquine has prompted attempts to develop a malarial vaccine to combat malaria.

Why is it difficult to develop an effective malaria vaccine?

- (a) Malaria is caused by several species of Plasmodium*
- (b) Man does not develop immunity to malaria during natural infection*
- (c) Vaccines can be developed only against bacteria*
- (d) Man is only an intermediate host and not the definitive host*

What is Malaria?

- Malaria is caused by the bite of the female Anopheles mosquito if the mosquito itself is infected with a malarial parasite.
- There are five kinds of malarial parasites — Plasmodium falciparum, Plasmodium vivax (the commonest ones), Plasmodium malariae, Plasmodium ovale and Plasmodium knowlesi.
- Therefore, to say that someone has contracted the Plasmodium ovale type of malaria means that the person has been infected by that particular parasite.
- Malaria is treated with prescription drugs to kill the parasite. Chloroquine is the preferred treatment for any parasite that is sensitive to the drug.

Plasmodium Ovale

- P ovale rarely causes severe illness and there is no need for panic.
- Symptoms include fever for 48 hours, headache and nausea, and the treatment modality is the same as it is for a person infected with P vivax.
- P ovale is no more dangerous than getting a viral infection.
- It is termed ovale as about 20% of the parasitised cells are oval in shape.

Burden of Malaria in India

- In 2018, the National Vector-borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP) estimated that approximately 5 lakh people suffered from malaria.
- 63% of the cases were of Plasmodium falciparum.
- The recent World Malaria Report 2020 said cases in India dropped from about 20 million in 2000 to about 5.6 million in 2019.

How epigenetics alters inherited genetics' message

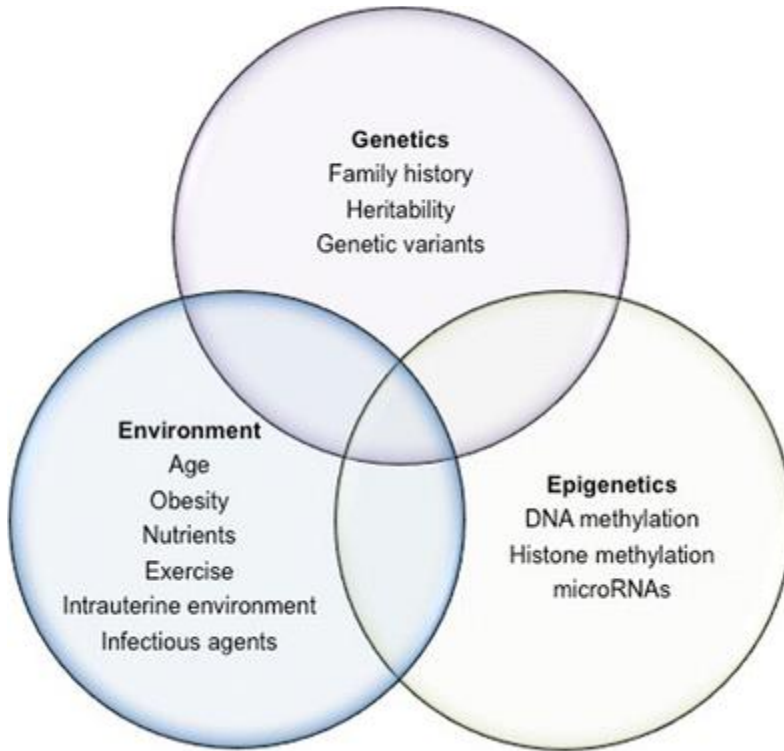
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Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Epigenetics

Mains level : Genetics and human health



Researchers have found the cause of vision impairment due to ageing as the accumulation of “epigenetic noise” that disrupts gene expression patterns leading to changes in inherent DNA function

Genetics is an all-time favourite of UPSC. Every year you can find a question in prelims. Try this one from CSP 2020:

Q.Consider the following statements:

1. Genetic changes can be introduced in the cells that produce eggs or sperms of a prospective parent
2. A person's genome can be edited before birth at the early embryonic stage.
3. Human-induced pluripotent stem cells can be injected into the embryo of a pig.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

What is Epigenetics?

- Epigenetics is the study of how your behaviours and environment can cause changes that affect the

way your genes work.

- Unlike genetic changes, epigenetic changes are reversible and do not change your DNA sequence, but they can change how your body reads a DNA sequence.
- Environmental stimuli can cause genes to be turned off or turned on.
- This determines a cell's specialization (e.g., skin cell, blood cell, hair cell, liver cells, etc.) as a fetus develops into a baby through gene expression (active) or silencing (dormant); and nurture.
- This normal epigenetic control on our genes can get altered during normal ageing, stress and disease conditions.

Cellular regulators

- The functioning of cells and tissues in our body are controlled by thousands of proteins that regulate various cellular functions.
- These proteins are in turn encoded by the respective genes which are a part of our genome or the cellular DNA.
- Any minor or major changes to our inherited DNA (addition or mutation) can result in altered protein production, which in turn leads to defective cellular functions.
- This forms the basis for many heritable genetic disorders affecting mankind.

A trigger for various inactivities

- Apart from DNA or protein sequence level alterations, there are other biochemical changes that influence and dictate if a gene should be active or inactive in a given cell type.
- For example, the gene that encodes for the insulin protein is present in the exact form, in every cell of the body.
- However, it is allowed to express only in the insulin-secreting beta cells of the pancreas and is kept inactive in the rest of the cells of the body.
- This phenomenon is tightly regulated by a combination of regulatory proteins that changes the expressivity of the gene.
- Also, the histone proteins that bind the DNA and help to compactly wrap it inside the chromosomes can undergo chemical modifications such as methylations and acetylations on different lysine amino acids within the protein.
- These modifications both on the DNA and its associated proteins alter the chromosomal conformations and regulate gene expression.
- These changes can either unwind the DNA and allow gene expression or can compact the DNA and render the genes in the region inactive or silent.

Epigenetics and the human eye

- The human (and mammalian) eye is a remarkable organ in the course of evolution which has allowed us to “see” the external world clearly and in colour.
- Earlier forms, such as microbes and plants, reacted to light in other ways (for absorption and use, such as photosynthesis).
- The front part of the human eye (cornea, lens and the vitreous humour gel) is transparent, colourless and helps focus the incoming light into the retina, helping us see colour.
- It is the retina that sends the message to the brain.
- Its main component, called the retinal ganglion cells (RGC) are the ones that help in this process of sending the message in the form of electrical signals, called neurons or nerve cells.
- Thus, RGCs are the ones that convert optics into electronics.

Galaxy NGC 6240

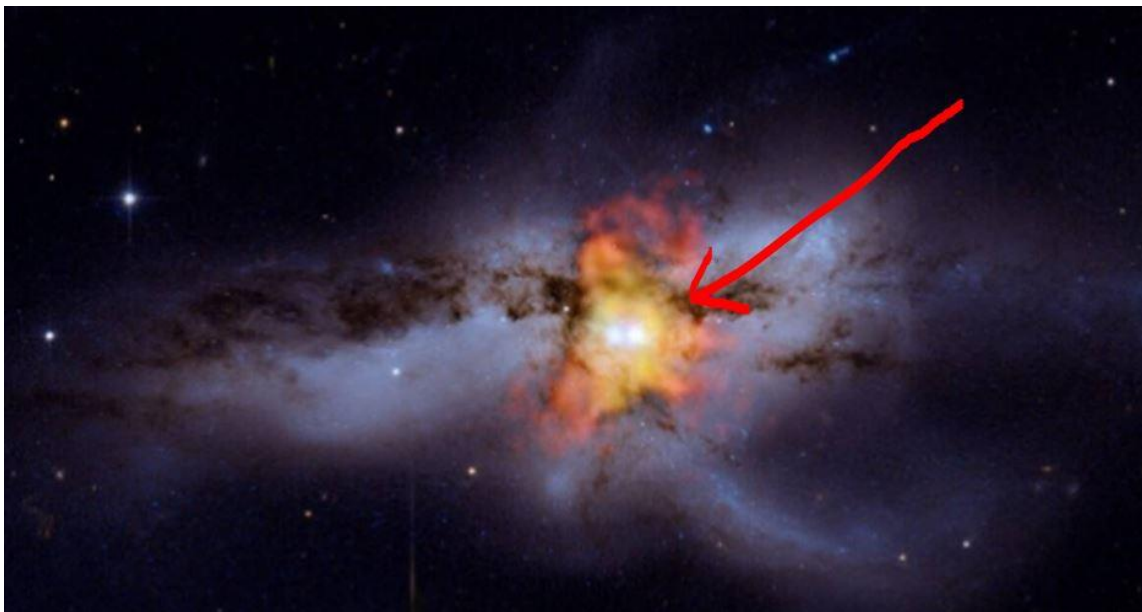
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Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Merger of Black Holes

Mains level : Black holes and gravitation waves



NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory shared the images of Galaxy NGC 6240 that contains two supermassive Black Holes in the process of merging.

From astronomers to general space enthusiasts, black holes are a topic of interest for many. If you're someone who spends a lot of their time researching facts about this region of space-time or watching videos on the same, then you must check out this news.

Galaxy NGC 6240

- The black holes, located in Galaxy NGC 6240 are 3,000 light-years apart and they will drift together to form a larger black hole millions of years from now.
- As per a blog post by the observatory, the merging process began some 30 million years ago
- The pairs of massive black holes in the process of merging are expected to be the most powerful sources of gravitational waves in the Universe.
- Seen as the bright 'dots' near the centre of this image, the black holes are just 3,000 light-years apart.

About Chandra X-ray Observatory

- It is a telescope specially designed to detect X-ray emissions from very hot regions of the universe such as exploded stars, clusters of galaxies, and matter around black holes.
- Orbiting at 139,000 km in space, the telescope was launched aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia during STS-93 by NASA in 1999.

Chang'e 5 returns to Earth carrying moon rocks

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Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Chang E probe

Mains level : Various lunar missions and their success



A Chinese lunar capsule has returned to Earth with the first fresh samples of rock and debris from the moon in more than 40 years.

Try this PYQ:

Q. What do you understand by the term Aitken basin:

- It is a desert in the southern Chile which is known to be the only location on earth where no rainfall takes place
- It is an impact crater on the far side of the Moon
- It is a Pacific coast basin, which is known to house large amounts of oil and gas
- It is a deep hyper saline anoxic basin where no aquatic animals are found

Chang'e-5 Probe

- The Chang'e-5 probe, named after the mythical Chinese moon goddess, aims to shovel up lunar rocks and soil to help scientists learn about the moon's origins, formation and volcanic activity on its surface.

- The goal of the mission is to land in the Mons Rumker region of the moon, where it will operate for one lunar day, which is two weeks long.
- It will collect 2 kg of surface material from a previously unexplored area known as Oceanus Procellarum — or “Ocean of Storms” — which consist of vast lava plain.
- The original mission, planned for 2017, was delayed due to an engine failure in China’s Long March 5 launch rocket.

A big achievement

- The successful mission was the latest breakthrough for China’s increasingly ambitious space programme that includes a robotic mission to Mars and plans for a permanent orbiting space station.
- This return marked China’s third successful lunar landing but the only one to lift off again from the moon.
- It also marked the first time scientists have obtained fresh samples of lunar rocks since the former Soviet Union’s Luna 24 robot probe in 1976.

Significance of the mission

- Rocks found on the Moon are older than any that have been found on Earth and therefore they are valuable in providing information about the Earth and the Moon’s shared history.
- Lunar samples can help to unravel some important questions in lunar science and astronomy, including the Moon’s age, its formation, the similarities and differences between the Earth and the Moon’s geologic features.
- For instance, the shape, size, arrangement and composition of individual grains and crystals in a rock can tell scientists about its history, while the radioactive clock can tell them the rock’s age.
- Further, tiny cracks in rocks can tell them about the radiation history of the Sun in the last 100,000 years.

CMS-01 Satellite launched by ISRO

| Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : CMS-01

Mains level : Not Much

ISRO'S PSLV-C50 LIFTS OFF WITH CMS-01 SATELLITE

PSLV-C50 successfully placed country's CMS-01 satellite into geosynchronous transfer orbit

- CMS-01 is India's 42nd communication satellite
- Will replace GSAT-12 satellite, launched in 2011
- Will provide telecom services in the Extended-C Band of the frequency spectrum
- Extended-C Band coverage will include Indian mainland, Andaman-Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands
- Mission life: 7 years

PSLV-C50

- **52nd** flight of PSLV
- **22nd** flight of PSLV 'XL' variant

77th launch vehicle mission from Sriharikota spaceport

Source: ISRO

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully placed into a transfer orbit India's 42nd communications satellite, CMS-01, carried onboard the PSLV-C50.

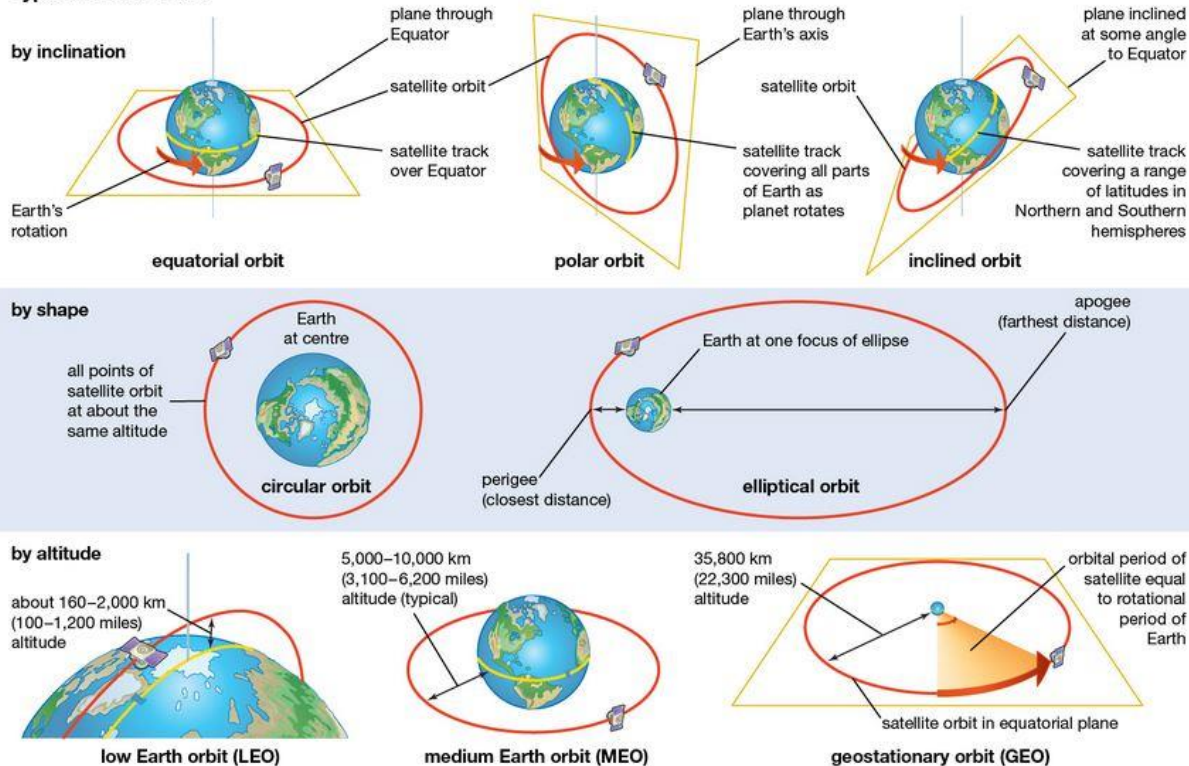
CMS-01

- It is a communications satellite envisaged for providing services in extended C Band of the frequency spectrum and its coverage will include the Indian mainland and the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands, the ISRO.
- The satellite is expected to have a life of over seven years.
- It was injected precisely into its pre-defined sub-geostationary transfer orbit (GTO).
- CMS-01 is considered to be a replacement of the aged satellite GSAT-12. It provides services like tele-education, tele-medicine, disaster management support

and Satellite Internet access.

What is GTO?

Types of Earth orbit



- A geosynchronous transfer orbit or geostationary transfer orbit (GTO) is a type of geocentric orbit.
- Satellites which are destined for geosynchronous (GSO) or geostationary orbit (GEO) are (almost) always put into a GTO as an intermediate step for reaching their final orbit.
- A GTO is highly elliptic.
- Its perigee (closest point to Earth) is typically as high as low Earth orbit (LEO), while its apogee (furthest point from Earth) is as high as geostationary (or equally, a geosynchronous) orbit.

Koothambalam of Guruvayur Temple

Mains Paper 1: Arts & Culture

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Koothambalam

Mains level : Keralan Architecture



The renovated Koothambalam of the Sreekrishna temple, Guruvayur, has been selected for the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for cultural heritage conservation.

Try this PYQ:

Q. Building 'Kalyana Mandapas' was a notable feature in the temple construction in the kingdom of-

- (a) Chalukya
- (b) Chandela
- (c) Rashtrakuta
- (d) Vijayanagara

What is Koothambalam?

- Koothambalam meaning temple theatre is a closed hall for staging Koothu, Nangiarkoothu and Koodiyattam, the ancient ritualistic art forms of Kerala.
- Koothambalams are said to be constructed according to the guidelines given in chapter 2 of Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata Muni.
- The stage within the hall is considered to be as sacred as the temple sanctum.

Its' construction

- It is constructed within the cloister of the Temple; more precisely within the

pancaprakaras of the temple. The prescribe location is between the prakaras of bahyahara and maryada.

- In Kerala tradition, it is considered as one among the panchaprasadas of a temple complex.
- Its dimension varies from temple to temple.
- A square platform with a separate pyramidal roof supported by pillars in the centre called natyamandapam is constructed as a separate structure within the large hall of Koothampalam.
- The floor of the hall is divided into two equal halves and one part is for performance (including stage, instruments, green room etc.) and another half for seating audience.

About Guruvayur Temple



- It is a Hindu temple dedicated to the Hindu lord, Guruvayurappan (a four-armed form of the Lord Vishnu), located in the town of Guruvayur in Kerala.
- It is one of the most important places of worship for Hindus in Kerala and is often referred to as BhulokaVaikunta (Holy Abode of Vishnu on Earth).

Christmas-Star Conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter

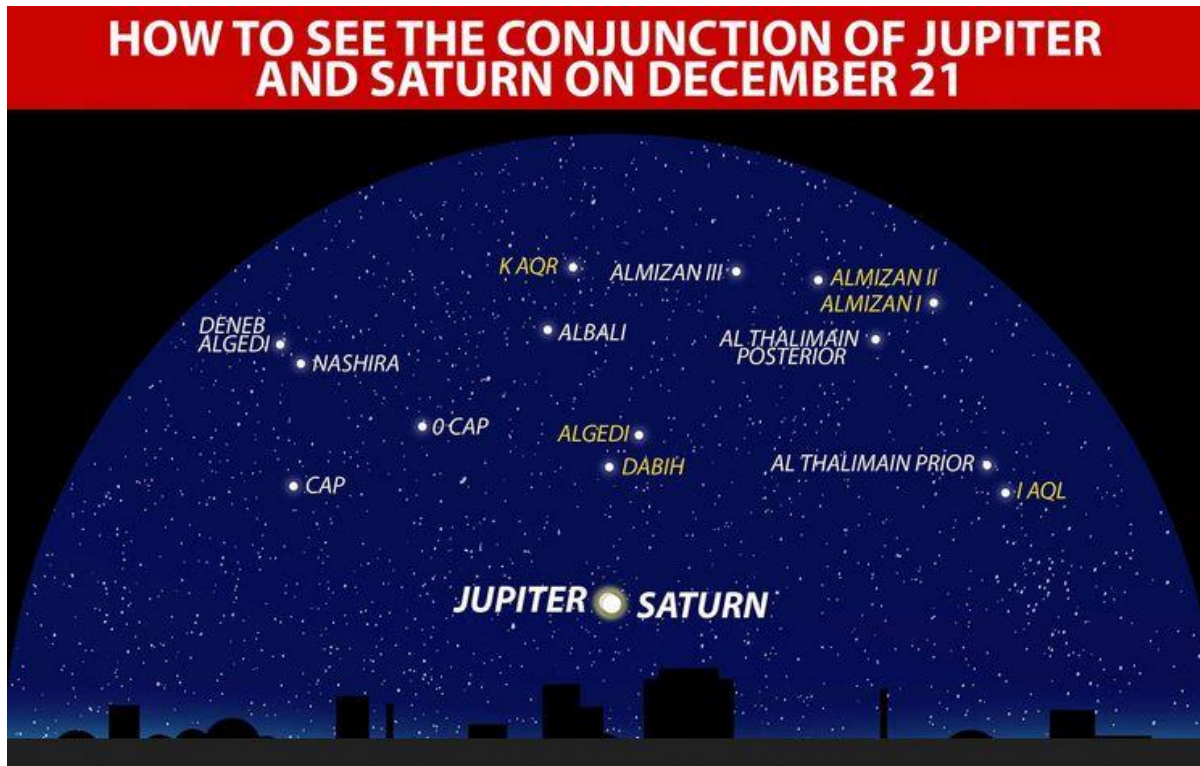
Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Conjunction in space-phenomena

Mains level : Not Much



After nearly 400 years, Saturn and Jupiter – the two largest planets in our solar system – will be brought closest in the night sky by an astronomical event called the “great conjunction” and popularly referred to as the “Christmas Star”.

Try this PYQ:

What is a coma, in the context of Astronomy?

- (a) Bright half of material on the comet
- (b) Long tail of dust
- (c) Two asteroids orbiting each other
- (d) Two planets orbiting each other

What are the Conjunctions?

- A conjunction is not unique to Saturn and Jupiter however, it is the name given to any event where planets or asteroids appear to be very close together in the sky when viewed from the Earth.
- In June 2005 for instance, as a result of **the “spectacular” conjunction**, Mercury, Venus and Saturn appeared so close together in the sky that the patch of sky where the three planets were could be covered by a thumb.
- Astronomers use the word “great” for the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn because of the **planets’ sizes**.

The “Great Conjunction”

- It happens once in about 20 years because of the time each of the planets takes to orbit around the Sun.
- Jupiter takes roughly 12 years to complete one lap around the Sun and Saturn takes 30 years.
- This is because Saturn has a larger orbit and moves more slowly because it is not as strongly influenced by the Sun's gravitational force as planets that are closer to the Sun.
- As the two planets move along their orbits, every two decades, Jupiter catches up with Saturn resulting in what astronomers call the great conjunction.

A 'rare alignment'

- Jupiter and Saturn are bright planets and can be typically seen with the naked eye even from cities.
- But during conjunction, they appear to be close to each other, which is what makes the event noteworthy.
- The event will coincide with the winter solstice (shortest day of the year in terms of hours of sunlight received) in the Northern Hemisphere and summer solstice in the Southern Hemisphere.
- This year, however, the event is rare because the planets will come the closest to each other in nearly four centuries; in what astronomer Henry Throop described is a result of a "rare alignment" of the planets.

Festivals in news: Chillai Kalan

Mains Paper 1: Arts & Culture

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Chillai Kalan

Mains level : Not Much

People in the Kashmir valley are finding unique ways to celebrate the start of 'Chillai Kalan', a local term for the 40-day period of harshest winter that begins annually from December 21.

Chillai Kalan

- Chillai Kalan is the coldest 40-day period of harsh winter of winter in the Jammu and Kashmir region.
- It is traditionally defined as a seasonal period of harsh winter accompanied by a change in increase in both frequency and quantity of precipitation usually snow.
- It begins from December 21 and ends on January 31 next year.
- It is followed by a 20-day long Chillai-Khurd (small cold) that occurs between January 31 and February 19 and a 10-day long Chillai-Bachha (baby cold).
- According to Persian tradition, the night of 21st December is celebrated as Shab-e Yalda-"Night of Birth", or Shab-e Chelleh "Night of Forty".

Its' celebration

- In the Persian tradition, the night of December 21, the longest of the year, is celebrated as Shab-e-Yalda (night of birth) or Shab-e-Chelleh.
- Dozens of netizens from Kashmir named it the 'Pheran Day', after the long woollen gown worn during

the winters in Kashmir.

- Use of a traditional firing pot called Kangri increases.
- Tap water pipelines partially freeze during this period. The Dal Lake also freezes.
- The famous tourist resort of Gulmarg receives heavy snow which attracts skier's from every part of the world.

What are Fastags?

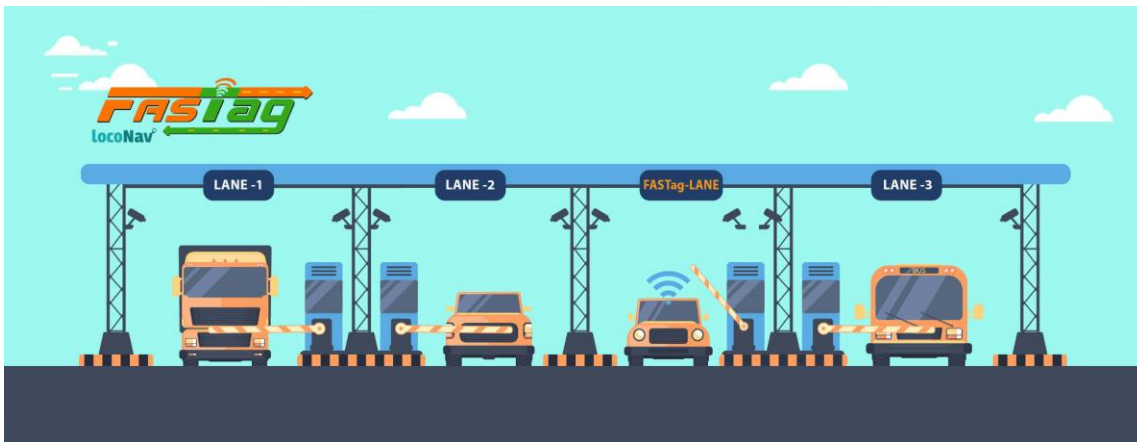
Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Fastag

Mains level : RFID technology



From January 1, all lanes of National Highways will accept only electronic payments through FASTag.

Fastags work on a unique technology called RFID (Radio Frequency Identification). This has gone unnoticed in several competitive exams. Hence it is still relevant for the aspirants.

Also read

Fastags

- As per Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, since 1st December 2017, the FASTag had been made mandatory for all registered new four-wheelers and is being supplied by the Vehicle Manufacturer or their dealers.

- It has been mandated that the renewal of fitness certificate will be done only after the fitment of FASTag.
- For National Permit Vehicles, the fitment of FASTag was mandated since 1st October 2019.

What is 'FASTag'?



- FASTags are stickers that are affixed to the windscreen of vehicles and use Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to enable digital, contactless payment of tolls without having to stop at toll gates.
- The tags are linked to bank accounts and other payment methods.
- As a car crosses a toll plaza, the amount is automatically deducted, and a notification is sent to the registered mobile phone number.

How does it work?

- The device employs Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for payments directly from the prepaid or savings account linked to it.
- It is affixed on the windscreen, so the vehicle can drive through plazas without stopping.
- RFID technology is similar to that used in transport access-control systems, like Metro smart card.
- If the tag is linked to a prepaid account like a wallet or a debit/credit card, then owners need to recharge/top up the tag.
- If it is linked to a savings account, then money will get deducted automatically after the balance goes below a pre-defined threshold.
- Once a vehicle crosses the toll, the owner will get an SMS alert on the deduction. In that, it is like a prepaid e-wallet.

How dangerous is Ammonia?

Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Ammonia compounds and its uses

Mains level : Not Much

Two persons died and several took ill in a major ammonia gas leakage at a fertilizers unit at Prayagraj.

Try this PYQ:

Q. With reference to chemical fertilizers in India, consider the following statements:

1. *At present, the retail price of chemical fertilizers is market-driven and not administered by the Government.*
2. *Ammonia, which is an input of urea, is produced from natural gas.*
3. *Sulphur, which is a raw material for phosphoric acid fertilizer, is a by-product of all oil refineries.*

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 2 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ammonia

- Ammonia is critical in the manufacturing of fertilizers and is one of the largest-volume synthetic chemicals produced in the world.
- More than 80 per cent of ammonia made is consumed in the manufacturing of fertilizer, and most of the remainder goes into the production of formaldehyde.
- A tri-hydride of nitrogen (NH_3), ammonia is a building block for ammonium nitrate (NH_4NO_3) that is used in agriculture as a high-nitrogen fertilizer.

Why is it harmful?

- According to experts in Chemistry, ammonia is stored for industrial use in liquid form under high pressure or in gaseous form at low temperature.
- In such cases, the cause of death is always suffocation as in the case of Prayagraj incident, the victims must have been very close to the point of a gas leak.

Effects on the human body

- Ammonia, even in moderate concentration, can cause irritation to eyes, skin, nose and throat.
- It interacts immediately upon contact with moisture present in the skin, eyes, oral cavity, and respiratory tract to form ammonium hydroxide.
- It is very caustic and disrupts the cell membrane lipids, ultimately leading to cellular destruction.
- As cell proteins break down, water is extracted, resulting in an inflammatory response that causes further damage.

Secretion in humans

- Ammonia, which is highly soluble in water, is found in soil, air, and water; it is naturally present in the body.
- It is secreted by the kidneys to neutralize excess acid.
- However, it is highly diluted when in the environment and does not affect the human body to a noticeable level.

IISER scientists identify the gene that greens plants

Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : BBX11 gene

Mains level : Genetics and its applications

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) have identified a gene that facilitates in the greening of plants.

It would be no surprise to expect a core Biology question in the coming years, if we look at this PYQ:

Q. Which of the following statements are correct regarding the general difference between plant cells and animal cells? (CSP 2020)

1. Plant cells have cellulose cell walls whilst animal cells do not.
2. Plant cells do not have plasma membrane unlike animals cells which do
3. Mature plant cell has one large vacuole whilst animal cell has many small vacuoles

Select the correct answer using the given code below-

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

BBX11

- The synthesis of chlorophyll in plants is a lengthy, multi-step process.
- When a seedling emerges from under the soil it must quickly synthesize chlorophyll to start supporting its own growth.
- In order to facilitate the quick synthesis of chlorophyll, plants make a precursor of chlorophyll called 'protophytyllide' in the dark, which glows red when blue light is shone on the plant.
- As soon as the plant comes out into the light from under the soil, light-dependent enzymes convert protophytyllide to chlorophyll.

- The two proteins oppositely regulate the 'BBX11' gene to maintain optimum levels of 'BBX11'.

How does it work?

- It plays a crucial role in regulating the levels of protochlorophyllide — an intermediate in the biosynthesis of the green pigment chlorophyll.
- The amount of protochlorophyllide synthesized needed to be proportional to the number of enzymes available to convert them to chlorophyll.
- If there is an excess of free protochlorophyllide, then exposure to light converts it into molecules that cause 'photobleaching'.
- Thus, it is very important to regulate the amount of protochlorophyllide synthesized by the plant and here comes the vital plant played by the 'BBX11' gene.
- If it is less, plants are unable to efficiently 'green' in order to harvest sunlight.

Benefits of the research

- The study could have tremendous implications in the agriculture sector in tropical countries like India and can help provide leads to optimize plant growth under stressful and rapidly changing climatic conditions.
- Due to the rapidly changing climatic conditions, farmers in several states in India, especially in Maharashtra, are suffering huge losses in crop yields.
- This often leads to severe distress among the farming community as indicated by the high number of farmer suicides in Maharashtra for the past several years.
- Severe drought, high temperature and high light are some of the major reasons for crop failure. Young seedlings emerging out of the soil are extremely sensitive to high irradiance of light.
- This study can provide leads to optimize plant growth under these stressful conditions.

Foreign architects of Indian cities

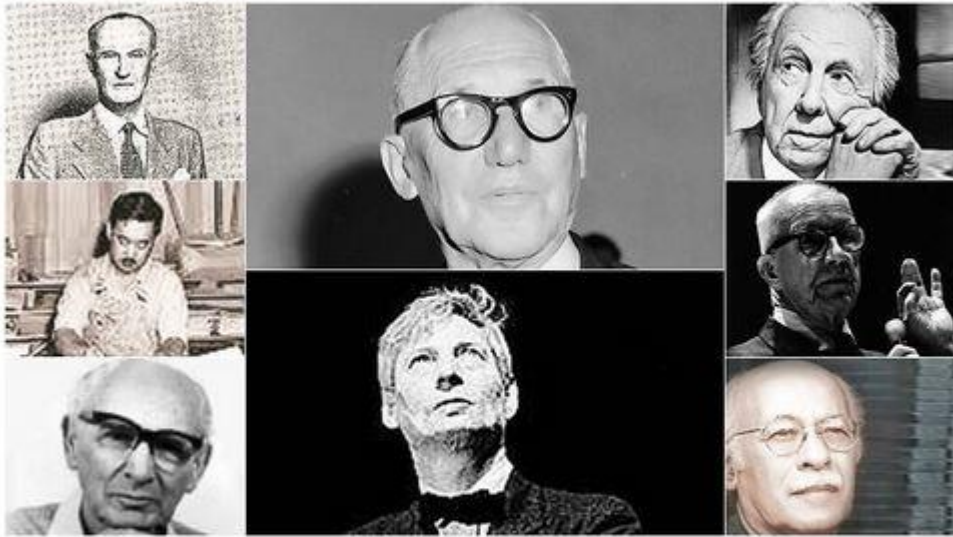
Mains Paper 1: Arts & Culture

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Indian architecture

Mains level : Indian architecture and foreign influence



Clockwise, from top left: Antonin Raymond, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Buckminster Fuller, Joseph Allen Stein, Louis Kahn, Otto Koenigsberger and George Nakashima.

A controversy has been playing out over the last several days over a decision by the IIM Ahmedabad to bring down 18 dormitories built by legendary American architect Louis Kahn on the old campus.

This newscard is full of facts. But one must note the features of present-day Indian Architecture and the western influence on it.

Kahn, in fact, is one among several foreign architects whose work defines several Indian cities. Take a glimpse of all important architects and their works:

Antonin Raymond & George Nakashima

- Golconde, one of India's first modernist buildings, was conceptualized in Puducherry by the founders of the experimental township of Auroville.
- Tokyo-based Czech architect Antonin Raymond was invited to design this space as a universal commune, and Japanese-American woodworker George Nakashima would complete it after Raymond left India.
- It is possibly India's first reinforced concrete buildings, built between 1937 and 1945.
- Its façade creates the impression that one could open or shut these concrete blinds, without compromising on privacy, while the ascetic interiors helped provide a meditative atmosphere.

Otto Koenigsberger

- Berlin-bred Koenigsberger was already working for the Maharaja of Mysore in the late 1930s when he was commissioned by Tata & Sons to develop the industrial township of Jamshedpur in the early 1940s.
- He would later design the masterplan for Bhubhaneswar (1948) and Faridabad (1949).
- Having seen children and women walk large distances to reach schools and workplaces, he planned for schools and bazaars in the city centre and for a network of neighbourhoods.
- His friends Albert Mayer and Mathew Nowicki would go on to design Chandigarh.
- However, much before Koenigsberger, there was the Scottish biologist and geographer Patrick Geddes, who wrote town planning reports, from 1915 to 1919, for 18 Indian cities, including Bombay and Indore.

Frank Lloyd Wright

- Though the legendary American architect never built a structure in India, his influence was unmistakable.
- Two of his students, Gautam and Gira Sarabhai, founders of the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, requested him to design the administration building for Sarabhai Calico Mills in 1946.
- It would possibly have been the city's first high-rise with terraces and a podium.
- Padma Vibhushan Charles Correa, one of India's finest architects and urban planners, was hugely influenced by Wright.

Le Corbusier

- Before Swiss-French painter-writer-architect Corbusier came on the scene in Chandigarh, there was Polish architect Mathew Nowicki, an admirer of Frank Lloyd Wright and American developer Albert Mayer.
- Nowicki's death in a plane crash ended the commission, and Corbusier came on board.
- With English architect Maxwell Fry and his wife Jane Drew, Corbusier with his cousin Pierre Jeanneret would design many of Chandigarh's civic buildings, from courts to housing.
- Corbusier's modernist approach, without decoration, gave India its brutalist, bare concrete buildings.
- He won favour with the Sarabhai's of Ahmedabad and built the Sarabhai House, Shodhan House, Mill Owner's Association Building and Sankar Kendra. He is often called the "father of modern Indian architecture".

Joseph Allen Stein

- He was invited by Vijayalakshmi Pandit in 1952 to come to India and establish the

Department of Architecture and Planning at the West Bengal Engineering College.

- Though he also practised briefly in Orissa and West Bengal, it's in New Delhi where Stein left the deepest imprint.
- From the Triveni Kala Sangam, the High Commissioner's Residence and Chancery for Australia, where his polygon-shaped masonry with local stone made its first appearance to 'Steinabad'.

Louis Kahn

- The importance of being Kahn is never more real than now, as the American architect's only project in India faces bulldozers.
- The design for IIM Ahmedabad (1962-1974) carried the essence of learning in the humility of its material, and the way spaces were managed.

'Digital Ocean': the Digital Platform for Ocean Data Management

Mains Paper 3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Digital Ocean platform

Mains level : India's deep ocean mission

The Ministry of Earth Sciences has inaugurated the web-based application "Digital Ocean" developed by INCOIS.

Digital Ocean

- Digital Ocean is a first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management.
- The platform will be promoted as a platform for capacity building on Ocean Data Management for all Indian Ocean Rim countries.
- It would help share ocean knowledge about the ocean with a wide range of users including research institutions, operational agencies, strategic users, the academic community, and maritime industry and policymakers.
- It also provides free access to information to the general public and the common man.
- It will play a central role in the sustainable management of our oceans and expanding 'Blue Economy' initiatives.

Its' features

- It includes a set of applications developed to organize and present heterogeneous oceanographic data by adopting rapid advancements in geospatial technology.
- It facilitates:
 1. Online interactive web-based environment for data integration,
 2. 3D and 4D (3D inspace with time animation) data visualization,
 3. Data analysis to assess the evolution of oceanographic features,
 4. Data fusion and multi-format download of disparate data from multiple sources viz., in-situ, remote sensing and model data, all of which is rendered on a georeferenced 3D Ocean

Security Issues

Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS)

Mains Paper 3: Various Security Forces, Agencies & Their Mandates

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : ATAGS

Mains level : India's capacity building for high mountain warfare

Firing on all cylinders



- Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) is a 155mm, 52 calibre gun, developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in a consortium model
- One prototype has been built in partnership with Tata Power (Strategic Engineering Division) and another with Bharat Forge
- Two guns from each company

are undergoing trials; two more guns to join trials later

- There is a sanction for production of 10 guns as part of the development process
- The gun currently weighs about 18 tonnes while the ideal weight is 14-15 tonnes

- The defence Ministry has approved purchase of 150 guns at an approximate cost of ₹3,365 crore
- The Army is in the process of finalising the Preliminary Specifications Qualitative Requirements (PSQR) which details the essential parameters, which should be ready by July 2019
- The gun is presently undergoing development trials. User assisted trials will begin from May-June 2019

KEY FEATURES

Electric drive
High mobility
Quick deployability
Auxiliary power mode
Advanced communication system
Automated command Control system
Six round magazine instead of a standard three round magazine

User trials of the indigenous Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will be held very soon.

Try this question for mains:

Q. Discuss why high-altitude warfare is challenging. Also, discuss India's preparedness for a long-term war.

ATAGS System

- The ATAGS is a 155-mm, 52-calibre artillery gun jointly developed by the DRDO in partnership with Bharat Forge of the Kalyani Group and the Tata Power SED.
- ATAGS has greater than 95% of indigenous content. It set a world record for the longest unassisted projectile range of 48 kilometres.

Its features

- The gun consists of a barrel, breech mechanism, muzzle brake and recoil mechanism to fire 155 mm calibre ammunition with a firing range of 48 km.
- It has an all-electric drive to ensure reliability and minimum maintenance over a long

period of time.

- It has advanced features like high mobility, quick deployability, auxiliary power mode, advanced communication system, automatic command and control system with night capability in direct fire mode.

What is Project 17A?

Mains Paper 3: Various Security Forces, Agencies & Their Mandates

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : Project 17A

Mains level : India's maritime capability



Himgiri, the first of the three stealth frigates being built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, under Project 17A for the Navy, was launched into the water.

Try this question:

Q“*To be secure on Land, we must be Supreme at Sea*”. In this context, discuss why India is primarily a Maritime Nation?

Project 17A

- The coveted ‘Project 17A’ was cleared by the govt back in 2015.
- It involves the building of seven stealth frigates at an estimated cost of Rs 50,000 crore.
- Of these seven, the contract for three frigates was awarded to GRSE while the contract for another four frigates was awarded to Government-owned Mazagon

Docks Limited (MDL) which is based in Mumbai.

- These frigates will come armed with advanced state-of-the-art sensors and boast of top-notch stealth features.
- They will represent the most advanced class of major surface warships for the Indian Navy in a decade, also featuring BrahMos supersonic surface-to-surface missiles.
- These will also have torpedoes and rockets to hit submarines and rapid-fire guns to destroy anti-ship missiles as well as a heavy main gun to engage ships and coastal target.

Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC)

Mains Paper 3: Various Security Forces, Agencies & Their Mandates

Note4Students

From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :

Prelims level : IMAC

Mains level : India's maritime security

India is looking at integrating more countries into coastal radar network IMAC.

What is IMAC?

In real time
The Navy's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram is the single-point centre linking all coastal radar chain networks along the 7,500-km Indian coastline and in some neighbouring countries

- The IFC tracks and monitors 75,000 - 1.5 lakh shipping vessels in real time round-the-clock
- The IFC actively interacts with the maritime community and has already built linkages with 18 countries and 15 multinational and maritime security centres
- The major centres with which regular exchange of maritime security information is being undertaken include Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Centre, Maritime Security Centre- Horn of Africa, Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery, Information Fusion Centre-Singapore, and International Maritime Bureau-Piracy Reporting Centre



- The Indian Navy's IMAC located in Gurugram which was set up after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks is the nodal agency for maritime data fusion.
- It functions under the National Maritime Domain Awareness (NMDA) Project.
- The NMDA project was launched in accordance with the vision of PM on SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

- The IMAC monitors movement of more than 120,000 ships a year passing through the Indian Ocean.
- The cargo carried by these ships accounts for 66 per cent of world crude oil, 50 per cent of container traffic and 33 per cent of bulk cargo.
- Thus, IMAC performs a very crucial role in collecting shipping information, analysing traffic patterns and sharing the inputs with the user agencies.

Mission SAGAR, unlike other missions, can create confusion with the name and its purpose. Make note of such special cases. UPSC can ask such questions as one liner MCQs.

Expanding IMAC

- It is meant to enable real-time monitoring of the high seas for threats as also expand India's assistance for capacity building to Indian Ocean littoral states.
- Efforts are in advanced stages to set up coastal radar stations in Maldives, Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- Mauritius, Seychelles and Sri Lanka have already been integrated into the country's coastal radar chain network.
- Similar plans are in the pipeline with Maldives and Myanmar and discussions are ongoing with Bangladesh and Thailand.

SECTION 3

Practice Questions with Answers

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1) Which of the following banks has signed an agreement With SIDBI to use the latter's asset restructuring module for MSME borrowers?

- A) ICICI
- B) SBI
- C) Indian
- D) Axis
- E) Bandhan

2) On which of the following dates is World AIDS day observed?

- A) December 2
- B) December 3
- C) December 4
- D) December 1
- E) December 5

3) S&P has retained India's GDP forecast at _____ per cent contraction in current fiscal Year.

- A) 7.5
- B) 7
- C) 8
- D) 8.5
- E) 9

4) Who among the following has been named as the Treasury Secretary by US President-elect Joe Biden?

- A) Ron Klain
- B) Neera Tanden
- C) Janet Yellen
- D) Ben Bernake
- E) Wally Adeyemo

5) Which of the following companies will apply for U.S. and European emergency authorization of its COVID-19 vaccine?

- A) Cipla
- B) Novartis
- C) Pfizer
- D) Moderna
- E) Roche

6) Mumbai-based fintech start-up Mahagram has decided to deploy _____ lakh wireless Bharat ATMs by March 2021.

- A) 11
- B) 12
- C) 13
- D) 14
- E) 15

7) Nagaland Statehood Day 2020 is observed on which of the following dates?

- A) December 2
- B) December 3
- C) December 4

D) December 1

December, 2020.

E) December 5

A) 61st

8) Footballer Papa Bouba Diop who passed away recently played for which country?

B) 62nd

A) Cote'D'Ivoire

C) 63rd

B) Ghana

D) 64th

C) Gambia

E) 65th

D) Mali

12) The Reserve Bank of India has decided to keep the benchmark interest rate unchanged at _____ per cent.

E) Senegal

A) 3

9) Who among the following participated in the Dev Deepawali Mahotsav in Varanasi?

B) 3.35

A) Anurag Thakur

C) 4.25

B) Ram Nath Kovind

D) 4

C) Narendra Modi

E) 4.35

D) Amit Shah

13) Phase 8 of the Vande Bharat Mission has been extended till which of the following dates?

E) Venkiah Naidu

A) June 30, 2021

10) The BSF is celebrating its _____ raising Day and has always lived up to its motto 'Duty for Life'.

B) March 31, 2021

A) 52nd

C) February 28, 2021

B) 53rd

D) January 1, 2021

C) 57th

E) December 31, 2020

D) 56th

14) Olympic Gold Medalist Rafer Johnson Passes who passed away recently belonged to which country?

E) 51st

A) Australia

11) The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) is celebrating its _____ Founding Day on 4th of

B) UK

C) US

D) France

E) Germany

15) Indian Navy Day is observed on which of the following dates?

A) December 2

B) December 3

C) December 5

D) December 4

E) December 6

16) Vocal for Local – Hunar Haat Invites for artisans and craftsmen will be organized from 18th to 27th of this month in which of the following cities?

A) Delhi

B) Lucknow

C) Surat

D) Pune

E) Chandigarh

17) Which edition of International Sand Art Festival has recently begun in Odisha's Puri?

A) 5th

B) 6th

C) 7th

D) 9th

E) 8th

18) RBI has directed which of the following banks to stop issuing new credit cards as well as halt the launch of new digital businesses?

A) Axis

B) BOI

C) HDFC

D) SBI

E) ICICI

19) Maharashtra's First Child Friendly Police Station has been opened up in which city?

A) Nagpur

B) Kolhapur

C) Solapur

D) Nashik

E) Pune

20) Who among the following will inaugurate & lay foundation stones of 15 National Highway projects of Nagaland?

A) Suresh Prabhu

B) Amit Shah

C) Nitin Gadkari

D) Venkiah Naidu

E) Narendra Modi

21) Which of the following institution has released the Urban Quality of Life Index?

A) IIT Delhi

B) IIT Madras

C) IIT Bombay

D) IIT Guwahati

E) IIT Roorkee

22) Who among the following has been appointed as CEO for WHO Foundation?

A) AmitAggrawal

B) Rajat Gupta

C) Surender Singh

D) Anil Soni

E) Sudhir Mishra

23) Narinder Singh Kapany who passed away at 94 was the father of _____.

A) Neuro linguistic programming

B) Robotics

C) HTML

D) DVD

E) Fiber optics

24) Who among the following has virtually inaugurated construction of the Agra Metro project in UP?

A) Prahlad Patel

B) Venkiah Naidu

C) NarendraModi

D) Amit Shah

E) Anurag Thakur

25) Which institution has won the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award 2020?

A) GAIL

B) ONGC

C) BHEL

D) ICAR

E) DRDO

26) Which institute has won the United Nations Investment Promotion Award for 2020?

A) ADB

B) Invest India

C) UNDP

D) IMF

E) World Bank

27) The _____ Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA) 2020 Conference has recently been Inaugurated In New Delhi.

A) 5th

B) 4th

C) 3rd

D) 1st

E) 2nd

28) The Quarterly Return filing & Monthly Payment Scheme has been Launched For GST Payers With Turnover Up To Rs _____ Crore.

A) 2

B) 3.5

C) 5

D) 4.5

E) 4

29) Which bank has launched the LenS-The Lending Solution to speed up and maintain accuracy in online loan processing and sanctioning of credit proposals?

A) Axis

B) HDFC

C) ICICI

D) PNB

E) SBI

30) PM Modi will share his thoughts in 'Mann Ki Baat' programme on which of the following date?

A) December 22

B) December 27

C) December 23

D) December 25

E) December 24

31) World Human Rights Day is observed on which date?

A) December 11

B) December 12

C) December 10

D) December 13

E) December 15

32) WEF 2021 will now be held in which country instead of Switzerland?

A) France

B) Germany

C) Thailand

D) Singapore

E) Vietnam

33) Who among the following cricketer has announced retirement from all forms of cricket?

A) Ishant Sharma

B) Yuvraj Singh

C) Harbhajan Singh

D) Ravindra Jadeja

E) Parthiv Patel

34) Government has announced _____ mobile app for COVID-19 vaccine delivery.

A) Protect-Covid

B) Covid-Pro

C) Go-Covid

D) CO-WIN

E) Cov-Vaccine

35) Who among the following will address the International Bharati Festival 2020 On December 11?

- A) NitinGadkari
- B) NarendraModi
- C) Prahlad Patel
- D) Anurag Thakur

E) Nirmala Sitharaman

36) Prime Minister Modi will lay the foundation stone of the new Parliament House building on which date?

- A) December 11
- B) December 12
- C) December 13
- D) December 10
- E) December 14

37) Agricultural scientist from which state has declined an award being presented to him by a Union Minister to express his solidarity with the farmers agitating against the Centre's farm laws?

- A) Bihar
- B) Rajasthan
- C) Punjab
- D) Haryana
- E) Chattisgarh

38) As per the New School Bag Policy 2020 Proposed By Union Education Ministry, the maximum weight of the school bags has been not more than _____ per cent of the student's weight.

- A) 14

- B) 12
- C) 8
- D) 5
- E) 10

39) Which of the following state has constructed the first eco-bridge for small animals?

- A) Tripura
- B) Haryana
- C) Uttarakhand
- D) Assam
- E) Manipur

40) The government of which state has launched scheme to take the unique culture of the Tharu tribes across the world?

- A) Chattisgarh
- B) Kerala
- C) Assam
- D) Uttar Pradesh
- E) Haryana

41) National Energy Conservation Day is observed on which of the following date?

- A) December 11
- B) December 12
- C) December 14
- D) December 13

E) December 15

42) NITI Aayog has released a white paper Vision _____ for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system into Ayushman Bharat.

A) 2037

B) 2040

C) 2030

D) 2035

E) 2027

43) Which organization is set to launch an international prize in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib?

A) World Bank

B) IMF

C) ILO

D) UNICEF

E) UNESCO

44) All the states except _____ have availed benefits of the newly announced scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure.

A) Karnataka

B) Kerala

C) Tamil Nadu

D) Haryana

E) Madhya Pradesh

45) Paolo Rossi who passed away recently was a

famous _____.

A) Producer

B) Director

C) Footballer

D) Cricketer

E) Writer

46) Which exchange has Launched an e-agricultural spot market platform?

A) MSE

B) OTCEI

C) NSE

D) BSE

E) Calcutta Stock Exchange

47) Which organization has launched the Hospital Management Information System?

A) Road Transport Organization

B) Indian Meteorological Department

C) Telecom Department

D) Indian Postal Service

E) Indian Railways

48) Who among the following has been named as the Social Entrepreneur of the year?

A) Sunil Mittal

B) Neena Gupta

C) Ashraf Patel

D) Rana Singh

E) Arvind Mishra

49) Joint Statement has been signed between India and which country on December 11, 2020?

A) Turkmenistan

B) Kazakhstan

C) Mongolia

D) Uzbekistan

E) Afghanistan

50) Who among the following was known as the First Man to Travel Faster Than Speed of Sound and has died at 97?

A) Pancho Barnes

B) Chuck Yeager

C) Bob Hoover

D) Victoria Scott D'Angelo

E) John Glenn

51) International Migrants Day is observed on which of the following date?

A) December 11

B) December 12

C) December 18

D) December 14

E) December 17

52) Which city will host the 2030 Asian Games?

A) Paris

B) Canberra

C) Jakarta

D) Doha

E) Oman

53) UN Arabic Language Day is observed on which of the following date?

A) December 12

B) December 13

C) December 15

D) December 17

E) December 18

54) Who among the following has Inaugurated the World's Largest Renewable Energy Park Opens in Kutch?

A) Venkiah Naidu

B) Prahlad Patel

C) Amit Shah

D) Narendra Modi

E) Prakash Javadekar

55) The Minorities Rights Day is observed in India every year on which date?

A) December 11

B) December 18

C) December 13

D) December 17

A) 5200

E) December 12

B) 5500

56) Cabinet has approved the assistance of Rs _____ crore for sugarcane farmers.

C) 6700

A) 1500

D) 6200

B) 2000

E) 6000

C) 3500

60) Which institution has decided to set up a dedicated control centre for Space Situational Awareness?

D) 3000

A) DRDO

E) 2500

B) ISRO

57) Which institution has launched a Recognition Scheme for Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies?

C) GRSE

A) ONGC

D) BEML

B) BHEL

E) BHEL

C) BEML

61) International Human Solidarity Day is observed on which of the following date?

D) QCI

A) December 11

E) ISRO

B) December 12

58) India and which country have decided to reopen the Chilahati-Haldibari rail link after nearly 55 years?

C) December 14

A) Myanmar

D) December 15

B) Bhutan

E) December 20

C) Nepal

62) PM Modi to address India-Japan Samvad Conference On which of the following date?

D) Afghanistan

A) December 22

E) Bangladesh

B) December 23

59) CCEA has approved the revised cost of Rs _____ crores for power transmission project.

C) December 21

D) December 24

E) December 25

63) Who among the following will deliver the inaugural address at IISF 2020?

A) Nitin Gadkari

B) Nirmala Sitaraman

C) Prahlad Patel

D) Narendra Modi

E) Amit Shah

64) The government of which state has launched the Special Varasat campaign to curb property and land-related disputes in rural areas?

A) Chhattisgarh

B) Uttar Pradesh

C) Haryana

D) Bihar

E) Madhya Pradesh

65) Mega Leather Park with Rs. 5850 crore investment is all set to come up in which city?

A) Dehradun

B) Surat

C) Kanpur

D) Delhi

E) Pune

66) MG Vaidya Passes who passed away at 97 in Nagpur was the first spokesperson of which

organization?

A) BJD

B) AIADMK

C) Congress

D) RSS

E) BJP

67) Who among the following will be the chief guest at virtual centenary celebrations of Aligarh Muslim University?

A) Venkiah Naidu

B) Anurag Thakur

C) Amit Shah

D) Prahlad Patel

E) Narendra Modi

68) Skill India has established the first Centre of Excellence for Skill Development in Power Sector in which state?

A) Jammu & Kashmir

B) Haryana

C) Punjab

D) Chhattisgarh

E) Gujarat

69) Mohammad Amir who announced his retirement from international cricket played for which country?

A) Australia

B) England

C) South Africa

D) Afghanistan

E) Pakistan

70) India has ranked _____ in the Human Freedom Index 2020 released by the Cato Institute.

A) 147

B) 109

C) 111

D) 110

E) 101

71) National Consumer Rights Day is observed on which date?

A) December 11

B) December 14

C) December 24

D) December 15

E) December 19

72) Which of the following Ministry has launched the Firefly bird diverter initiative?

A) Ministry of Science & Technology

B) Ministry of Earth Sciences

C) Ministry of Education

D) Ministry of Environment

E) Ministry of Consumer Affairs

73) NITI Aayog launches india's first indigenous digital storage platform _____.

A) Digital Boxx

B) Consumer Boxx

C) Beat Boxx

D) Internet Boxx

E) Digi Boxx

74) Sugathakumari who passed away was a renowned _____.

A) Actor

B) Director

C) Writer

D) Poet

E) Singer

75) Cabinet has given nod to merger of _____ Film Media Units with NFDC.

A) 3

B) 4

C) 5

D) 6

E) 8

76) Who among the following has released the Postal Stamp To Mark Centenary Celebrations Of AMU?

A) Ram Nath Kovind

B) Venkiah Naidu

C) Narendra Modi

D) Prahlad Patel

E) Anurag Thakur

77) PM Modi will release Rs. _____ crore under PM-Kisan scheme to more than 9 crore farmers.

A) 14,000

B) 17,000

C) 16,000

D) 18,000

E) 15,000

78) Cabinet has approved _____ crore of the post matric scholarship scheme of more than four crore SC students.

A) 25,048

B) 35,000

C) 45,000

D) 55,047

E) 59,048

79) Which institution has launched the COVID-19 vaccine market dashboard?

A) ADB

B) WHO

C) UNICEF

D) UNESCO

E) IMF

80) Who among the following has been appointed as the next new chief Secretary of AP?

A) Narendra Mehta

B) Aditya Nath Das

C) Rajendra Singh

D) Sushil Gupte

E) Raj Kanwar

81) India's 1st tiger reserve hot air balloon safari has been launched in which state?

A) Uttar Pradesh

B) Assam

C) Madhya Pradesh

D) Haryana

E) Bihar

82) Brodie Lee also known as Jon Huber was a famous _____ who passed away at 41.

A) Actor

B) Producer

C) Director

D) Wrestler

E) Cricketer

83) The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has extended the validity of vehicular documents till which date?

A) 1 March 2021

B) 1 February 2021

C) 1 August 2021

D) 30 July 2021

E) 31 March 2021

84) Who among the following has been unanimously elected as National President of JD (U)?

A) Rajesh Singh

B) RCP Singh

C) Sanjiv Singh

D) Subodh Singh

E) Vimal Singh

85) The chief minister of which state has unveiled Vajpayee's statue at Ridge?

A) Uttar Pradesh

B) Chhattisgarh

C) Assam

D) Himachal Pradesh

E) Haryana

86) Myanmar Navy formally commissions which submarine which was handed over by the Indian Navy?

A) Chakra

B) Viraat

C) Sindhuvir

D) Sindhughosh

E) Veerangna

87) The cabinet of which state has approved the Dharma Swatantrya (Religious Freedom) Bill 2020?

A) Bihar

B) Uttar Pradesh

C) Haryana

D) Chhattisgarh

E) Madhya Pradesh

88) India will replace the UK as the fifth-biggest economy in which year?

A) 2029

B) 2028

C) 2025

D) 2026

E) 2027

89) Home Minister Amit Shah will lay foundation stone for 7 major projects in which state?

A) Uttar Pradesh

B) Bihar

C) Chhattisgarh

D) Manipur

E) Mizoram

90) Which country has planned to set up a nuclear reactor on the moon?

A) Israel

B) US

C) Japan

D) France

E) Germany

91) India's first pollinator park has come up in which state?

A) Bihar

B) Madhya Pradesh

C) Uttarakhand

D) Haryana

E) Chhattisgarh

92) Indian Railways has completed its _____ Kmph Speed Trail Run recently.

A) 170

B) 155

C) 160

D) 180

E) 150

93) Who among the following has launched the Global PravasiRishta portal and mobile App?

A) Prahlad Patel

B) Anurag Thakur

C) NarendraModi

D) S.Jaishankar

E) V. Muraleedharan

94) Union Cabinet approved the export of which missile system recently?

A) Vikas

B) Nirbhay

C) Aakash

D) Prithvi

E) Garud

95) PM will lay the foundation stone of Light House Projects at how many sites?

A) 4

B) 6

C) 5

D) 7

E) 8

96) To mark the _____th anniversary of NetajiSubash Chandra Bose, NarendraModi recently went to Port Blair and had the honour of hoisting the Tricolour.

A) 71

B) 72

C) 73

D) 75

97) The 3rd Global Re-invest Summit was addressed by who among the following?

A) Nirmala Sitharaman

B) Anurag Thakur

C) RK Singh

D) Narendra Modi

E) Prahlad Patel

98) Union Minister NitinGadkari has announced the Multi-Modal Logistics Park In which state recently?

A) Nagaland

B) Tripura

C) Mizoram

D) Manipur

E) Assam

99) The Central Government has announced Nagaland as 'disturbed area' for ____ months.

A) 3

B) 5

C) 6

D) 4

E) 7

100) The Fourth meeting of India and which country's working group has recently been held in virtual mode?

A) Singapore

B) Vietnam

C) Thailand

D) Sri Lanka

E) Bangladesh

ANSWERS**1) Answer: C**

Indian Bank has entered into an agreement with Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) to use the latter's asset restructuring module for MSME borrowers.

Indian Bank signed up with SIDBI to help its borrowers use SIDBI's module. On its part, Indian Bank has also introduced an online training programme – MSME Prerana – to train the MSMEs in basic accounting, maintenance of books of accounts and government / bank schemes meant for MSMEs.

2) Answer: D

The theme of World AIDS Day, to be observed on December 1 is 'Ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic: resilience and impact.'

The aim is to make U=U or undetectable = Untransmittable a reality.

The 2017 National Health Policy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals aim to end AIDS by 2030.

3) Answer: E

S&P Global Ratings retained its forecast of 9 per cent contraction in the Indian economy for the current fiscal, saying even though there are now upside risks to growth but it will wait for more signs that COVID infections have stabilised or fallen.

S&P, in its report on Asia Pacific, projected the Indian economy to grow at 10 per cent in the next fiscal.

The RBI in October projected India's economy to contract by 9.5 per cent this fiscal. It stated the industrial sector is leading and the output is now above levels from a year ago, helped by rising demand for consumer goods.

4) Answer: C

US President Elect Joe Biden Names Janet Yellen as Treasury Secretary (If confirmed by the Senate, she will be the first woman ever to hold the post). Neera Tanden as Director of Office of Management & Budget

Mr Biden also named Wally Adeyemo, a former Obama administration official and the first CEO of the former president's nonprofit foundation, as his nominee for deputy treasury secretary.

5) Answer: D

Moderna Inc stated it will apply for U.S. and European emergency authorization of its COVID-19 vaccine based on full results from a late-stage study showing its vaccine was 94.1% effective with no serious safety concerns.

Of the 196 volunteers who contracted COVID-19 in the more than 30,000-person trial, 185 had received a placebo versus 11 who got the vaccine. The company reported 30 severe cases – all in the placebo group – which means the vaccine was 100% effective at preventing severe cases. The trial included one COVID-19-related death in the placebo group.

Moderna stated it was on track to have about 20 million doses of its vaccine ready to ship in the United States by the end of 2020, enough to inoculate 10 million people.

6) Answer: B

Mahagram is all set to deploy 12 lakh wireless ATMs that will empower kirana shops and other retail stores to disburse cash to people, as banks are finding it increasingly unviable to operate and maintain ATMs across the country.

Bharat ATM already has 1.5 lakh touch points across the country which comprises 20,000 handheld terminals (wireless ATMs) for card payments run on Aadhaar and RuPay card, and the rest are all Android mobiles with the Bharat ATM app installed, which can be used along with a fingerprint scanner for Aadhaar authentication to dispense cash.

"The four most popular ATMs in the country are those of ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank and SBI, which

are big brands.

7) Answer: D

Nagaland attained statehood with the enactment of the state of Nagaland Act in 1962 by the Parliament.

The interim body was dissolved on 30 November 1963 and the state of Nagaland was formally inaugurated on 1 December 1963

Kohima was declared as the state capital. Nagaland became the 16th state of India on 1 December 1963. The state is home to a rich variety of flora and fauna.

8) Answer: E

Papa Bouba Diop died at the age of 42 after a long illness. Diop is best known for scoring the winning goal against the defending champion France in the opening match of the 2002 World Cup.

He won the 2008 FA Cup with Portsmouth in a club career that included stints at Lens, Fulham, West Ham United and Birmingham City.

9) Answer: C

The Prime Minister named Guru Nanak Dev ji himself as the biggest symbol of reforms in the society and system.

The Dev Deepavali ("the Diwali of the Gods" or "Festival of Lights of the Gods") is the festival of Kartik Purnima celebrated in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India. It falls on the full moon of the Hindu month of Kartika (November – December) and takes place fifteen days after Diwali.

The festival is also observed as Tripura Purnima Snan or Worship of Shiva.

10) Answer: D

"The Border Security Force has always lived up to its motto 'Duty for Life' (Jeevan Paryant Kartavya) with its bravery and prowess.

As per the official website of BSF, 'India's first line of defence' was officially raised in accordance with an Act of the Indian Parliament on December 1, 1965, soon after the India-Pakistan War of 1965.

BSF has distinguished itself as a valorous force, unwavering in its commitment to protect the nation and assist citizens during natural calamities. India is proud of BSF!" tweeted Prime Minister Modi.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah also saluted brave personnel of the force for their national service.

11) Answer: C

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) is celebrating its 63rd Founding Day on 4th of December, 2020

This time the celebration will be done virtually on a digital platform in the presence of the Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman along with the Union Minister of State for Finance & Corporate Affairs Shri Anurag Singh Thakur.

As part of this year's Founding Day celebrations, a panel discussion on Trade Based Money Laundering is also organised through video conferencing with the representatives from Australian Border Force, HM Revenue and Customs, Customs Administration of the Netherlands and INTERPOL as panelists.

12) Answer: D

The Reserve Bank of India has decided to keep the benchmark interest rate unchanged at 4%.

Announcing the outcome of the three-day RBI bi-monthly policy review, Governor Shaktidas Das stated that the MPC has projected real GDP growth for 2021 at -7.5%.

He stated recovery in rural demand will strengthen further. He stated there is a need to have an accommodative stance to remain through the current financial year.

Mr. Das stated with financial stability and depositor

interest in mind we have fixed issues at two scheduled commercial banks.

13) Answer: E

Phase 8 of the Vande Bharat Mission has been operational since the first of November.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava stated, this Phase has now been extended until the 31st of December.

Under this extended phase called Phase 8 Plus, 897 international flights have been scheduled to operate from 15 countries with a capacity to repatriate an estimated 1.5 lakh people.

In addition to this, flights operated under the bilateral air bubble arrangements with 18 countries are progressing smoothly.

14) Answer: C

American legend Rafer Johnson, who won the gold medal at the 1960 Rome Olympics for the decathlon event, and was considered by many to be the 'World's Greatest Athlete', died at the age of 86 at his home in Los Angeles.

About Rafer Johnson:

He won Silver Medal in 1956 Melbourne Games

15) Answer: D

Indian Navy Day is Observed to celebrate the achievements and role of the naval force of the country.

The theme of Navy Day 2020 is Indian Navy Combat Ready, Credible & Cohesive

16) Answer: B

HunarHaat will be organised at Numaish Ground, Rampur from 18th to 27th of this month and Shilp Gram, Lucknow from 23rd to 31st January next year.

The theme will be Vocal for Local with focus on

indigenous Indian toys (Swadeshi toys) . Artisans and craftsmen from 27 States and UTs will bring their indigenous exquisite handmade products for display and sale at these HunarHaats.

17) Answer: D

The five days event has been organized from 01 December 2020 to 05 December 2020.

Sudarsan Pattanaik, world-renowned sand artist and Padmashree Awardee, has been appointed as Chief Curator of the festival.

This year, the main themes of the sculptures are 'Environment' and 'Covid-19'.

About 70 artists from across the country are set to take part in the much-awaited festival that provides a platform for both national and international sand artists to showcase their talent.

31st Konark Dance Festival begins

The 31st edition of the Konark Dance Festival began in Konark, Odisha after the Corona Protocol.

The festival is organized every year by the Tourism Department of the Government of Odisha against the backdrop of the famous Sun Temple.

18) Answer: C

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has directed India's largest private sector lender, HDFC Bank, to stop issuing new credit cards as well as halt the launch of new digital businesses, according to a company filing with the stock exchanges.

HDFC Bank MD and CEO Sashi Jagdishan

19) Answer: E

The police station has been set up in accordance with guidelines laid down by the National Commissioner for Protection of Child Rights.

It was inaugurated by IIT Kanpur Director Dr Abhay Karandikar who tweeted that the "child-friendly police

station is an innovative concept in the direction of preventing juvenile crimes and children reforms.”

Aimed at giving children in conflict with law as well as minor victims a friendly environment, officials stated.

20) Answer: C

Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Nitin Gadkari along with Chief Minister of Nagaland Neiphiu Rio will inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of 15 National Highway projects of Nagaland through video conference.

The projects having the total length of 270 kms worth over 4,127 crores rupees in Nagaland will benefit the state by generating employment and self employment opportunities, easy access for availing health care and emergency services, boost the socio- economic progress and also enhance economic relations with other neighbouring states.

21) Answer: C

IIT-Bombay researchers have come up with an urban quality of life index tailored to the reality of life in India.

The first time, they have factored in gender parity

Chennai, it turns out, is the most women-friendly and Patna the least.

Overall, Mumbai tops the list of 14, followed closely by Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai.

The study found that Jaipur has the highest crime rate against women, Chennai has the lowest .

22) Answer: D

World Health Organisation has appointed Indian-origin Anil Soni as the Chief Executive Officer for the WHO Foundation.

Global health expert Soni will assume his role as its inaugural CEO on January 1 next year.

WHO Director-General TedrosAdhanomGhebreyesus described Soni as a proven innovator in global health

who has spent two decades in service of communities affected by HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

In his new role, Soni will accelerate the Foundation’s work to invest in innovative, evidence-based initiatives that support WHO in delivering on its mission to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, the WHO Foundation stated.

23) Answer: E

Kapany was the first to transmit images through fiber optics back in 1954 and laid the foundation for high speed internet technology.

He founded the Optics Technology Incorporation and Kaptron Incorporation in 1960 and 1973 respectively.

DR Narinder Singh Kapany is among the 10 most renowned Sikhs in the world.

Achievements of Kapany:

He received ‘The Excellence 2000 Award’ from the USA Pan-Asian American Chamber of Commerce in 1998.

He was named among the seven “Unsung Heroes” of the 20th century who affected the lives of people all over the world by Fortune in their ‘Businessmen of the Century’ issue of November 22, 1999.

24) Answer: C

Prime Minister NarendraModi is set to inaugurate the phase one of construction of the Agra metro project via videoconferencing on 7 thdec.

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandi Ben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath marked their virtual presence on the occasion.

The Agra metro project comprises two corridors with a total length of 29.4 km and will connect major tourist attractions like TajMahal, Agra Fort, Sikandra with railway stations and bus stands.

The estimated cost of the construction of the project is Rs 8,379.62 crore and it will be completed in five

years, an official stated.

The project will benefit Agra's population of 26 lakh and also cater to more than 60 lakh tourists who visit the historic city every year. It will provide an environment-friendly mass rapid transit system to Agra.

25) Answer: D

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), has bagged the prestigious International King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award conferred by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome.

The announcement to this effect was made on a virtual function by the FAO on the World Soil Day 5th December 2020 Through Video Conferencing.

The prestigious global award was conferred to the ICAR for its commitment to raising awareness of the importance of healthy soils.

The World Soil Day Award was conferred to the ICAR for last year's World Soil Day celebration, which addressed soil erosion under the motto "Stop soil erosion, save our future".

ICAR organised "Soil Health Awareness Week" during 1-7 December 2019 with participation of more than 13 000 people, including scientists, government institutions, officials, students, farmers and the general public, in the social media campaign "SOIL – Our Mother Earth" on 5 December 2019.

Her Royal Highness, Princess MahaChakriSirindhorn of Thailand, will give the award to the ICAR in an official ceremony that will take place in Bangkok in January 2021.

26) Answer: B

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has declared 'Invest India' as winner of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.

The award ceremony took place at UNCTAD Headquarters in Geneva on Dec 7.

The Award recognizes and celebrates the outstanding achievements of the World's best-practice investment promotion agencies. The evaluation was based on UNCTAD's assessment of work undertaken by 180 national Investment Promotion Agencies across the world.

27) Answer: E

The Minister of Science and Technology Harsh Vardhan held the second TCGA-Cancer Genome Atlas 2020 conference in New Delhi.

The conference brought together scientists and clinicians from all over the world to jointly establish the Indian Cancer Genome Atlas (ICGA).

About ICGA

It aims to create an indigenous, open-source and comprehensive database to collect molecular profiles of all prevalent cancers in the Indian population. A variety of molecular mechanisms, including genetic and lifestyle factors, cause cancer, posing major challenges to treatment. Therefore, it is necessary to better understand the underlying factors of the patient.

28) Answer: C

The government has launched the 'Quarterly Return filing & Monthly Payment' scheme for small taxpayers under the Goods and Services Tax system.

The notifications for the same were issued by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

Eligibility:

Taxpayers with an aggregate annual turnover of up to Rs 5 crore in the preceding financial year and have filed their October GSTR-3B (sales) return by Nov. 30, 2020, are eligible for this scheme.

29) Answer: D

Punjab National Bank launched a tech-based loan management solution called 'LenS-The Lending Solution', to speed up and maintain accuracy in online

loan processing and sanctioning of credit proposals.

Purpose

To standardise the system, process and appraisal formats for loan processing,

Speed up the process of credit sanctions,

Auto-generate loan documents, among others.

This system is envisaged to be implemented in a phased manner for all kinds of loans — MSME, agriculture, retail and other credit.

Processing and sanction of credit proposals up to ₹10 lakh under the Mudra scheme, including MSME loans (fresh, renewal, enhancement and review) shall be done through LenS with effect from December 1, 2020.

30) Answer: B

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will share his thoughts with the people in the country and abroad in the 'Mann Ki Baat' programme on All India Radio at 11 AM on 27th of this month. It will be the 19th edition of Prime Minister's Mann kiBaat 2.0.

The programme will be broadcast on the entire network of AIR and Doordarshan and also on AIR News website www.newsonair.com and newsonair Mobile App. It will also be streamed live on the YouTube channels of AIR, DD News, PMO and Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

AIR will broadcast the programme in regional languages immediately after the Hindi broadcast. Citizens can share their suggestions and ideas for the upcoming Mann kiBaat programme through Namo App, MyGov Forum or through toll free number 1800-11-7800.

31) Answer: C

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December – the day on which the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The UDHR is a milestone document that proclaims the inalienable rights to which everyone is entitled as a human being – regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Human Rights Day 2020 theme – Recover Better – Stand Up for Human Rights.

Human Rights Day was formally established on December 4, 1950.

32) Answer: D

The World Economic Forum will hold its 2021 annual meeting in Singapore instead of its traditional home of Switzerland, which is battling a rising number of coronavirus infections.

The meeting is generally held in Davos, Switzerland, but amid covid, the meeting was first shifted to Lucerne-Burgenstock, Switzerland in October 2020. Now again the venue has been shifted to Singapore.

The event is expected to return to Davos in 2022.

33) Answer: E

Former India wicketkeeper-batsman Parthiv Patel announced his retirement from all forms of cricket after an 18-years-long cricket career.

The 35-year-old left-hander, who made his international debut in 2002, played 25 Tests, 38 ODIs and two T20Is for India.

While the Gujarat cricketer represented his state in 194 first-class matches.

Parthiv, made his Test debut under Sourav Ganguly, at the age of 17 years and 153 days, played 65 international games for the country, which included 25 Tests, 38 ODIs and two T20 Internationals.

Parthiv scored nearly 1700 runs (1696) across formats with 934 runs (6 half centuries) coming in the longest format.

He last played for India in 2018 during a Test match

against South Africa in Johannesburg.

34) Answer: D

The central government has introduced a new digital platform called CO-WIN for COVID-19 vaccine delivery.

There will be a new mobile app that will allow people to register for the vaccine.

CO-WIN app is set to be available for smartphone users and will be publicly available as soon as possible.

The platform will be used for recording vaccine data and will form a database of healthcare workers.

The app will have separate modules for administrator, registration, vaccination, beneficiary acknowledgement and reports.

35) Answer: B

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the International Bharati Festival, 2020 on Dec 11 at 4:30 pm via video conferencing.

This year the festival is being organised in virtual mode and will see participation of several national and international poets and artists.

The festival is being organised by Vanavil Cultural Centre to celebrate the 138th birth anniversary of Mahakavi Subramanya Bharati.

36) Answer: D

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone of the New Parliament Building at Sansad Marg in Parliament Complex on November 10.

The new building is an intrinsic part of the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

It will be a landmark opportunity to build peoples' Parliament for the first time after independence.

The new Parliament building will match the needs and

aspirations of New India in the 75th anniversary of independence in 2022.

The new 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 proposal for the New Parliament Building was made by Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, during the proceedings of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, on 5th August last year.

37) Answer: C

Varinderpal Singh, an agricultural scientist with the Punjab agricultural University, refused to accept an award being presented to him by a Union Minister to express his solidarity with the farmers agitating against the Centre's farm laws.

Dr. Singh, a principal soil chemist on the PAU in Ludhiana, Punjab, was chosen for the 'FAI Golden Jubilee Award for Excellence' for finest work executed in plant vitamins.

38) Answer: E

The Union Education Minister proposed a new School Bag Policy 2020 and recommends that weight of the school bag needs to be monitored on a regular basis as per NCERT recommendation.

As per the new School Bag Policy 2020 proposed by the Education Ministry, the maximum weight of the school bags has been not more than 10% of the student's weight.

In addition to this, the new policy also proposed that students below Class 2 will not be given any homework as per the proposal of the new policy.

The NEP 2020 proposes that the weight of the school bag should be in the ratio of 1:10 with the body weight and in accordance with this the New School Bag Policy caps the max weight to 10% of the student's weight.

39) Answer: C

The Ramnagar Forest Division in Nainital District, of Uttarakhand has constructed the state's first eco-bridge across KaladhungiNainital Highway.

This 90-feet-long and 5-feet-wide bridge is Uttarakhand's first eco-bridge.

Aim: To enhance wildlife connectivity that can be disrupted because of highways or logging.

It is mainly for small animals and reptiles such as squirrels, snakes, monitor lizards

The Forest officer Amit Kumar Gwaskoti has also informed that no iron or cement has been used in the construction of the bridge and it is made of eco-friendly items such as rope, bamboo, and grass.

40) Answer: D

Uttar Pradesh government has recently launched a scheme to take the unique culture of the Tharu tribes across the world.

The UP state government is planning to connect the villages of the Tharutribals located on the International border of Nepal.

The state government is working to connect Tharu villages in the districts of Balrampur, Bahraich, Lakhimpur and Pilibhit bordering Nepal, with the home stay scheme of the UP Forest Department.

The idea is to offer tourists an experience of living in the natural Tharu habitat, in traditional huts made of grass collected mainly from the forests.

41) Answer: C

December 14 is celebrated as National Energy Conservation Day every year

The India Energy Conservation Act was first implemented by the Energy Efficiency Bureau (BEE) in 2001.

Objective : The day focuses on making people aware

of global warming and climate change and promotes efforts towards saving energy resources.

Purpose of the day : To raise awareness among the general public about the importance of energy conservation and energy efficiency, as well as holistic development for overall effort towards climate change mitigation.

42) Answer: D

NITI Aayog has released a white paper Vision 2035 for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system into Ayushman Bharat

The white paper lays out India's vision for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system into Ayushman Bharat.

It also spells out the need for expanded referral networks and enhanced laboratory capacity.

The white paper was released by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Dr Rajiv Kumar, Member (Health) DrVinod K Paul and CEO Amitabh Kant.

Vision : The vision of this white paper is to make India's public health surveillance system more responsive and predictive to enhance preparedness for action at all levels.

Citizen-friendly public health surveillance system will ensure individual privacy and confidentiality, enabled with a client feedback mechanism

43) Answer: E

UNESCO has decided to launch an international prize in the field of 'creative economy' in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh MujiburRahman.

Starting November 2021, the dollar 50 thousand award will be given away once in two years for global economic initiatives of the youth.

Purpose : According to UNESCO, the international award will create a knowledge-sharing mechanism by capturing, celebrating and communicating best

practice in the development of creative entrepreneurship.

UNESCO has declared 2021 as 'International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development'.

44) Answer: C

All the states except Tamil Nadu have availed benefits of the newly announced scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure.

The scheme was announced by the Finance Minister on 12th October as a part of the AtmaNirbhar Bharat package.

Aim: The Scheme is aimed at boosting capital expenditure by the State Governments who are facing a difficult financial environment this year due to the shortfall in tax revenue arising from the COVID 19 pandemic.

So far, capital expenditure proposals of over 9,879 crore rupees of 27 States have been approved by the Finance Ministry.

45) Answer: C

Paolo Rossi, Italy's goalscoring hero from their victorious 1982 World Cup campaign, has died at the age of 64.

Rossi won two Serie A titles, a European Cup and a Coppa Italia with Juventus but will be most fondly remembered for lighting up the 1982 World Cup in Spain with six goals.

Achievements :

Rossi then scored Italy's first in a 3-1 victory that gave them their third World Cup title and their first since 1938.

He won the Golden Boot as the top scorer and Golden Ball as the player of the tournament, a campaign regarded as one of the best individual World Cup performances of all-time.

He was also awarded the 1982 Ballon d'Or as

Europe's top footballer.

He also scored three goals at the 1978 World Cup in Argentina. With a total of nine goals, he remains Italy's joint highest scorer at the World Cup with Roberto Baggio and Christian Vieri.

46) Answer: D

BSE (earlier known as Bombay Stock Exchange) has launched an electronic spot platform for agricultural commodities through its subsidiary BSE Investments Ltd.

BSE E-Agricultural Markets Ltd (BEAM) will function as a national level, institutionalised, electronic, transparent commodity spot trading platform in line with the Prime Minister's vision to create a single market, BSE stated.

Importance of BEAM : With the help of BEAM, farmers in one state will be able to reach out to markets in other states and auction their produce.

BEAM has leveraged modern technology to offer customised solutions to farmers, traders, and stakeholders to facilitate risk-free and hassle-free purchase and sale of various agri commodities.

47) Answer: E

Indian Railways has launched the Hospital Management Information System (HMIS) to provide better health care facilities to its work force with the help of information technology.

The HMIS Trial Project has been launched over South Central Railway.

The HMIS has been developed by Indian Railways in coordination with RailTel Corporation Limited.

Presently, three modules of HMIS – Registration, OPD doctor desk, and pharmacy – are being taken up implemented.

Objective : The objective of the HMIS is to provide a single-window of clearance of hospital administration activity such as clinical, diagnostics, pharmacy,

examinations, industrial health etc.

48) Answer: C

Ashraf Patel won the Social Entrepreneur of the Year award instituted by the Schwab Foundation and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation.

The award was presented by Smriti Zubin Irani, Minister of Women and Child Development and Textiles at a virtual ceremony.

Ashraf Patel is the co-founder of Pravah and ComMutiny Youth Collective. In partnership with UNICEF ROSA, they developed an appreciative enquiry tool to assess the impact of COVID 19 on the lives of adolescents in 8 South Asian countries.

49) Answer: D

Prime Minister of the Republic of India Shri Narendra Modi and President of the Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev co-chaired a Virtual Summit between India and Uzbekistan on 11 December, 2020.

India and Uzbekistan signed nine Agreements and Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs).

Nine Agreements are enlisted below :

Solar Energy

Digital Technologies

High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP)

Trade, Economic and Investment Cooperation

Defence and Security

Civil Nuclear Energy

Connectivity

Culture, Education and People- to-People Contacts

Terrorism

50) Answer: B

Chuck Yeager, the first person to travel at a speed faster than the speed of sound, has passed away at the age of 97

Yeager made history on October 14, 1947, when he became the first man to fly faster than the speed of sound during his nine-year assignment as the nation's leading test pilot.

He also became the first man to fly more than twice the speed of sound in level flight, flying the Bell X-1A on December 12, 1953, the US Air Force stated.

He was also associated with World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War and his three war active-duty flying career spanned more than 30 years.

51) Answer: C

The International Migrants Day is observed on 18 December every year.

On 4 December 2000, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), taking into account the large and increasing number of migrants in the world, proclaimed 18 December as International Migrants Day

The day was selected to mark the anniversary of the 1990 adoption by UNGA of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

The theme of International Migrants Day 2020 : 'Reimagining Human Mobility'.

To mark International Migrants Day this year, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has called for the world community to come together and remember the refugees and migrants who have lost their lives.

52) Answer: D

Doha will host the 2030 Asian Games and rival Riyadh will stage the event in 2034 following a vote by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) General Assembly

in Muscat.

The second hosting city, for 2034, is Riyadh.

The double award comes after OCA President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah arranged a “win win” situation which saw the city with the most votes awarded the 2030 Games and the runner-up given 2034.

2030 Asian Games will be the 21st edition of the multi-sports event, held after every four years. It is also known as Asiad.

It means back-to-back Games will be held in West Asia with an intriguing race between two fierce political opponents ending with both Qatar and Saudi Arabia having something to show for it.

53) Answer: E

World Arabic Language Day is celebrated every year on 18 December since 2012.

December 18 was chosen as the date for the Arabic language as it is “the day in 1973 when the General Assembly approved Arabic as an official UN language ”

The event was established by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2010 seeking to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as well as to promote equal use of all six of its official working languages throughout the organization.

World Arabic Language Day 2020 will provide an opportunity to reflect on and discuss how Language Academies can help revive and enhance the use of classical Arabic.

The Day will also give an opportunity to showcase and celebrate the richness and global importance of the Arabic language worldwide.

54) Answer: D

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the world's largest renewable solar and wind energy 30,000 megawatts (MW) Ultra Mega Hybrid

Park in Gujarat's Kutch.

It will be the largest renewable energy park of its kind in the world.

The vast project in western Gujarat's Kutch region spread over 1,80,000 acres

The energy project in PM Modi's home state will account for a large chunk of India's ambitious target of generating 175 GW in renewable energy by 2022 and 450 GW by 2030.

The desalination plant will be able to process 100 million litres of water a day for 8 lakh people living in the arid region.

PM Modi also laid the foundation stone for the Rs 129-crore fully automated dairy plant under the Centre's Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana. As the then CM, Modi had set up the district's first dairy plant with 2 lakh litre processing capacity in 2013-14.

55) Answer: B

The Minorities Rights Day is observed in India every year on December 18.

AIM:

The aim of the day is to advance and protect the privileges of the individuals to have a place with linguistic, religion, castes and color minorities.

History:

The Minorities Rights Day is celebrated by the National Commission for Minorities (NCM).

On 18 December 1992, the United Nations adopted the Statement on the individual's Rights belonging to religious or Linguistic National or Ethnic Minorities.

It highlighted religious linguistic, cultural, and national identity of the minorities that shall be respected, preserved, and protected by the states and within individual territories.

56) Answer: C

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi has approved assistance of about Rs. 3,500 crore (US\$ 476.10 million) for sugarcane farmers (GannaKisan).

This subsidy aims at covering expenses on marketing costs including handling, upgrading and other processing costs and costs of international and internal transport and freight charges on export of up to 60 LMT of sugar limited to Maximum Admissible Export Quota (MAEQ) allocated to sugar mills for sugar season 2020-21.

57) Answer: D

Quality Council of India (QCI) at the behest of the FSSAI has come out with a Scheme for approval of Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies to scale up Hygiene Rating by increasing the number of recognised Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies in the country.

This rating will be in the form of smileys (1 up to 5) and the certificate should be displayed prominently in the consumer facing area.

Aim : To help consumers take informed decisions regarding food outlets where they prefer to eat by encouraging businesses to improve hygiene and safety standards, the Commerce and Industry Ministry. The recognised agency will verify compliance with food hygiene and safety procedures laid down by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

FSSAI's initiative of 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme' is a certification system for food businesses supplying food directly to consumers, either on or off premise, the ministry said in a statement.

58) Answer: E

India and Bangladesh reopened the 55 years old Chilahati-Haldibari rail link between the two nations. The inauguration took place during a virtual bilateral summit between PM Modi and PM Sheikh Hasina on December 17, 2020.

59) Answer: C

CCEA (Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the Revised Cost Estimate (RCE) of North Eastern Region Power System Improvement Project (NERPSIP) at an estimated cost of Rs 6,700 crore

The central government approved the revised cost estimate of Rs 6,700 crore for North Eastern Region Power System Improvement Project for six states to strengthen intra-state transmission and distribution systems.

six beneficiary the north-eastern states – Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, and are targeted to be commissioned by December 2021.

The main objective of the project is the government commitment for the total economic development of the North Eastern Region and to strengthen the intra-state transmission and distribution infrastructure in the region.

The scheme will also increase the per capita power consumption of these states, and contribute to the total economic development of the region.

60) Answer: B

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has set up a dedicated Space Situational Awareness (SSA) Control Centre, at its ISTRAC campus at Peenya, Bangalore.

The control centre was formally inaugurated by Chairman, ISRO and Secretary, Department of Space K Sivan on December 14.

According to ISRO, the Network for space object Tracking and Analysis (NETRA) project is initiated as a first step towards meeting this goal, its main elements being a radar, an optical telescope facility, and a control centre.

61) Answer: E

International Human Solidarity Day is celebrated

every year on December 20.

According to the UN website, the day celebrates unity in diversity throughout the world and serves as a reminder to governments to respect their commitment to international agreements and raise public awareness.

International Human Solidarity Day also reiterates the importance of solidarity in removing poverty.

The day was proclaimed by the United Nations' (UN) General Assembly on December 22, 2005.

According to the United Nations Millennium Declaration, solidarity is one of the fundamental values that are essential for healthy international relations.

62) Answer: C

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to address the India-Japan Samvad Conference on December 21.

This Samvad Conference revolves around the need to build the future of Asia on the positive influence of traditions of non-violence and democracy in Asia.

The first conference, Samvad-I, was held in New Delhi in 2015, at Bodh Gaya. During Samvad I, leading scholars, religious leaders, academics, and political personalities had exchanged views on conflict avoidance and environmental consciousness.

63) Answer: D

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver the inaugural address at the India International Science Festival (IISF) 2020 through video conferencing.

Purpose : To promote scientific temper in society, the Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences in association with Vijnana Bharati conceptualized the India International Science Festival.

Launched in 2015, IISF is a celebration to promote science and technology.

Aim : The aim is to engage the public with science,

celebrate the joy of science and show how Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, STEM can provide solutions to improve lives.

Goal : The goal of the IISF 2020 is to help youth develop 21st century skills, with a focus on scientific knowledge, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork. A long-term objective is to encourage students to study and work in scientific fields.

64) Answer: B

In Uttar Pradesh, the government has launched a special campaign to curb property & land-related disputes in rural areas.

This is a first of its kind campaign to end the nagging land-related issues in the rural areas.

Aim : It is aimed at eradicating the exploitation of the villagers in the name of 'Varasat' of land and property.

This special campaign will continue till 15 th February next year.

65) Answer: C

A mega leather park will come up in Ramaipur village of Kanpur with an investment of Rs 5,850 crores.

The park which is part of the mega leather cluster project is likely to create 50,000 jobs, for 1.5 lakh people.

Recently, the project has received approval from the Union Commerce Ministry.

The mega leather cluster project will attract an investment of about Rs 13,000 crores.

66) Answer: D

Senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue and first spokesperson of the organization, Madhav Govind Vaidya passed away. He was 97.

MG Vaidya was an ace journalist, ex MLC, Sanskrit

scholar and first official spokesperson of RSS.

The RSS is the ideological mentor of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and he became a member of the RSS in 1943.

He was also a member of Maharashtra's Legislative Council as the Governor's nominee between 1978 and 1984.

67) Answer: E

In Uttar Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the chief guest at the virtual centenary celebrations of Aligarh Muslim University.

This is for the first time in over five decades that any Prime Minister of India will attend a function at Aligarh Muslim University.

Earlier to this Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri attended an event at AMU in 1964. Before Lal Bahadur Shastri, then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had visited AMU four times. He visited the AMU campus first time in 1948 and lastly in 1963. Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank will also join the event via videoconferencing.

68) Answer: B

Skill India has established the first Centre of Excellence for Skill Development in the Power Sector in the campus of National Institute of Solar Energy, Gurugram Haryana.

Inaugurating the Centre, Minister of State for Skill Development Raj Kumar Singh stated that India is taking rapid strides to move towards renewable energy to accelerate economic development, improve energy security and energy access while mitigating climate change challenges too.

The Centre of Excellence located in Gurugram is an outcome of collaboration between the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India, along with the Ministry of National Education and Youth, Government of France and Schneider Electric.

Centre has high-end modern labs designed keeping

in mind the future technology, which will further strengthen India and France's relationship in the energy sector.

The Centre of Excellence will focus on creating a pool of highly skilled trainers and assessors for further training to increase employability of candidates in the field of Electricity, Automation and Solar Energy Sectors.

69) Answer: E

Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Amir has decided to quit international cricket alleging 'mental torture' from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

Amir played 30 Tests, 61 ODIs, and 50 T20Is in his international career, picking up 119, 81, and 59 wickets in the three formats respectively.

His last appearance for Pakistan came in the T20I series against England in August earlier this year.

70) Answer: C

India was ranked 111th out of 162 countries in the Human Freedom Index 2020 report released by the Cato Institute, plummeting 17 spots from its position in the last index.

In 2019, India was ranked 94 on the index.

The countries that ranked in the top 10 are New Zealand (8.87), Switzerland (8.82), Hong Kong (8.74), Denmark, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Estonia, and Germany and Sweden (with the last two tied in the 9th place).

Syrian Arab Republic is the last ranked country with a human freedom score of 3.97 out of 10.

About Human Freedom Index 2020:

The Human Freedom Index 2020, Published by the Cato Institute in the United Fraser Institute in Canada.

71) Answer: C

National Consumer Rights Day is observed on

December 24, every year in India.

The Consumer Protection Act 1986 came into effect on this day.

The theme of the National Consumer Day is The Sustainable Consumer. The theme is in view of the urgent need for action to approach the worldwide crisis, global temperature change and biodiversity loss.

Aim of the act:

The main objective of the Consumer Protection Act is to provide consumers with effective safeguards against different types of exploitation such as defective goods, unsatisfactory services, and unfair trade practices.

Significance:

This day provides an opportunity for individuals to highlight the importance of the consumer movement and the need to make every consumer more aware of their rights and responsibilities.

72) Answer: D

The Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) along with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) India has come up with a unique initiative of a firefly bird diverter for overhead power lines in areas where Great Indian Bustard (GIB) populations are found in the wild.

Firefly bird diverters are flaps installed on power lines. They work as reflectors for bird species like the GIB. Birds can spot them from a distance of about 50 meters and change their path of flight to avoid collision with power lines.

73) Answer: E

NITI Aayog's CEO Amitabh Kant has virtually launched India's first digital asset management and storage platform DigiBoxx.

Kant also signed up for an account, making him the first user of an Indian digital file storage, sharing and management SaaS product that provides storage

options for business as well as individual users.

The platform provides an easy and secure way to store all the files in one centralised location.

DigiBoxx has free 2GB storage space and the file shared stays for 45 days.

74) Answer: D

Renowned Malayalam poet and activist Sugathakumari, who devoted her life to the green cause, rights of women and the deprived, passed away at Thiruvananthapuram. She was 86.

She was one of the most active campaigners of the Save Silent Valley Movement when it took shape in the 1970s.

She wrote a poem MarathinuSthuti (Hymn to a tree) , which was received at every other protest to save the silent valley.

75) Answer: B

The Cabinet approved the merger of Films Division, Directorate of Film Festivals, National Film Archives of India, and Children's Film Society, India with National Film Development Corporation.

The Cabinet also approved revision in guidelines for providing DTH services in India.

Under the DTH licence will be issued for 20 years in place of present 10 years.

Guidelines have been amended to allow 100 percent FDI in DTH services.

And also the Cabinet approved an ordinance for extending National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Act for another 3 years, giving protection to unauthorised colonies from punitive action in Delhi.

The Cabinet also gave its nod for signing the revised Air Services Agreement between India and Philippines. It also gave its approval for signing the revised Air Services Agreement between India and

Afghanistan.

76) Answer: C

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a special postal stamp to mark the centenary celebrations of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

This is the first time in five decades that a prime minister has attended an AMU event as the chief guest. Prime Minister Modi attended the event via video conferencing.

Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank also Participated in the event.

Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank recalled the achievements of the AMU over the century and contributions of its alumni.

The last time a prime minister attended an event at AMU was Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1964.

Before him, prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru had visited the AMU four times.

77) Answer: D

Prime Minister Modi will release Rs. 18,000 crore for the next instalment of financial benefit under the PM-Kisan scheme to more than 9 crore farmers through video conference.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar will also be present during the programme.

Under the PM-KISAN Scheme, a financial benefit of Rs. 6,000 per year is provided to small and marginal farmers, payable in three equal 4-monthly installments of Rs. 2,000 each.

The fund is transferred directly to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries.

78) Answer: E

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has also approved Rs. 59,048 Crore post matric scholarship scheme for more than 4 Crore Scheduled

Castes students in 5 years.

Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawarchand Gehlot stated, the Central Government will spend Rs. 35,534 Crore for it which is 60 percent and the balance 40 per cent will be spent by the State Governments.

It is estimated that 1.36 Crore such poorest students, who are currently not continuing their education beyond 10th standard would be brought into the higher education system in the next 5 years.

79) Answer: C

On December 21, The UNICEF announced the launch of a Covid-19 vaccine market dashboard.

It is an interactive tool to follow the developments of the rapidly evolving coronavirus vaccine market and the efforts of the COVAX Facility to ensure fair and equitable access for every country in the world.

80) Answer: B

Senior IAS officer Aditya Nath Das has been appointed Chief Secretary to the Government of Andhra Pradesh..

Incumbent Nilam Sawhney, who is due to retire from service on December 31, has been appointed Principal Advisor to the Chief Minister in the rank of a Cabinet Minister.

Das, a 1987 batch IAS officer, currently the Special Chief Secretary, Water Resources and Environment, Forest, Science and Technology departments, will take charge as the Chief Secretary after the incumbent Sawhney retires from service.

The order of the appointment was issued by Praveen Prakash, on 22nd December 2020.

81) Answer: C

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.

The activity will be restricted to the buffer area and people can watch tigers, leopards, Indian sloth bears and other wild animals from a height.

It is the first in any tiger reserve in the country.

The service is being operated by Jaipur-based Sky Waltz.

82) Answer: D

US wrestler Jon Huber, better known to fans as Brodie Lee or Luke Harper, has died aged 41.

He competed as Luke Harper for WWE, before leaving in 2019 and joining All Elite Wrestling (AEW) as Brodie Lee.

He won Tag Team titles twice and also won the Intercontinental Championship (AEW).

83) Answer: E

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has extended the validity of vehicular documents such as driving licenses (DLs), registration certificates (RCs) and Permits till 31st of March 2021 in the light of need to prevent the spread of Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Ministry had earlier issued advisories on 30th March, 9th June and 24th August this year 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 31st of December this year.

It is further advised that the validity of all of the above referred documents may be treated to be valid till 31st March 2021.

This covers all documents whose validity has expired since 1st Feb, 2020 or would expire by 31st March 2021.

84) Answer: B

Rajya Sabha MP RCP Singh was unanimously elected as the national president of the Janata Dal.

This decision was taken at the party's national executive meeting in Patna.

The 62-year-old leader from Bihar's Nalanda took over from Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who was re-elected as the JD(U) president in 2019 for three years.

Outgoing President Nitish Kumar proposed the name of RCP Singh and members of the Executive Committee supported the proposal. Mr. Singh was holding the post of General Secretary of the party.

85) Answer: D

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur unveiled an 18 feet statue of former prime minister AtalBihari Vajpayee at the historic Ridge Maidan here on his 96th birth anniversary.

The statue has been built at a cost of Rs 1.08 crore. The Ridge Maidan also houses statues of Mahatma Gandhi and former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

December 25 is also marked as Good Governance Day, which was established in 2014 to honour Vajpayee by fostering awareness on accountability in government among the people.

86) Answer: C

The Myanmar Navy has officially commissioned the submarine INS Sindhuvir, which was handed over by the Indian Navy to the country in October 2020.

INS Sindhuvir was commissioned as UMS MinyeTheinkhathu and inducted on the 73rd anniversary of the Myanmar Navy.

During the commissioning ceremony, Indian ambassador to Myanmar Saurabh Kumar was also present along with top brass of Myanmar's Navy.

The kilo class submarine has a displacement of 3000 tonnes, a diving depth of 300 meters and top speed at

20 knots.

This was the first time India has given a submarine to another country.

The submarine has been refurbished for the Myanmar Navy by state-run defense shipbuilder, Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) in Visakhapatnam.

87) Answer: E

The Madhya Pradesh cabinet approved the Dharma Swatantrya (Religious Freedom) Bill 2020 .

Under the provisions of the bill, forced conversion of a woman will be punishable for a term up to 10 years and minimum fine of Rs 50,000.

Specific provisions are also made in the cases of religious conversion of minors, groups, or of those belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Blood relatives, including parents of victims of such religious conversion, can file complaints under the proposed Act.

88) Answer: C

The Centre for Economics and Business Research stated Indian economy will again overtake the UK to become the fifth largest economy in 2025 and race to the third spot by 2030.

India had overtaken the UK in 2019 to become the fifth largest economy in the world but has been relegated to 6th spot this year.

The Research organisation forecasts that the Indian economy will expand by 9 percent in 2021, and another 7 percent in 2022.

As per the report, China will become the World's Biggest Economy in 2028 meanwhile, Japan will remain on 3rd spot till 2030s.

89) Answer: D

On December 27, 2020, Union Home Minister Amit Shah will lay the foundation stone for seven major

projects while two other projects will be inaugurated.

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Dr. Jitendra Singh will also attend the function.

The convention was organised by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), which was formed to spearhead public movement against any outcome of the Indo-Naga peace talks that could potentially disintegrate Manipur.

Shah will address a public gathering at HaptaKangjeibung ground before inaugurating Thoubal multipurpose project worth Rs 1,998.99 crores and Bishnupur-Tupul-Thoubal-KasomKhullen road worth Rs 475.68 crore.

The seven major projects, including the Churachandpur Medical College estimated to cost Rs 325 crore, IIIT worth Rs 128 crore, IT SEZ worth Rs 950 crore, and State Government Guest House worth Rs 237.49 crore, among others.

90) Answer: B

US's plan to have the first nuclear reactor on the moon by the end of 2026.

The US Department of Energy in collaboration with Nasa intends to solicit industry design proposals in early 2021 got an impetus with a recent White House directive.

On December 16, outgoing President Donald Trump, issued the National Strategy for Space Nuclear Power and Propulsion.

President Trump issued Space Policy Directive-6 (SPD-6), the Nation's Strategy for Space Nuclear Power and Propulsion (SNPP), which aims at increasing US presence on the surface of the moon and Mars too.

91) Answer: C

The country's first pollinator park with over 40 species of butterflies, honey bees, birds and insects has been developed over four acres at Nainital's Haldwani.

Developed by the research wing of the Uttarakhand Forest Department, the colourful park was inaugurated by renowned butterfly expert Peter Smetacek.

Objective of the Park : The objective behind developing the park is to conserve various pollinator species, create awareness among people in general about the importance of conservation of these species and to promote further research on various aspects of pollination, including threat to habitat and impact of pollution on pollinators.

There are at present 40 species of pollinators at the park.

92) Answer: D

Indian Railways successfully completed a speed trial for 180 km per hour of a new design vistadome tourist coach.

According to the Railway Ministry, the new vistadome tourist coach has been manufactured by the Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai.

These vistadome coaches mostly operate in mountain railways and are specially designed to make train journeys scenic and memorable.

The coaches also give a boost to tourism.

The European-style coaches are made with see-through glass rooftops and wide windows for the indulgent sightseeing experience.

These vistadome tourist coaches boast of large windows on the sides and have glass panels on the roof of the trains.

These coaches are being operated on selected routes on the Indian Railways network including the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, Nilgiri Mountain Railway, Kangra Valley Railway, Kashmir Valley, Kalka-Shimla Railway, Matheran Hill Railway between Dadar in Mumbai as well as Madgaon in the Araku Valley.

93) Answer: E

Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan launched the Global PravasiRishta portal and mobile App, to connect with 3.12 crore strong diaspora across the world.

The Minister said, 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.

This portal is created to enable the registration of Indian diaspora members i.e. NRIs, PIOs and the OCIs which is not just going to facilitate the Indian government to connect with the overseas Indian community but also facilitate NRIs, OCIs and PIOs community by connecting them to various new and existing government schemes benefiting them in various areas of interest.

Union Minister for external Affairs
:SubrahmanyamJaishankar

94) Answer: C

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister NarendraModi has approved the proposal to export indigenously-developed Akash Missile System.

Akash is the country's important missile with over 96 percent indigenisation. Akash is a Surface to Air Missile with a range of 25 Kms.

The export version of Akash will be different from System currently deployed with Indian Armed Forces

The missile was inducted in 2014 in IAF and in 2015 in Indian Army.

95) Answer: B

Prime Minister NarendraModi will lay the foundation stone of Light House Projects under the Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC-India) at six sites across six states on January 1 in a video conference.

The Prime Minister will also announce winners under Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators (ASHA)-India and give out annual awards for excellence in implementation of PradhanMantriAwasYojana –

Urban (PMAY-U) Mission.

During the event, he will release a certificate course on innovative construction technologies named 'NAVARITI' (New, Affordable, Validated, Research Innovation Technologies for Indian Housing) and a compendium of 54 innovative housing construction technologies identified through GHTC-India, the Prime Minister's Office said.

The LHPs are being constructed at Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Rajkot (Gujarat), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Ranchi (Jharkhand), Agartala (Tripura) and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh).

They comprise about 1,000 houses at each location along with allied infrastructure facilities.

96) Answer: D

"To mark the 75th anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, he had gone to Port Blair and had the honour of hoisting the Tricolour,"

The Prime Minister said, 30th December 1943, a day etched in the memory of every Indian, when the brave Netaji Subhas Bose hoisted the Tricolour at Port Blair.

Born to advocate Janakinath Bose in Odisha's Cuttack on January 23, 1897, Netaji went on to play a key role in the freedom movement.

He is also known for establishing the Azad Hind Fauj.

97) Answer: C

The renewable energy minister was speaking at the Chief Ministers' Plenary session of the virtual 3rd Global RE-INVEST Summit.

Power Minister R K Singh said that the Centre has achieved remarkable achievement in terms of expanding access to electricity in the country.

India will have around 60 per cent of its installed electricity generation capacity from clean and green sources by 2030.

Union Power Minister and Minister of New & Renewable Energy, R K Singh said that the centre is

committed to promote new and renewable energy resources in the country.

He added that the centre has asked every state government to earmark at least one city within their territory as green city.

Mr. Singh asserted that the government is working with a focused approach towards clean and green energy with emphasis on areas which require special attention.

Highlighting the achievements :

98) Answer: E

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari has announced that a multi-modal logistics park will be constructed in Silchar in Assam.

The Balacherra-Harengajao section of the Silchar-Saurashtra Highway will be completed in March 2022.

Mr Gadkari made this announcement at a public meeting at Zero Point on the East-West Corridor at Madhuramukh at Rangpur.

It is pertinent to mention that the Union Minister unveiled a 13-foot tall bronze statue of former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

99) Answer: C

The entire state of Nagaland has been declared a disturbed area for six more months.

The Home Ministry in a notification said, the Central government is of the opinion that the area comprising the whole of Nagaland is in such a disturbed and dangerous condition that the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary.

It said, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, the Central government declares that the whole of the State of Nagaland to be disturbed area for a period of six months. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act has been in force in Nagaland for several decades.

Union minister of Home Affairs: Amit shah

100) Answer: D

The Fourth Meeting of the India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group on Fisheries was held through virtual mode.

The meeting covered the entire gamut of issues related to fishermen and fishing boats which have been on the agenda of bilateral discussions between India and Sri Lanka for many years.

It may be recalled that during the Virtual Bilateral Summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa held on 26 September this year, both leaders agreed to continue engagement to address the issues related to fishermen through regular consultation and bilateral channels.

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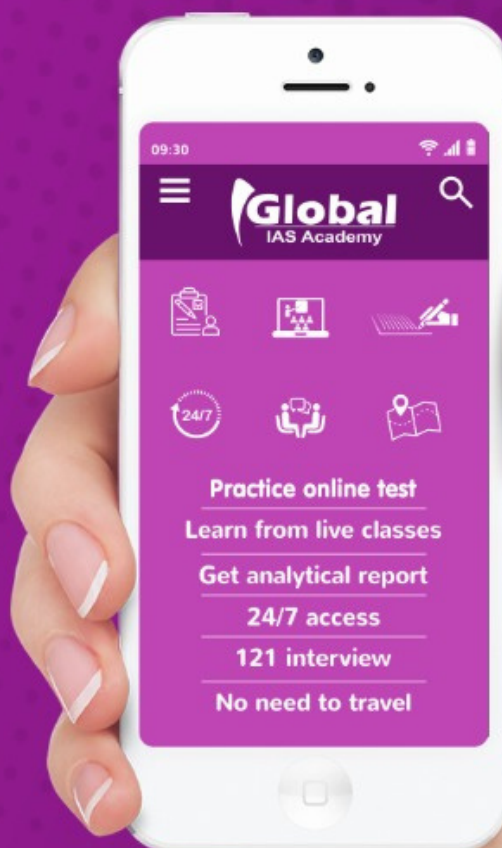
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