

SSC BANKING MANTHAN

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Preface

Dear Readers,

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

Happy Reading!

Best Wishes

Team CL



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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

National



Agriculture Infrastructure Fund: An important Link in Agricultural Reforms

- In its direction of agriculture reforms, the Central Government has launched one lakh crore rupees Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF).
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the financing facility of 1 lakh crore rupees under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund through video conferencing. The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund is a medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and credit guarantee. The duration of the scheme shall be from FY2020 to FY2029 (10 years).
- Under the scheme, Rs. 1 Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans with interest subvention of 3% per annum and credit guarantee coverage under CGTMSE scheme for loans up to Rs. 2 Crore for a maximum period of 7 years to the beneficiaries to increase the viability of these projects. Moratorium for loan repayment under this financing facility will be from 6 to 24 months.
- The beneficiaries will include farmers, PACS, Marketing Cooperative Societies, FPOs, SHGs, Joint Liability Groups (JLG), Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, Agri-entrepreneurs, Startups, and Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public-Private Partnership Projects.
- 11 of the 12 Public Sector Banks have already signed MOUs with the Department of Agriculture, Co-operation and Farmers Welfare. The Fund will catalyze the creation of post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets such as cold storage, collection centres and processing units.
- These assets will enable farmers to get greater value for their produce, as they will be able to store and sell at higher prices, reduce wastage, and increase processing and value addition. One lakh crore rupees will be sanctioned under the financing facility in partnership with multiple lending institutions. Prime Minister also released the sixth instalment of funds of 17 thousand crore rupees to 8.5 crore farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme. The event will be witnessed by lakhs of farmers, cooperatives, and citizens across the country.

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme was launched in December 2018 to provide income support by way of a cash benefit to all landholding farmers (subject to certain exclusion criteria) to enable them to fulfill their agricultural requirements and support their families. Under the scheme, the financial benefit of Rs.6000/- per year is provided to eligible beneficiary farmers in three equal installments.

Bhubaneswar became the first Indian city to get an ISO 9001:2015 Certification

- The capital city of Odisha, Bhubaneswar became the first Indian city to get an ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001:2015 Certification for 'Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) services'. Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) was the first civic body to implement FSSM regulations in the State.
- Jhenaidah is the first city in the world to get ISO 9001:2015 certifications. Bhubaneswar is the second city in the world and first in India to get ISO 9001:2015 certification.

- In February 2017, the **National Policy on Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM)** was launched by the **Ministry of Urban Development**. It is in line with Prime Minister Modi's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and is a part of Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) Scheme.
- The aim of FSSM is to **facilitate the citywide implementation of safe and sustainable sanitation** in each and every household, street, town and city.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is an international standard-setting body composed of **representatives from various national standards organizations**. Founded on **23 February 1947**, the organization promotes worldwide proprietary, industrial, and commercial standards. It is **headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland**, and works in 165 countries. It was **one of the first organizations granted general consultative status** with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. **ISO 9001:2015** is a company level certification based on the standard published by the International Organization for Standardization titled "Quality management systems-Requirements".

New farm Acts aim to transform agriculture sector in country & raise farmers' income

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi government has taken several measures with an aim to transform agriculture sector in the country and raise farmers' income.
- **Three Farm acts that are bone of contention: 1. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, 2. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, 3. Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.**
- The acts aim to **do away with government interference in agricultural trade by creating trading areas free of middlemen and government taxes outside the structure of Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs)**. It will **allow farmers an option to sell their produce directly to these new zones, without going through the middlemen** and paying levies such as mandi fees. It **sought to remove stock holding limits as well as curbs on inter-State and intra-State trade, and create a framework for contract farming**.
- The farmers have the power to sell their fruits or vegetables to anyone, and anywhere. The **Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020, seeks to remove commodities like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, onion, and potato from the list of essential commodities** and will do away with the imposition of stock holding limits.

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

Prakash Javadekar launches India Climate Change Knowledge Portal

- **Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar launched the India Climate Change Knowledge Portal**. The portal will have all the major steps the Government is taking at both national and international levels to address the climate change issues.
- It will be a **single-point information resource that provides information on the different climate initiatives** taken by various Line Ministries enabling users to access d status on these initiatives. **With regard to climate actions after the Paris Agreement, India has practically achieved its pre-2020 climate action targets**.
- Mr Javadekar also demanded that other **countries must commit to the advance commitments of Kyoto Protocol which has not been followed by the countries that must be done**.

The landmark Paris deal, struck in 2015, aims to limit global warming to "well below" 2 °C above pre-industrial temperatures. The agreement came into force on **November 4, 2016** and 189 countries have adopted it within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), dealing with greenhouse-gas-emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance. **In November 2020, United States formally left the Paris Agreement**.

Nagaland hosts first virtual celebration of Hornbill Festival 2020

- Nagaland has hosted the first virtual celebration of Hornbill Festival 2020. Dubbed as the “Festival of Festivals”, the Hornbill Festival is celebrated every year showcasing the rich cultural heritage and tradition of the Nagas in one platform at Naga Heritage Village Kisama under Kohima District.
- However, due to Coronavirus pandemic, the state is holding its 21st edition of Hornbill festival 2020 completely on virtual mode. The content of the festival was sourced from Government archives.

Nagaland is a landlocked state in north-eastern India. Nagaland's capital city is Kohima and its largest city is Dimapur. Neiphiu Rio is the current Chief Minister of Nagaland. Ravindra Narayana Ravi is currently serving as the Governor of Nagaland. Retired IPS 1976 batch. Nagalim (Greater Nagaland) is consisting of all the Naga-inhabited areas of neighbouring Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and some portions Myanmar, which it considers to be the rightful homeland of the Nagas.

Arjun Munda launched 10-day-long Aadi Mahotsav

- Shri Arjun Munda, Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, launched the virtual edition of Aadi Mahotsav-Madhya Pradesh. The 10-day long festival, commencing on December 1, 2020, is being hosted on the Tribes India website (www.tribesindia.com).
- Keeping in view of restrictions due to Covid-19, the TRIFED has decided to organise its annual event Aadi Mahotsav-2020 in an online mode. India website www.tribesindia.com and the main focus of this year is on the tribal craft and culture of Madhya Pradesh.
- The Aadi Mahotsav is a unique celebration of the spirit of tribal culture, crafts, cuisine and commerce. It commenced in 2017. The festival is an attempt to familiarize the people with the rich and diverse craft and culture of the tribal communities across the country, in one place.

Farm Legislations: Contract Agreement will guarantee the Farmers to get the fixed price

- The Narendra Modi government has taken several steps to transform the agriculture sector and to raise farmers' income. The government has also brought new farm acts in this direction.
- Contract farming is an alternate market model in which farmers and sponsors like wholesalers, processors, exporter enter into an agreement at the time of sowing. They work together to produce the required variety and quality in return of a risk-free income for the farmer.
- Such agreements provide multiple benefits to farmers including access to quality inputs, innovative cultivation practices, latest technology, market intelligence. It helps cultivate quality produce of variety consistent with market demand. It further improves farmers market access and opens high-value markets like export. The farmer will have full power in the contract to fix a sale price of his choice for the produce. They will receive payment within maximum 3 days.

In October 2019, Tamil Nadu has become the first State in the country to enact a law on contract farming with President Ram Nath Kovind giving assent to the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Contract Farming and Services (Promotion and Facilitation) Act. Contract farming usually involves the following basic elements - pre-agreed price, quality, quantity or acreage (minimum/maximum) and time (Manage 2003). Contracts can range from oral deals to formal, registered written contracts, the university said on its Website.

ADB, India sign 132.8 million loan to strengthen Meghalaya's power distribution Sector

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India signed a \$132.8 million loan to strengthen and modernize the distribution network and improve the quality of power supplied to households, industries, and businesses in India's northeastern state of Meghalaya.
- The project will construct 23 substations; renovate and modernize 45 substations, including the provision of control room equipment and protection systems; install and upgrade 2,214 kilometers of distribution lines and associated facilities covering three out of the six circles in the state.

- Installation of smart meters will benefit about 180,000 households. **The loan is proposed to be supplemented by a \$2 million grant from ADB's Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction** that will finance renewable energy mini-grids for improving power quality and supporting income generation activities, especially for women and other socially disadvantaged groups in three villages and three schools.
- The project will **help develop a distribution sector road map and a financial road map for the Meghalaya Power Distribution Corporation Limited (MePDCL)**. These road maps will **strengthen the capacity of MePDCL to operate and manage the distribution networks**.

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

Odisha approves unified emergency helpline number 112

- **Odisha Government approved the unified emergency helpline number 112 to provide all forms of police assistance to people in distress.** Launching the service Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said the consolidated helpline number would enable police to rush services to people in an efficient manner.
- **The helpline number 112 subsumes the earlier segregated helpline numbers like 100, 101, 108 and other for emergency services like police, fire and ambulance.** These multiple helplines have been clubbed together into the single toll free number under a centre-sponsored scheme that is already functional in several States.
- The 112 single Pan India helpline number had been launched by the centre in February last year to trigger emergency response to distress calls.

The '112' helpline is an integration of police (100), fire (101) and women (1090) helpline numbers and the project is being implemented under the central government's Nirbhaya Fund. The single number for emergency services is similar to '911' in the United States. The Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) envisages a single pan-India emergency number '112', which is an internationally recognised number, to target all types of emergencies. **The Nirbhaya Fund was set up by the central government for projects specifically designed to improve the safety and security of the women.**

Govt constitutes High-level Ministerial Committee for implementation of Paris Agreement

- Government of India has **constituted a High-level Ministerial Committee for implementation of Paris Agreement.** The Apex Committee for Implementation of Paris Agreement (AIPA) will be chaired by Environment Secretary.
- **The purpose of AIPA is to generate a coordinated response on climate change matters that ensures India is on track towards meeting its obligations under the Paris Agreement.**
- **Another key function of AIPA would be to operate as a National Authority to regulate carbon markets in India under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement,** formulate guidelines for consideration of projects or activities under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, issue guidelines on carbon pricing, market mechanism, and other similar instruments that have a bearing on climate change and NDCs.
- **The year 2021 would mark the beginning of implementation of the Paris Agreement** and constitution of AIPA is central to strengthening the national systems and institutional arrangements for implementation and monitoring of climate actions.

Economy firmly on the path of a V-shaped recovery, says Finance Ministry

- **India's economy is firmly on the path of a V-shaped recovery after the collapse in the first quarter,** and further improvement is expected in the third quarter, **'notwithstanding some moderation'** in November's indicators attributing the **recovery to the unlocking process along with 'astute' stimulus measures.**
- The prospects of a second wave of COVID-19 infections, however, remains the key downside risk to the economy, with **'Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi probably facing their second and third waves'** in November. **"This V-shaped recovery, evident at the half-way stage of 2020-21, reflects the**

resilience and robustness of the Indian economy. The fundamentals of the economy remain strong as gradual scaling back of lockdowns, along with the astute support of Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission has placed the economy firmly on the path of recovery.

Economic recovery can take many forms, which is depicted using alphabetic notations. For example, a Z-shaped recovery, V-shaped recovery, U-shaped recovery, elongated U-shaped recovery, W-shaped recovery and L-shaped recovery. The fundamental difference between the different kinds of recovery is the time taken for economic activity to normalize. Z-shaped recovery is the most-optimistic scenario in which the economy quickly rises after an economic crash. V-shaped recovery is the next-best scenario after Z-shaped recovery in which the economy quickly recoups lost ground and gets back to the normal growth trend-line. U-shaped recovery is a scenario in which the economy, after falling, struggles around a low growth rate for some time, before rising gradually to usual levels. W-shaped recovery is a dangerous creature. In this, growth falls and rises, but falls again before recovering, thus forming a W-like chart. L-shaped recovery fails to regain the level of GDP even after years go by.

India's first transgender children's homes will be in Bengaluru

- India's first homes for transgender children in need of care and protection will soon be established in Bengaluru. The Ministry of Women and Child Development gave its nod for the project.
- The minutes of the supplementary Project Approval Board (PAB) under child protection services says that two government-run children's homes reserved for transgender children will be established in Bengaluru Urban. Children in need of care and protection include orphans, abandoned children, street children, child labourers and child victims of abuse.

PASSEX conducted by Indian Navy and Russian Navy

- The Indian Navy (IN) is undertaking a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with Russian Federation Navy (RuFN) in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region (IOR) from 4 to 5 December 2020.
- The exercise involves participation of RuFN guided missile cruiser Varyag, large anti-submarine ship Admiral Panteleyev and medium ocean tanker Pechenga. IN is being represented by indigenously constructed guided missile frigate Shivalik and anti-submarine corvette Kadmattalong with integral helicopters.
- PASSEXs are conducted regularly by IN with units of friendly foreign navies, whilst visiting each other's ports or during a rendezvous at sea. This exercise, being conducted in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region, reflects the strong long-term strategic relationship between the two countries and particularly, defence cooperation in the maritime domain.

Mizoram's first solar power plant commissioned

- Mizoram's first solar power plant has been commissioned at Tlungvel. The grid connected 2 megawatt solar photovoltaic (SPV) solar power plant was opened by state Power minister R Lalzirliana. The Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) Power Plant commissioned has a peak generation capacity of 2 MW.

Mizoram is a state in Northeast India, with Aizawl as its capital city. The name is derived from "Mizo", the name of the native inhabitants, and "Ram", which means land, and thus Mizoram means "land of the Mizos". Like several other northeastern states of India, Mizoram was previously part of Assam until 1972, when it was carved out as a Union Territory. It became the 23rd state of India, a step above Union Territory, on 20 February 1987, with Fifty-Third Amendment of Indian Constitution, 1986. Lal Thanhawla has been the Chief Minister of Mizoram since 11 December 2008. Kummanam Rajasekharan is the current Governor of Mizoram.

Bihar plans migratory bird festival to raise awareness about them

- In a novel initiative, Bihar is holding a bird festival to create awareness about the importance of migratory birds that arrive here in large numbers every year. The initiative assumes significance in the light of increasing cases of poaching and illegal hunting of migratory birds that provide benefits to the ecosystem, including pest control, pollination of plants and also serve as food sources for other wildlife, according to researchers.

- The first-of-its-kind bird festival is being organised at Bhagalpur, an eastern Bihar town located on the southern bank of the Ganges. The three-day festival likely to start from December 11 is being jointly organised by the Bhagalpur forest division, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Mandar Nature Club.

Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT B) ranks as the number one university in India, according to QS World University Ranking 2021

- QS Top Universities website provides a comprehensive database of universities with detailed coverage about their features, facilities, courses, faculty, and other information. It also provides a university search tool that lets the users find and learn about different universities using very useful filters.
- India is a remarkable destination for higher education, with a long list of universities that offer students world class education. This article lists the top 10 Indian universities based on QS World University Ranking 2021.
- Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT B) ranks as the number one university in India, and stands at the 172nd position in the world ranking. The first of its kind to be set up with foreign assistance in India, this institution of national importance has 10,401 Indian students, including 99 international students, and around 974 faculty members. The institute is acknowledged globally as a leader in the field of engineering education and research. Indian Institute of Science Bangalore ranks second on the QS Top Universities list and is at the 185th position among the world's top universities.

Hunar Haat to be organised at Rampur from 18th to 27th December and Lucknow from 23rd to 31st January 2021

- Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi announced that the next “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”.
- Hunar Haat is an exhibition of handicrafts and traditional products made by artisans from the minority communities. These are organised by the Ministry of Minority Affairs under USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme.

Task force set up for preparing a roadmap on imparting technical education in Mother Tongue

- Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’ has set up a task force for preparing a roadmap on imparting technical education in Mother Tongue.
- The task force set up under the chairmanship of Secretary, Higher Education will take into consideration the suggestions made by various stakeholders and will submit a report in a month. The decision was taken by the Minister at a high level meeting held on imparting technical education in Mother Tongue.
- The Minister said that no language will be imposed on any student but enabling provisions should be made so that bright students are not deprived of Technical Education due to lack of knowledge of English language.

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

PM Narendra Modi laid foundation stone of new proposed Parliament Building in New Delhi

- Although the laying of the foundation stone was allowed, Justice A.M. Khanwilkar of Supreme Court of India put a hold on Central Vista Redevelopment Project at whole till resolution of pleas received against the project in the court. On 10 December 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone with a ceremony of sarva dharma prarthana (inter-faith prayer).

- The new Parliament Building is being constructed at a cost of 971 crore rupees which will house more Committee Rooms and Political Parties offices than the existing Parliament House.
- “The new building is an intrinsic part of the vision of ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ and will be a landmark opportunity to build peoples’ Parliament for the first time after independence, one which will match the needs and aspirations of ‘New India’ in the 75th anniversary of independence in 2022.”
- The Central Vista project includes construction of a new Parliament building, with the existing building converted into a museum. Five big office buildings each would come up on both sides of Rajpath, while the National Museum and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts buildings would be pulled down to make way for the new buildings.
- In 2010s, a proposal was introduced to revamp Central Vista and re-build or relocate a number of administrative buildings which initiated a program expecting completion in 2024. The new Parliament Building Complex, triangular in shape spread over 64,500 square metre, is described as the pivot of the Central Vista project design.
- It is to be much bigger than the existing Parliament building and will be able to house 1,224 Members of Parliament. The Lok Sabha chamber will have a seating capacity of 888 MPs while the Rajya Sabha chamber will accommodate 384 MPs. The increased capacity of the chambers has been provisioned for keeping in mind future increase in the number of MPs. Currently, the Lok Sabha has 545 MPs and the Rajya Sabha 245.
- Under the Central Vista project, the residence of the Prime Minister is likely to be shifted near the South Block that houses the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). The vice-president’s new house will be closer to the North Block. The “North” and “South” Blocks are named so for their location north and south of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- According to the Central Vista redevelopment plan, North and South Blocks will be converted into museums. However, the current residence of the vice president is among the buildings identified for demolition.

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

Cyclonic Storm ‘Burevi’ over southwest Bay of Bengal

- The Deep Depression over the southeast and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal has intensified into a cyclonic storm. Seven days after Cyclone Nivar hit the Karaikal coast, another cyclone, Burevi, named by the Maldives, crossed Tamil Nadu’s southernmost district of Kanyakumari first week of December.
- This is the third cyclone formed within the last 10 days in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, put together. Due to upwelling caused by Nivar, Cyclone Burevi has limited intensity.

Tropical Cyclone is any large system of winds that circulates about a center of low atmospheric pressure in a counter-clockwise direction north of the Equator and in a clockwise direction to the south.

Gwalior & Orchha included in list of World Heritage City by UNESCO

- Gwalior and Orchha of Madhya Pradesh have been included in the list of World Heritage City by UNESCO. Tourism experts are calling it a big achievement. Orchha located in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh is famous all over the world for its temples and palaces.
- Orchha was the 16th century capital of the erstwhile Bundela dynasty. Many temples and palaces are located here, which have some legend. Orchha Raj Mahal, Jahangir Mahal, Ramaraja Mandir, Rai Praveen Mahal, Laxminarayan Mandir and many other famous temples and palaces are famous for a unique confluence of Rajput and Mughal architectural influences.

- **Gwalior** was established in the 9th century and ruled by Gurjar Pratihara Rajvansh, Tomar, Baghel Kachvaha and Scindias. The memorabilia left by them are found in abundance in memorials, forts and palaces in the area. **Gwalior** is known for its palaces and temples, including the intricately carved Sas Bahu Ka Mandir temple.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris. **Audrey Azoulay** appointed as the **Director-general** of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), becoming the **second female leader of the organization**. India is sixth on the list of countries with 37 sites in the list. Italy leads with 54 sites.

Cyclone Nivar was the fourth cyclone to take shape in the North Indian Ocean region this year

- **Very Severe Cyclonic Storm Nivar** was a tropical cyclone which brought severe impacts to portions of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in late November of 2020. The eighth depression and fourth named storm of the 2020 North Indian Ocean cyclone season, Nivar originated from a disturbance in the Intertropical Convergence Zone.
- Cyclone Nivar was the fourth cyclone to take shape in the North Indian Ocean region this year. The first three cyclones were Cyclone Gati (made landfall in Somalia on November 22), Cyclone Amphan, (eastern India witnessed it in May), and Cyclone Nisarga (in Maharashtra). The name Nisarga was given by Bangladesh, Gati was taken from India's suggested names. Nivara has been selected from the list of names given by Iran.
- Cyclone warnings are provided by the India Meteorological Department from the Area Cyclone Warning Centres (ACWCs) at Calcutta, Chennai and Mumbai and Cyclone Warning Centres (CWCs) at Vishakhapatnam, Bhubaneswar and Ahmedabad. The cyclone warning process is coordinated by the Weather Central in the office of DDGM (Weather Forecasting) at Pune and the Northern Hemispheric Analysis Centre at New Delhi.
- **North Indian Ocean Region** covers tropical cyclones formed over Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. The 13 members, which come under the region, are Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. In 2018, five more countries were added. These are Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Yemen. A total of 169 cyclones were named by these countries for this year, with 13 names from each country.

Winter rains in North-Western India are caused by Western Disturbances. A Western Disturbance is an extratropical storm originating in the Mediterranean region that brings sudden winter rain to the northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent. It is a non-monsoonal precipitation pattern driven by the westerlies. Retreating monsoon season commences with the beginning of the withdrawal of the south-west monsoon (mid-September – November) and lasts till early January. It is a 3-month long process where it starts from the peninsula in October and from the extreme south-eastern tip by December. Thus, from October to December the coast of Tamil Nadu state receives at least half of its roughly 40 inches (1,000 mm) of annual precipitation. In simple words, retreating means withdrawal. So, withdrawal of south-west monsoon winds from skies of north India during months of October and November is known as retreating monsoon.

HAL-IISc Skill Development Centre in launches its first training programme

- **HAL-IISc Skill Development Centre** in Challakere of Chitradurga district in Karnataka launched its first training programme offering five courses in virtual mode.
- The programmes offered are in the niche engineering areas of aerospace, mechanical, electrical and electronic sectors, and in line with the "Make in India" mission. The experienced engineers, supervisors and faculty members of various technical institutes will be trained in the Centre.

- The trainees will spend more than 50 per cent of the course duration in labs, conducting experiments. Faculty members will be selected from Indian Institute of Science and other leading organisations including HAL.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had formally inaugurated the Skill Development Centre in Challakere on August 13th this year. The Centre is located in IISc's new 1500 acre campus in Challakere, projected as a Science and Technology city.

PM Narendra Modi addressed inaugural session of virtual India Mobile Congress 2020

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given the inaugural address at the virtual India Mobile Congress 2020. IMC 2020 is being organised by the Department of Telecommunications, and the Cellular Operators Association of India. IMC 2020 is organised by the Department of Telecommunications, and the Cellular Operators Association of India.
- The theme for IMC 2020 is "Inclusive Innovation - Smart, Secure, Sustainable". It aims to align to the Prime Minister's vision to promote 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', 'Digital Inclusivity', and 'Sustainable development, entrepreneurship and innovation'. It also aims to drive foreign and local investments, encourage Research and Development in the telecom and emerging technology sectors.

India-Uzbekistan virtual summit on December 11, a first with central Asian nation

- In a first-ever virtual summit with a Central Asian country, PM Narendra Modi was held a virtual summit with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on December 11.
- PM Modi has already had virtual summits with his counterparts from–Australia, EU, Sri Lanka, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg. More such meets are on the anvil, with a virtual summit with Bangladesh expected to happen on the December 17. Indian Prime Minister had visited the doubly landlocked central Asian country in 2015 and 2016, followed by visits of Uzbek President Mirziyoyev to India in 2018 and 2019.

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

First visit by an Indian Army chief to Saudi Arabia and the UAE

- Regular joint military exercises and training besides joint production of defence equipment are some of the goals that India, UAE and Saudi Arabia look to achieve on Army chief General M.M. Naravane's week-long trip to the two key Middle East countries.
- This is the first visit by an Indian Army chief to Saudi Arabia and the UAE and is seen as a sign of how India's ties with the Middle East has improved over the past few years.
- Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa's visit to Saudi Arabia in August, to ease the diplomatic strain between the countries, ended with him being denied a meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Indian Army is the land-based branch and the largest component of the Indian Armed Forces. The President of India is the Supreme Commander of the Indian Army, and its professional head is the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), who is a four-star general. Two officers have been conferred with the rank of field marshal, a five-star rank, which is a ceremonial position of great honour. General Manoj Mukund Naravane is a Four Star general of the Indian Army and the 28th Chief of the Army Staff (COAS).

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar reassures farmers, MSP will continue & APMC mandis will not be scrapped

- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has reiterated government stand that Minimum Support Price will continue and APMC mandis will not be scrapped.

- Mr Tomar said, **no one can take away the land of the farmer for any reason and buyers cannot make any changes** in the farmer's land. Mr Tomar also said that contractors cannot terminate the contract without full payment.
- The Minister said, **under the farms laws, farmers can fix the prices of the produce before they grow the crop**. He said, buyers will have to pay on time or else they will have to face legal action.

Minimum Support Price is the price at which government purchases crops for the farmers, to safeguard the interests of the farmers. In our country, **MSP for 24 agricultural commodities of Kharif and Rabi season are announced by the Government based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agriculture Cost and Prices (CACP)**. **MSP is fixed on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) since 2009**. During the 2018-19 Union Budget the government announced that **MSP would be kept at 1.5 times the cost of production (as per recommendations from the M S Swaminathan chaired National Commission for Farmers)**.

PM Narendra Modi will inaugurate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention on January 9

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention to be held in virtual format on January 9**. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention is the flagship event of the Government of India and provides an important platform to engage and connect with the overseas diaspora.
- **The theme of PBD 2021 is "Contributing to Atmanirbhar Bharat"**. The PBD Convention will include two Plenary Sessions – 'Role of Diaspora in Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Facing Post Covid Challenges-Scenario in Health, Economy, Social and International Relations'.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a celebratory day observed on **9 January** by the Republic of India to **mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India**. The day commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai on 9 January 1915.

India drops to second position in BNEF's 2020 Climatescope ranking; Chile bags top spot

- **India has dropped to the second position in Bloomberg New Energy Finance's (BNEF) 2020 Climatescope survey ranking from first last year, as a result of a decline in clean energy investment**, which fell 12 per cent in 2018-19 to \$8.5 billion and has plummeted 32 per cent since 2017.
- **Chile has bagged the top spot in the survey reflective of its strong clean energy policies while, Brazil remained at the third position**. However, the report added that Mainland China and India continued to be the biggest markets for clean energy investment with Mainland China far and away the largest.

In September 2019, at the United Nations Climate Action Summit, India announced increasing the renewable energy target to 450 GW by 2030 from 175 GW by 2022. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is the nodal Ministry of the Government of India for all matters relating to new and renewable energy. **New and Renewable Energy sources include solar energy, geothermal energy, wind power, hydropower, biomass, etc**. **Raj Kumar Singh is the current minister of New and Renewable Energy**.

Global climate summit marked 5th anniversary of Paris Climate Pact

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Global Climate Summit on the occasion of the **fifth anniversary of the landmark Paris Climate Agreement which was adopted on 12th December 2015**. The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was **adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12th December 2015 and entered into force on 4th of November 2016**.
- The Paris Climate Agreement completed five years on 12th of December and the United Kingdom has called for a virtual Global Climate Summit and Prime Minister Narendra Modi also took part in the meeting.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that **India has not only achieved its target against climate change as per the Paris Agreement 2015 but has also gone beyond it**.
- Speaking at the **Climate Ambition Summit 2020, co-hosted by the United Nations, the United Kingdom and France**, Prime Minister asserted that review of achievements should be done against the set targets in order to

inspire the youths and forthcoming generations. Mr. Modi said, **India has increased its solar capacity from 2.63 Gigawatt in 2014 to around 36 Gigawatt in 2020.**

- Referring to the **two remarkable initiatives of International Solar Alliance and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure**, Prime Minister said that the **centennial India in 2047 will not only meet its own targets but will also exceed the expectations.**
- The Prime Minister said that **India has exceeded in expanding its forest cover** and also safeguarding its biodiversity. The virtual summit witnessed world leaders coming together to make new commitments to tackle climate change and deliver on the Paris Agreement.

The landmark Paris deal, struck in 2015, aims to limit global warming to “well below” 2 °C above pre-industrial temperatures. The agreement came into force on November 4, 2016 and 189 countries have adopted it within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), dealing with greenhouse-gas-emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance. In November 2020, United States formally left the Paris Agreement. Under the Paris climate change agreement signed in 2015, India has committed to cut GHG (Green House Gas) emissions intensity of its GDP by 33-35 per cent, increase non-fossil fuel power capacity to 40 per cent from 28 per cent in 2015, add carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonne CO₂ per annum by increasing the forest cover.

Lakshadweep first UT to become 100% organic

- After Sikkim, Lakshadweep is the first Union Territory to become 100 per cent organic as all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, providing access to safer food choices and making agriculture a more environment-friendly activity. **The ministry of agriculture has declared the island as organic.** Earlier in 2016, Sikkim became India's first “100 percent organic” State.
- According to FSSAI, ‘organic farming’ is a system of farm design and management to create an ecosystem of agriculture production without the use of synthetic external inputs such as chemical fertilisers, pesticides and synthetic hormones or genetically modified organisms.

India's smallest Union Territory, Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands with an area of 32 sq km. All are tiny islands of coral origin (Atoll) and are surrounded by fringing reefs. The Capital is Kavaratti and it is also the principal town of the UT. Praful Khoda Patel assumed additional charge as Administrator of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep from 05 December 2020.

PM-WANI scheme will revolutionise tech world & significantly improve WiFi availability across country

- In a bid to fuel broadband internet proliferation across the country, the Government of India launched PM WANI (Prime Minister Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) Scheme. **The scheme aims to bring large scale deployment of Wi-Fi hotspots through the country to drive up connectivity options and improve digital access.**
- The scheme envisages setting up of public Wi-Fi networks and access points by local Kirana and neighbourhood shops through public data offices (PDO will be set up on the lines of Public Call Offices (PCOs)) that will not involve any licence, fee or registration.
- Apart from, **Public Wi-Fi being a low-cost option to reach unserved citizens** and grow the economy, it can revolutionise the tech world and significantly improve Wi-Fi availability across the length and breadth of India.
- The scheme will enable small shopkeepers to provide WiFi service. Prime Minister said, this will boost incomes as well as ensure the youth gets seamless internet connectivity. **It will also strengthen the Digital India mission.**
- Cabinet approved setting up of public Wi-Fi networks to provide public Wi-Fi service through Public Data Offices without levy of any License Fee. **The Union Cabinet also cleared the provision of submarine optical fibre cable connectivity between mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands.**
- According to the TRAI report, **public Wi-Fi system on the WANI architecture can lead to a 10% rise in net penetration** which in turn can lead to a **1.4% increase in GDP**. PM WANI can result into a rapid scale-up of the Internet in rural India, which will be transformative, **given the low level of penetration — 27.57 subscribers per 100 populations in 2019.**

- Wi-fi linked to broadband fibre service can be the fastest route to bridging the existing gap.

MahaSharad Digital Platform

- Maharashtra's Department of Social Justice is all set to launch an ambitious scheme for distribution of assistive devices to lakhs of persons with disabilities through MahaSharad Digital Platform to coincide with NCP chief Sharad Pawar's 80th birthday. It will be available on Play Store by March 2021.
- Maharashtra System for Health and Rehabilitation Assistance" or MahaSharad platform has been created to provide various devices to persons with disabilities free of cost through the Commissionerate for persons with Disability. Modern equipment and devices help divyang to lead life like normal individuals. Several people, organizations, private companies, industrialists and others are willing to make available such equipment for divyang.
- The MahaSharad platform will help such donors meet needy divyang. This is the first such experiment in the state to bring together the needy disabled people and various social groups who want to help them.

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

UK PM Boris Johnson to attend Republic Day parade as chief guest

- The United Kingdom has confirmed that Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson will be the chief guest at the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi on 26th of January next year. Then-Prime Minister John Major was the chief guest at the event in 1993, the last time India had invited a dignitary from the UK.
- During a joint briefing after the bilateral talks with External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar, the UK FS said, "Prime Minister Boris Johnson has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to join the UK-hosted G7 summit next year. The UK Prime Minister has also accepted the very generous invitation to attend India's Republic Day celebrations (as chief guest) in January which is a great honour."
- On the issue of India's role in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, Johnson further added, "As the 'pharmacy of the world' India supplies more than 50% of the world's vaccines, with over a billion doses of the UK's Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine being manufactured at India's Serum Institute in Pune."
- India is one of the three countries invited as guest nations for the G7 by PM Boris Johnson. The other two being Australia and South Korea. Earlier UK had also proposed the idea of a D-10 grouping (Ten Democracies) which included G7 plus India, Australia and South Korea. But, that proposal is still at a nascent stage.

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

India signs one billion dollar loan agreement with NDB for Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan

- The Government of India and New Development Bank signed a loan agreement for one thousand million dollar to provide support to Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan through MGNREG Scheme.
- The Finance Ministry said, the programme will support Government in mitigating the adverse economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic and enable economic recovery in the rural areas through Natural Resource

Management (NRM) works. This will facilitate economic activity and employment generation to stimulate rural demand, to combat the decline in economic activity due to outbreak of COVID-19.

- **This will facilitate economic activity and employment generation to stimulate rural demand, to combat the decline in economic activity due to outbreak of COVID-19.** The agreement was signed by Joint Secretary in Department of Economic Affairs Baldeo Purushartha and Xian Zhu, the Vice President and Chief Operations Officer on behalf of the New Development Bank.

Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (or, NREGA, later renamed as the “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act” or MGNREGA), MGNREGA), is an Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the ‘right to work’. This act was passed in September 2005 under the UPA government of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. **It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Employment is to be provided within 5 km of an applicant’s residence, and minimum wages are to be paid. If work is not provided within 15 days of applying, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance. MGNREGA is to be implemented mainly by gram panchayats (GPs).**

NITI Aayog releases a white paper “Vision 2035 - Public Health Surveillance in India”

- **NITI Aayog released a white paper Vision 2035 - Public Health Surveillance in India.** 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 building blocks for this vision are an **interdependent federated system of governance between the Centre and states.** The white paper was released by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Dr Rajiv Kumar, Member (Health) Dr Vinod K Paul and CEO Amitabh Kant. **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.**

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

Centre exempted Handicraft and Geographical Indications toys from Quality Control Order

- **Centre has exempted Handicraft and Geographical Indications toys from Quality Control Order.** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade mentioned this **exemption in Toys (Quality Control) Second Amendment Order, 2020.** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry has **devised a comprehensive action plan to boost production and sale of indigenous toys across the country.**
- Quality control order was issued by the Department for **standardization and quality adherence of Toys and the order will come into effect from 1st January next year.** This order aims to bring forward the synergized efforts of the centre, states and the stakeholders to **promote ‘Team up for toys’ vision** keeping quality standards of the indigenous toys as the priority.

In a first, Parliament committee to examine functioning of RTI, information commissions

- **In a first, a Parliamentary standing committee will scrutinise the working of the transparency watchdogs, the Central Information Commission (CIC) and the state information commissions (SICs).** The move has irked the right to information activists saying it “usurps” the powers of the state legislatures.
- **As the information commissions are statutory bodies, the CIC is required to submit annual reports to the Parliament and the SICs to state legislatures through its administrative wings, the Ministry of Personnel and Training in Centre and Services Department in the states.**

- However, **these annual reports are rarely discussed in Parliament or state legislatures** even though members have raised questions over the efficacy of the information law through short duration discussion and zero hour, where a member can raise an issue approved by the Chair

The Central Information Commission has been constituted with effect from 12-10-2005 under the Right to Information Act, 2005. The jurisdiction of the Commission extends over all Central Public Authorities. The Commission has **certain powers and functions mentioned in sections 18, 19, 20 and 25 of the RTI Act, 2005**. These broadly relate to adjudication in second appeal for giving information; direction for record keeping, **suo motu disclosures receiving and enquiring into a complaint on inability to file RTI etc; imposition of penalties and Monitoring and Reporting including preparation of an Annual Report**. The decisions of the Commission are **final and binding**. The commission includes **one chief information commissioner and not more than ten information commissioners** who are appointed by the President of India on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister. Y K Sinha is the current the chief information commissioner.

Centre for new tribunal for Krishna water sharing between Andhra, Telangana

- **Union Jal Sakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** in his letter to **Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao** indicated that the Centre is considering setting up a new tribunal to **decide the sharing of Krishna river water between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh**.
- Alternatively, the Centre will refer the matter to the existing second Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT-II), after obtaining legal opinion. **The KWDT-II, headed by Justice Brijesh Kumar, allocated a total share of 1,001 tmc ft (thousand million cubic feet) to Andhra Pradesh, 911 tmc ft to Karnataka and 666 tmc ft to Maharashtra in Krishna river water.**

The Interstate River Water Disputes Act, 1956 (IRWD Act) is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted under **Article 262 of Constitution of India** on the eve of reorganization of states on linguistic basis to resolve the water disputes that would arise in the use, control and distribution of an interstate river or river valley. **Article 262 of the Indian Constitution provides a role for the Central government in adjudicating conflicts surrounding inter-state rivers that arise among the state/regional governments**. River waters use / harnessing is included in states jurisdiction (entry 17 of state list, Schedule 7 of Indian Constitution). However, union government can make laws on regulation and development of inter-State rivers and river valleys when expedient in the public interest (entry 56 of union list, Schedule 7 of Indian Constitution).

A scheme to take the unique culture of its ethnic Tharu tribe across the world

- **The Uttar Pradesh government** has recently **embarked upon a scheme to take the unique culture of its ethnic Tharu tribe across the world**. The intention is to put Tharu villages on the tourism map, and to create jobs and bring economic independence to the tribal population.
- 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.
- **The Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation will train the Tharu people to communicate effectively with visitors, and encourage villagers to acquaint them with aspects of safety and cleanliness, and with the rules of the forest.**

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

Maharashtra: Govt signs MoU with Cornell University to train entrepreneurs

- The Maharashtra state government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Cornell University in New York to set up a world-class incubation centre in Maharashtra to provide the necessary infrastructure and conducive environment for new entrepreneurs and innovative start-ups.
- “This is the first time that a state in India is setting up an incubation centre through an MoU with an international university,” said Desai. 60 entrepreneurs will receive training, guidance and financial and administrative support every year at the incubation centre from the university.
- Entrepreneurs holding a domicile certificate in Maharashtra will be able to take part in the programme. Those participating will get a certificate from Cornell University.

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

Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi scheme launched

- Taking yet another step towards women empowerment, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy launched 'Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi' scheme to distribute 2,49,151 sheep and goat units to the beneficiaries of YSR Cheyutha and YSR Aasara. A total Rs. 1,869 crore is being spent for the purpose.
- The Chief Minister expressed satisfaction over launching another scheme to help the women stand on their own feet and support their families. Under the scheme, beneficiaries are free to buy local sheep, goat breeds from the region of their choice or can avail the services of the committee to be set up with two veterinary doctors, officials from SERP and banks, which will guide them to choose proper sheep or goat units at a reasonable price.
- “The state government has signed MoUs with Reliance, Allana group, Amul, HUL, Procter & Gamble and ITC to collaborate and empower women beneficiaries of YSR Cheyutha and Aasara schemes. The main objective of partnerships is to provide more business opportunities and bring self-reliance among women, by providing assistance for better investments.

Andhra Pradesh is the first state in India to have Five Deputy Chief Ministers one each from Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, backward, minority and Kapu communities. YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is the current Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh is the first state in India to have three capital cities; there are Visakhapatnam (Executive capital), Amaravati (Legislative capital) and Kurnool (Judiciary). Andhra Pradesh High Court imposed a stay on implementation of 3 capitals. Andhra Pradesh is the first state to be formed on a linguistic basis in India on 1 October 1953. On 2 June 2014, Telangana was separated from the northwestern part of Andhra Pradesh as the newly formed state with Hyderabad as its capital.

GRSE Kolkata launches 'Himgiri', its first ship of Project 17A

- Himgiri, which is the first of the three Project 17A ships being built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata was launched. She made her first contact with the waters of Hoogly River at the launch ceremony where Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat was the Chief Guest.
- Under the Project 17A program, a total of seven ships, four at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three ships at GRSE are being built with enhanced stealth features, advanced indigenous weapon and sensor fit along with several other improvements.
- Launch of 'Himgiri' has showcased GRSE's commitment towards the building of three state-of-the-art warships of P17A for Indian Navy. Over the years, GRSE has emerged as a leading shipyard having built over 100 ships. The yard has scaled up its infrastructure and skill sets to meet new challenges in building of P17A ships.
- P17A ships are the first gas turbine propulsion and largest combat platforms ever built at GRSE. Since its inception, Project 17A has upheld India's vision for Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Gujarat gets new online fire safety approval system

- A new mechanism for approval and renewal of fire safety certifications for buildings has been put in place in Gujarat by bringing the entire process online through a portal called Fire Safety COP, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said.
- It was approved and will be implemented from January 26, comes after recent incidents of fire in COVID-19 facilities in which several patients died, including in Rajkot on November 27. Gujarat will be the first state to do this.

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

The first Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, Iran and Uzbekistan on joint use of Chabahar Port will be held

- The first Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, Iran and Uzbekistan on the joint use of Chabahar Port was held virtually on December 14, 2020. During the meeting, the participants discussed joint use of Chabahar Port for trade and transit purposes and enhanced regional connectivity. All sides also noted the significant role played by Chabahar port for the region to deliver humanitarian assistance during the COVID pandemic.
- All sides welcomed India's proposal to hold "Chabahar Day" on the sidelines of the International Maritime Summit scheduled to be hosted by India in January 2021. India welcomes the interest of Uzbekistan to use the Chabahar port as a transit port.

The Chabahar port is being considered a gateway to golden opportunities for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with central Asian countries besides ramping up trade among the three countries in the wake of Pakistan denying transit access to New Delhi. Under an agreement signed between India and Iran in May 2016, India is to equip and operate two berths in Chabahar Port Phase-I with capital investment of USD 85.21 million and annual revenue expenditure of USD 22.95 million on a 10-year lease.

PM Narendra Modi lights up 'Swarnim Vijay Mashaal to begin 50th anniversary celebrations of Indo-Pak War

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi lights up 'Swarnim Vijay Mashaal and begin 50th anniversary celebrations of Indo-Pak War. Various commemorative events are planned across the nation and the inaugural event was held at the National War Memorial in New Delhi.
- Four Victory Mashaals was lit from the Eternal Flame of National War Memorial. These Mashaals were carried to various parts of the country including to villages of Param Vir Chakra and MahaVir Chakra Awardees of 1971 War. Soil from the villages of these Awardees and from areas where major battles were fought in 1971 are being brought to the memorial in New Delhi.

In December 1971, the Indian Armed Forces secured a decisive and historic Victory over Pakistan Army, which led to creation of a Nation - Bangladesh and also resulted in the largest Military Surrender after the World War – II. From 16 December, the Nation will be celebrating 50 Years of Indo-Pak War, also called 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh'. Various commemorative events are planned across the Nation.

World's tallest rail bridge on Chenab in J&K likely to be completed by 2021

- Touted as the next man-made wonder, the world's tallest rail bridge on the Chenab in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory is expected to be completed by next year.

- The 1,315-metre-long bridge between Bakkal and Kauri villages of Reasi is coming up at a height of 359 metres. The arched structure will connect Baramulla to Jammu via Udampur, Katra and Qazigund with a travel time of six and a half hours.

India, UK express resolve to boost their educational collaboration

- India and the United Kingdom have expressed the resolve to further strengthen their educational collaboration.
- In a bilateral meeting between Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and United Kingdom Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab in New Delhi, the two countries agreed to deepen their engagement in the field of education and research, and work collaboratively on mutual recognition of academic qualifications over the next year.
- India and UK have also agreed to set up a joint Task Force consisting of designated higher education organizations from both sides to work towards mutual recognition of academic qualifications.

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

PM Narendra Modi & his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina held virtual summit

- A day after celebrating Vijay Diwas, marking India's triumph over Pakistan in 1971 that led to the birth of Bangladesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is held a virtual summit with his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina to discuss ways and means on how to strengthen bilateral ties and cooperation in the post-Covid era.
- According to sources, India and Bangladesh have been putting significant efforts to enhance ties in transport and connectivity as the leadership in both countries has shown commitment to revive and operationalise six pre-1965 rail links between India and Bangladesh.
- India and Bangladesh have continued to maintain regular exchanges at the highest level. Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a video message on the historic occasion of Mujib Borsho in March 2020.
- Bangladesh is commemorating 2020-21 as "Mujib Borsho" on the occasion of the centennial birth anniversary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding leader of the country.

Bangladesh is a country in South Asia. It shares land borders with India and Myanmar (Burma). Nepal, Bhutan and China are located near Bangladesh but do not share a border with it. Dhaka is its capital and largest city, followed by Chittagong, which has the country's largest port. Bangladeshi taka is the currency of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Mohammad Abdul Hamid is the 16th and current President of Bangladesh, in office since April 2013. Sheikh Hasina is the current Prime Minister of the Bangladesh.

Skill India Establishes First Centre of Excellence for Skill Development in Power Sector

- Skill India has established first Centre of Excellence for Skill Development in 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 said that sustained efforts towards boosting the growth of renewable energy sector will play a significant role to fulfill Prime Minister's vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.
- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India, the Ministry of National Education and Youth, Government of the French Republic and Schneider Electric, announced the inauguration of first Center of Excellence (CoE) for skill development in power sector in the campus of National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) located at Gwal Pahari, Gurugram (Haryana) to create a robust cadre of certified trainers and assessors across the country.

Indian Railways develops National Rail Plan to increase modal share of Railways

- In an endeavour to address the inadequacies of capacity constraints and improve its modal share in the total freight ecosystem of the country, Indian Railways has come up with a Draft National Rail Plan.
- A long term strategic plan called the National Rail Plan has been developed to plan infrastructural capacity enhancement along with strategies to increase modal share of the Railways. It will be a common platform for all future infrastructural, business and financial planning of the Railways.
- It will also increase the modal share of Railways from 27 per cent currently to 45 per cent in freight by 2030 as part of a national commitment to reduce Carbon emission and to continue to sustain it and net Zero Carbon emission by 2030.

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

India adds Tso Kar wetland complex to Ramsar Site

- In a significant development to conservation of biodiversity, India has added Tso Kar wetland complex to the Ramsar Site. Tso Kar, the 42nd Wetland of International Importance, is at more than 4,500 metres above sea level in the Changthang region of Ladakh.
- The complex includes two connected lakes, the freshwater Startsapuk Tso and the larger hypersaline Tso Kar, with presentation of a notable example of two such lakes existing in close proximity.
- The name Tso Kar refers to the white salt efflorescence on the margins of the lake caused by the evaporation of the saline waters. The local climate is arid, and glacial melt water is the primary water source for the lakes. The lakes and in particular the presence of fresh water attract biodiversity in a biologically sparse region.
- The site is habitat of numerous threatened species including the endangered saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and Asiatic wild dog or dhole (*Cuon alpinus laniger*), and the vulnerable snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*).
- The Site also acts as an important stopover ground for migratory birds along the Central Asian Flyway and is one of the most important breeding areas in India for the black-necked crane (*Grus nigricollis*).
- Tso Moriri or Lake Moriri or “Mountain Lake”, is a lake in the Changthang Plateau in Ladakh. It was notified in 2002 under the List of Ramsar Wetland sites under the Ramsar Convention.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. It is also known as the Convention on Wetlands. It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the convention was signed in 1971. Ramsar convention is an inter-governmental environmental treaty established by UNESCO and came into force in 1975. A Ramsar site is a wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Goa Liberation Day 2020

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant extended greetings on the Goa Liberation Day 2020. December 19 is observed as Goa Liberation Day to commemorate the role of India's armed forces in liberating Goa from Portuguese rule.
- The Portuguese ruled several Indian territories including Goa for over four centuries. But the Indian state was finally liberated Goa from the Portuguese occupation after a brief military operation in 1961.
- And since then December 19 is observed as the Goa Liberation Day every year. The day marks the Independence of Goa from centuries of Portuguese colonisation.

- **Portugal had colonised several territories in India since 1510.** However, by the end of 19th century, **their rule was limited to few Indian territories including Goa, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli.**
- **The movement to end Portuguese rule in Goa was started with low-level revolts. After India got its Independence in 1947, the territory of Goa was still under the control of Portugal.** Despite several rounds of negotiations and diplomatic parleys, Portugal did not agree to free Goa and other Indian territories.

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

India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) conducted

- **The 35th edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) between the Indian Navy and the Indonesian Navy is being conducted from 17 to 18 December 2020.** Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kulish, an indigenously built missile corvette along with P8I Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) undertook coordinated patrol with Indonesian Naval Ship KRI Cut Nyak Dien, a Kapitan Pattimura (Parchim I) class corvette and a MPA of the Indonesian Navy.
- **As part of Government of India’s vision of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region), the Indian Navy has been proactively engaging with countries in the Indian Ocean Region** for Coordinated Patrols, cooperation in EEZ Surveillance, Passage exercises and Bilateral/ Multi-lateral exercises, towards enhancing regional maritime security. India and Indonesia have especially enjoyed a close and friendly relationship covering a wide spectrum of activities and interactions, which have strengthened over the years.
- **To reinforce maritime links, the two navies have been carrying out CORPAT along their International Maritime Boundary Line since 2002,** with the aim of ensuring safety and security of shipping and international trade in the region. CORPATs build up understanding and interoperability between navies and facilitate institution of measures to prevent and suppress Illegal Unreported Unregulated (IUU) fishing, drug trafficking, maritime terrorism, armed robbery and piracy.

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

India International Science Festival (IISF) 2020 organized

- **India International Science Festival (IISF) 2020 is organized on 22 December** on virtual platforms. Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered the inaugural address at the India International Science Festival, IISF 2020 through video conferencing.
- This was the **largest science festival to be held on virtual platform. The central theme of this year’s festival is “Science for Self-reliant India and Global Welfare”.** 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.
- 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. **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.

MHA bans NSCN (K) along with all its factions, wings and front organisations

- **Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has declared **National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), NSCN(K) along with all its factions, wings and front organisations as an unlawful association under sections of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.**
- The Central Government is of the opinion that the **NSCN (K), is continuously engaging in unlawful and violent activities** thereby undermining the authority of the Government of India and the Governments of Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. It said, NSCN (K) is spreading terror and panic among the people; **aligning with other unlawful associations like the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and Mettei organisations of Manipur;** and indulging in kidnapping for ransom and extortion of money. It further said that the NSCN (K) has been obtaining assistance from anti-India forces in other countries to procure arms.

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is an **Indian law aimed at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.** Its **main objective was to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India.** Passed in 1967, the law aims at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India. The Act assigns absolute power to the central government, by way of which if the Centre deems an activity as unlawful then it may, by way of an Official Gazette, declare it so. It has death penalty and life imprisonment as highest punishments. **The 2004 amendment, added “terrorist act” to the list of offences to ban organisations for terrorist activities, under which 34 outfits were banned.** Till 2004, “unlawful” activities referred to actions related to secession and cession of territory. In August 2019, Parliament cleared the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019** to designate individuals as terrorists on certain grounds provided in the Act.

ISGF launched the first of its kind project in south Asia on peer to Peer (P2P) Trading of Rooftop Solar Power on Blockchain in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

- **Uttar Pradesh launched India and South Asia’s first blockchain-enabled Peer to Peer (P2P) Trading of Rooftop Solar Power.**
- **Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation (UPPCL), Madhyanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (MUVNL) and Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) hosted the first of its kind pilot project involving energy generated from solar rooftop systems installed on buildings in Lucknow.**
- The project is being **implemented by India Smart Grid Forum (ISGF) along with blockchain technology partner Power Ledger, Australia and Abajyon Consulting** who supported the integration of blockchain platform with UPPCL’s billing system.

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

UN Women, Kerala government collaborate for India’s first Gender Data Hub

- **The Kerala government and UN Women have collaborated to establish India’s first Gender Data Hub.** A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was **signed in this regard in the presence of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan**
- **The Gender Hub builds on the goals established through the International Conference on Gender Equality** held in November 2015, to collect, analyse and use more nuanced data and inform policy formulation in a manner that centre-stages women’s rights.
- **Three key areas of co-operation, as specified in the MoU, will be setting up the Gender Data Centre at The Gender Park, launching the second edition of the International Conference on Gender Equality, and increasing engagement on the global normative frameworks on gender equality and empowerment of women.**

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women, is a United Nations entity working for the empowerment of women. UN Women became operational in January 2011. President of Chile Michelle Bachelet was the inaugural Executive Director, and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is the current Executive Director. It is headquartered in New York, USA.

Government of India constituted a High Level Committee to commemorate 125th Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

- The Government of India has decided to constitute a High Level Committee to commemorate the 125th Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.
- The Committee will decide on the activities for a one year long commemoration starting 23rd January, 2021. The High Level Committee will be headed by Home Minister Amit Shah.
- The Commemoration is being held as a tribute and as a mark of gratitude to the colossal contribution Netaji made to India's freedom struggle. The members of the Committee will include experts, historians, authors, family members of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, as well as eminent persons associated with Azad Hind Fauj-INA.
- The Committee will also lend guidance to the commemoration activities in Delhi, Kolkata and other places associated with Netaji and Azad Hind Fauj, both in India as well as overseas.

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

Shri Piyush Goyal launches India-Australia Economic Strategy Report

- Union Minister of Railways, Commerce and industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public distribution Shri Piyush Goyal said that there is tremendous scope for Australian investment into India as we ease our FDI norms & open up different sectors. The Minister also launched India-Australia Economic Strategy Report.
- The Minister said that in the backdrop of the pandemic, the focus of the industry, which had been to bring back economic activity, is yielding very good results. The economy is showing a V-shaped recovery. "India has utilised the opportunity thrown up by COVID 19 to further liberalise our economy & make it easier to do business in India. We are one of the most open economies today particularly with FDI in automatic route up to 100% in almost all sector expect."

Piyush Vedprakash Goyal is currently taking charge as Minister of Railways, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.. He was elected as the BJP candidate from Maharashtra for the Rajya Sabha on 3 June 2016.

PM Narendra Modi launched 'SEHAT', Health Insurance Scheme for UT of J&K

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) SEHAT scheme via video-conferencing to extend health insurance coverage to all residents of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched 'SEHAT' - Health Insurance Scheme for the entire Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to cover the remaining One crore population which was not covered under Ayushman Bharat Scheme.

- Under Ayushman Bharat PM Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), **eligible beneficiaries were covered under Health Cover of Rs 5 Lakh**. Under PMJAY scheme, **30 lakh people are being covered in J&K**.
- With the launch of ‘SEHAT’ Scheme by the Prime Minister **J&K will be among the first in the country to achieve Universal Health Coverage**.
- Programmes will be **organized across the UT and the distribution of Golden cards** will be started on the same day. The scheme will **provide free-of-cost insurance cover to all residents of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir**, the PMO said, adding that it will **extend financial cover of up to Rs.5 lakh per family on a floater basis to all residents of the UT**.

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) of the Government of India to provide free access to healthcare for **40% of people in the country**. People using the program access their own **primary care services** from a family doctor. When anyone needs additional care, then AB PM-JAY provides free **secondary health care** for those needing specialist treatment and **tertiary health care** for those requiring hospitalization. It was launched in September 2018 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. PM-JAY offers service to **50 crore (500 million) people** and is the world’s largest government sponsored healthcare program. The scheme has the benefit cover of **Rs. 5 lakh per family per year**.

Union Cabinet approves 100% FDI in DTH service

- The Union Cabinet approved **100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in direct-to-home (DTH) service**, extension of the **license period from 10 years to 20** and a **reduced licence fee**.
- Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar said, “The Commerce Ministry had already spoken of **100% FDI in the DTH sector**, but because of the guidelines issued by the **Information and Broadcasting [I&B] Ministry**, the FDI was limited to **49%**.”

‘FDI’ or ‘Foreign Direct Investment’ means investment through capital instruments by a person resident outside India –in an **unlisted Indian company** or in **ten per cent or more of the post-issue paid-up equity capital on a fully diluted basis of a listed Indian company**. In India, foreign investment can be made **mainly under two routes: Automatic Route**: Under the Automatic Route, the non-resident investor or the Indian company does not require any approval from Government of India for the investment. **Reserve Bank of India is in charge of Automatic Route. Government Approval Route**: Under the Government Approval Route, prior to investment, approval from the Government of India is required. **A foreign direct investment (FDI) is an investment in the form of a controlling ownership in a business in one country by an entity based in another country**.

Anji Khad, India’s first cable-stayed rail bridge

- The Railways is developing India’s first ever cable-stayed bridge, called **Anji Khad**. It is being built at a height of **331 metres above the riverbed**, and will connect **Katra and Resai in the Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir**.
- **Anji Khad is a part of the complex Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project** and is being developed by the **Konkan Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL)**.
- “**Engineering Marvel in the Making**: The work on magnificent Anji Khad Bridge at night, **India’s first cable stayed rail bridge**, is going on in full swing. **A part of Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link project**, it will connect **Katra & Reasi in Jammu and Kashmir**.”

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

In a first, Uttarakhand government, IIRS to study urban flooding in Dehradun

- The Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS) is planning to undertake the first of its kind study of urban flood patterns in the state capital. It is the **first time such a study is being undertaken in any city of Uttarakhand**.
- “Under this study, maps with high-resolution of around 1 cm, of the **flood-prone areas will be developed by using high tech drones**. Based on these maps which also capture land undulations on a very high resolution, we will **understand the drainage and passageways for rainwater and flooding patterns around Rispana (a tributary of the Song River that drains central Dehradun) and Bindal (which also flows through Dehradun and is fed by a number of springs at the base of Mussoorie ridge) rivers in Dehradun**,”.

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

Navies of India, Vietnam to hold PASSEX in South China Sea

- Indian Navy ship INS Kiltan, which arrived in Vietnam to deliver relief material under Mission Sagar-III, will hold a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Vietnamese Navy in the South China Sea (SCS).
- Mission Sagar was launched as a part of India's HADR assistance to friendly foreign countries during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The exercise has been conducted at a time when China has been expanding its military assertiveness in the South China Sea notwithstanding mounting global concerns and criticism.

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

Vietnam, an important country of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), has territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea region. India has oil exploration projects in the Vietnamese waters in the South China Sea. China claims sovereignty over all of the South China Sea, a huge source of hydrocarbons. **However, several ASEAN member countries, including Vietnam, Philippines and Brunei, have made counterclaims.** Chinese claims in the South China Sea are described in part by the nine-dash line.

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launches E-Sampada web portal and mobile app on Good Governance Day

- Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched E-Sampada, a new web portal and mobile app on Good Governance Day.
- The new application provides a single window for all the services including allotment for over one lakh government residential accommodations, office space allotment to government organisations in 45 office complexes in 28 cities and booking of 1,176 holiday home rooms. The portal provides online facility to users across India to lodge complaints, submit documents and appear for virtual hearing.

Hardeep Singh Puri is the current Civil Aviation Minister of India and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in India. He is a 1974 batch Indian Foreign Service officer who served as the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations from 2009 to 2013. He formerly served as President of the United Nations Security Council and he represents Rajya Sabha from Uttar Pradesh.

Assam cabinet approves Bill to make Bodo associate official language of state

- The Assam cabinet approved the Assam Official Language Amendment Bill for making Bodo (in Devanagari script) an associate official language of the state.
- The development comes 11 months after signing of the third Bodo peace accord between the Centre, Assam government, four Bodo rebel groups and two Bodo organizations, which included declaring Bodo as associate official language as one of the clauses.
- According to the Census 2011, there are around 14.16 lakh Bodo speakers in Assam (4.53% of the total population of the state).
- The cabinet also approved setting up of the Bodo Kachari autonomous welfare council-another clause of the Bodo accord signed in January this year. A proposal for amendments to the Autonomous Council Acts of Kamtapur, Motak and Moran was also approved wherein provisions were introduced for formation of interim governments.

Jagdish Mukhi is the current Governor of Assam and Assam is known for Assam tea and Assam silk. Dispur is the capital of the state of Assam. Guwahati is the largest city of Assam and Northeastern India. Sarbananda Sonowal is current the Chief Minister of Assam. In 1874, on the formation of Assam as the Chief Commissioner's Province, it was chosen as the headquarters of the new administration because of its convenient location between the Brahmaputra and Surma valleys and more so because the climate of Shillong was much cooler than tropical India. Shillong remained the capital of undivided Assam until the creation of the new state of Meghalaya on 21 January 1972, when Shillong became the capital of Meghalaya, and Assam moved its capital to Dispur in Guwahati.

Madhya Pradesh cabinet approves Dharma Swatantrya (Religious Freedom) Bill 2020

- 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.
- Any marriage solemnized only for the purpose of converting a person will be considered null and void under the provisions of this proposed legislation. A provision is also being made that those willing to convert need to apply before the district administration two months in advance. The new Act will replace the Freedom of Religion Act 1968 in the state of Madhya Pradesh and its rules which were made in the year 1969.

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

FASTag for all vehicles in country to be mandatory from January 2021

- Road Transport & Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari announced that FASTag is being made mandatory for all vehicles in the country from New Year. Mr Gadkari said, FASTag will be enforced from 1st of January, 2021.
- This has been done to help the commuters to make payments at the toll plaza without stopping the vehicle for cash payment. FASTags are now being widely used in India ever since the MoRTH made them mandatory for vehicles at toll plazas on the national highway.

India to become 5th largest economy in 2025, 3rd largest by 2030

- India, which appears to have been pushed back to being the world's sixth biggest economy in 2020, will again overtake the UK to become the fifth largest in 2025 and race to the third spot by 2030, a think tank said.

- India had overtaken the UK in 2019 to become the fifth largest economy in the world but has been relegated to 6th spot in 2020.
- “India has been knocked off course somewhat through the impact of the pandemic. As a result, after overtaking the UK in 2019, the UK overtakes India again in this year’s forecasts and stays ahead till 2024 before India takes over again,” the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) said in an annual report published. The UK appears to have overtaken India again during 2020 as a result of the weakness of the rupee, it said. The CEBR forecasts that the Indian economy will expand by 9 per cent in 2021 and by 7 per cent in 2022.

Nashik leads wine capital race with Geographical Indication tag

- Nashik’s ambitions of claiming the wine capital of India status received an impetus after the Centre accorded it the coveted Geographical Indication tag. The city has been branded Nashik Valley Wine to give wine production a push.
- “The particular taste of any fruit or crop is attributable to the soil in the region. The soil and the geographical condition of Nashik are unique. That was the reason why we could produce a particular variety of grape that aided in wine production”.

A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. In order to function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given place. In addition, the qualities, characteristics or reputation of the product should be essentially due to the place of origin. Geographical Indications protection is granted through the TRIPS Agreement of WTO. India, as a member of the WTO, enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 has come into force with effect from 15 September 2003. GIs have been defined under Article 22 (1) of the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. Darjeeling tea became the first GI tagged product in India, in 2004–2005.

International



UAE: First Arab Country to generate electricity from coal

- **The United Arab Emirates** is set to become the first Arab Gulf country to generate electricity from coal. As governments increasingly turn to cleaner fuels and the price of renewable energy falls, it may also be the last.
- **Dubai is starting up the \$3.4 billion Hassyan coal plant**, with capacity being increased from an initial 600 mega watts to 2,400 by 2023. Japan's Jera Co. will supply coal under a long-term agreement with Acwa Power of Saudi Arabia, which is developing the plant.

Abu Dhab is the capital and the second most populous city of the United Arab Emirates (the most populous being Dubai), and also capital of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the largest of the UAE's seven emirates. United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federal sovereign absolute monarchy in Western Asia. **Khalifa Al Nahyan** is the current President of the United Arab Emirates. **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum** is the Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Ruler of the Emirate of Dubai. United Arab Emirates dirham is the currency of the United Arab Emirates. It is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the west and south and by Oman to the east and northeast. The land border with Qatar in the Khawr al Udayd area is a source of ongoing dispute.

Scotland first in the world to make sanitary products free

- **Scotland made sanitary products free to all women, becoming the first nation in the world to take such a step against "period poverty."**
- The measure makes tampons and sanitary pads available at designated public places such as community centres, youth clubs and pharmacies, **at an estimated annual cost to taxpayers of 24 million pounds (\$32 million U.S.).**
- The Period Products (Free Provision) Scotland Bill passed unanimously, and **First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon** called it **"an important policy for women and girls."**

Scotland is a country that is part of the United Kingdom. **Edinburgh** is the capital city of Scotland. **Nicola Sturgeon** is the current First Minister of Scotland.

Scottish homes to be first in world to use 100% green hydrogen

- **Hundreds of homes in Scotland** will soon become the first in the world to use 100% green hydrogen to heat their properties and cook their meals as part of a new trial that could help households across the country replace fossil fuel gas.
- **Some 300 homes in Fife** will be fitted with free hydrogen boilers, heaters and cooking appliances to be used for more than four years in the largest test of whether zero carbon hydrogen, made using renewable energy and water, could help meet Britain's climate goals.
- They will begin to **receive green gas from the end of 2022, at no extra charge, and up to 1,000 homes** could be included if the first phase of the trial is completed successfully.

Canada plans digital tax in 2022 on global tech giants such as Facebook, Google

- **Canada plans to impose a tax on corporations providing digital services from 2022** that will stay in place until major nations come up with a coordinated approach on taxation.

- **The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development is working on a common approach to ensure digital behemoths**, such as Alphabet Inc's Google and Facebook Inc, pay their share of taxes as the coronavirus hammers budgets.

Canada is a country located in the northern part of North America. Canada is the world's second-largest country by total area. Elizabeth II is the Head of the Commonwealth and queen regnant of seven independent Commonwealth countries: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan, and Ceylon. Its capital is Ottawa, and its three largest metropolitan areas are Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Canadian dollar is the currency of Canada. Justin Pierre James Trudeau is serving as the 23rd and current Prime Minister of Canada since 2015.

Azerbaijan fully reclaims lands around Nagorno-Karabakh

- **Azerbaijan completed reclaiming territory ceded by Armenia under a Russia-brokered peace deal** that ended six weeks of fierce fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev hailed the restoration of control over the areas as a "historic victory" and a demonstration of his nation's "unbending spirit."
- **Turkey, which has strongly backed its ally Azerbaijan**, has extended its clout in the region. **Russian and Turkish military officials signed documents to set up a joint monitoring center to ensure the fulfillment of the peace deal.**
- **The peace agreement was celebrated as a victory in Azerbaijan**, but **sparked mass protests in Armenia**, with thousands taking to the streets of the capital of Yerevan to demand the ouster of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Several hundred protesters again rallied in Yerevan, repeating the demand.
- **Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994. That conflict left not only Nagorno-Karabakh itself but large chunks of surrounding lands in Armenian hands.**

Azerbaijan is a country in the Caucasus region of Eurasia. Baku is the capital and largest city of Azerbaijan, as well as the largest city on the Caspian Sea and of the Caucasus region. The city is renowned for its harsh winds, which is reflected in its nickname, the "City of Winds". The manat is the currency of Azerbaijan. Ilham Aliyev is the fourth president of Azerbaijan, in office since 2003. Ali Hidayat oğlu Asadov is currently serving as the Prime Minister of Azerbaijan following his appointment to the post on 8 October 2019 by President Ilham Aliyev.

Armenia is a country in the South Caucasus region of Eurasia. The dram is the monetary unit of Armenia. Yerevan is the capital and largest city of Armenia as well as one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities. Nikol Pashinyan is currently serving as Prime Minister of Armenia.

In world first, U.K. approves Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use

- **Britain approved Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine jumping ahead of the United States and Europe to become the West's first country to formally endorse a jab.**
- **Prime Minister Boris Johnson touted the medicine authority's approval as a global win and a ray of hope amid the gloom of the novel coronavirus which has killed nearly 1.5 million people globally, hammered the world economy and upended normal life.**

Boris Johnson invited as 2021 Republic Day chief guest

- **India has invited U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson as chief guest for the Republic Day celebrations in January 2021 and a decision on this is awaited from London.**
- **There has been top level visit since U.S. President Donald Trump's visit in February 2020 due to COVID-19. Also, with the number of COVID-19 cases in India crossing 9.5 million, there is still no clarity on the Republic Day celebrations in 2021. Then-Prime Minister John Major was the chief guest at the event in 1993, the last time India had invited a dignitary from the UK.**

UN, Ethiopia sign deal for humanitarian access to Tigray

- The United Nations says it and Ethiopia's government have signed a deal to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to the embattled Tigray region, at least the parts under federal government control.
- This will allow the **first aid to the region of 6 million people** that has been cut off during fighting that began a month ago between the federal and Tigray regional governments. Each regards the other as illegal in a power struggle that has been months in the making.

Ethiopia is a country in the Horn of Africa and its capital and largest city is Addis Ababa. The birr is the unit of currency in Ethiopia. Abiy Ahmed Ali is serving as the 15th and current Prime Minister of Ethiopia since 2 April 2018.

Lebanon Reform, Recovery & Reconstruction Framework (3RF)

- The Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) is part of a **comprehensive response to the massive explosion on the Port of Beirut**. It is a people-centered **recovery and reconstruction framework focusing on a period of 18 months** that will bridge the immediate humanitarian response and the medium-term recovery and reconstruction efforts to put Lebanon on a path of sustainable development.
- The 3RF aims to help Lebanon achieve **three central goals in response to the Beirut port explosion**. First, a people-centered recovery that returns sustainable livelihoods to the affected population; improves social justice for all, including women, the poor, and other vulnerable groups; and ensures participatory decision making.
- Second, the reconstruction of critical assets, services, and infrastructure that provides equal access for all to quality basic services and enables sustainable economic recovery. Third, the implementation of reform to support reconstruction and to help restore people's trust in governmental institutions by improving governance.

In UK, examining the world's first 'foul air death'

- An important inquest is underway in London to determine whether air pollution caused or contributed to the death in February 2013 of a nine-year-old child, Ella Adoo Kissi-Debrah, who lived with her mother near a busy road in London.
- Ella's death could become possibly the first in the world to be legally certified as having been caused by "air pollution". For three years before she died, Ella Adoo Kissi-Debrah had suffered seizures, and had made 27 visits to hospital after having problems breathing.
- She lived less than 30 metres from the South Circular, a busy and congested arterial road in **Lewisham in southeast London**. If the campaign by the family is successful — Ella's mother Rosamund, an important voice in the clean air movement, has set up **The Ella Roberta Family Foundation to help improve the lives of children suffering from asthma** — Ella will become the **first person in the United Kingdom**, and possibly in the world, to have air pollution recorded as the cause of death.

PoK government signs agreements with Chinese firm to build 700 MW hydropower project

- The government in **Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir** has signed agreements with a Chinese company and a local renewable energy firm for the construction of 700 MW hydropower project at an estimated cost of \$1.35 billion in the region as part of the ambitious China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
- **China Gezhouba Group** and its local partner **Laraib Group Pakistan** are the shareholders of the 'Azad Pattan Hydropower Project', which is located on Jhelum River in Sadhanoti district of PoK.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir ('Free Jammu and Kashmir') is a region administered by Pakistan as a nominally self-governing entity and constitutes the western portion of the larger Kashmir region, which has been the subject of a dispute between India and Pakistan since 1947. The territory has a parliamentary form of government modelled after the British Westminster system, with its capital located at Muzaffarabad. Masood Khan is a Pakistani diplomat who serves as the 27th President of Azad Kashmir.

Xi declares end to extreme poverty in China, meeting party goal

- **Chinese President Xi Jinping declared victory in an eight-year drive to eradicate extreme poverty in the world's most populous nation**, a key goal of the ruling Communist Party. After assuming leadership of the Communist Party eight years ago, **Xi made the drive to eliminate extreme poverty by 2020 one of his top goals**.
- The party defines it as a step to achieving what it calls a **“moderately prosperous” society**, a key part of its moves to improve living standards and underpin its claim to political legitimacy. **China's poverty line is slightly below the absolute poverty level of the World Bank, at market exchange rates**.

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

Chinese scientists make world's first light-based quantum computer

- **Chinese scientists claim to have created the world's first light-based quantum computer** which can solve problems far faster than a **classical supercomputer**, an advance hailed by experts as a **“major achievement”** that provides a fundamentally different approach to designing such powerful machines.
- **Jiuzhang, the quantum computer**, can reliably demonstrate **“quantum computational advantage”**, a milestone in computing. **Quantum computers excel at running simulations that are impossible for conventional computers**, leading to breakthroughs in materials science, artificial intelligence and medicine. Jiuzhang takes its name from an ancient Chinese mathematical text.
- **Jiuzhang takes its name from an ancient Chinese mathematical text**. It can perform an **extremely esoteric calculation, called Gaussian boson sampling, in 200 seconds**. The same task would take the world's fastest classical supercomputer Fugaku around 600 million years, the report said. It is the second such milestone after Google declared its 53-qubit quantum computer had achieved such a breakthrough last year.

Quantum computing is the use of quantum phenomena such as superposition and entanglement to perform computation. Computers that perform quantum computations are known as quantum computers. Quantum computing began in the early 1980s, when physicist Paul Benioff proposed a quantum mechanical model of the Turing machine. Richard Feynman and Yuri Manin later suggested that a quantum computer had the potential to simulate things that a classical computer could not. On 23 October 2019, Google AI, in partnership with the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), claimed to have performed a quantum computation that is infeasible on any classical computer. The most widely used model is the quantum circuit. Quantum circuits are based on the quantum bit, or “qubit”, which is somewhat analogous to the bit in classical computation.

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

- **Bangladesh signed its first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Bhutan allowing duty free access to a range of goods between the two countries**. This is the **first PTA Bangladesh has signed with any country in the world**.
- **The agreement was signed on the occasion marking the 50 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries. In 1971, Bhutan was the first country in the world, followed by India as the second, to recognise Bangladesh as an independent country.**
- **Under the PTA 100 Bangladeshi products will get duty free access to Bhutan**. At the same time, 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.
- **Goods like Jute and Jute products, baby clothes and accessories, men's trousers, jackets and blazers are among the 100 items from Bangladesh which will get duty free access to Bhutan. On the other hand fruit juice,**

natural honey, wheat flour jams, jellies and lime stone, quartzite etc from Bhutan will have duty free access to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is a country in South Asia. It shares land borders with India and Myanmar (Burma). Nepal, Bhutan and China are located near Bangladesh but do not share a border with it. Dhaka is its capital and largest city, followed by Chittagong, which has the country's largest port. Bangladeshi taka is the currency of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Mohammad Abdul Hamid is the 16th and current President of Bangladesh, in office since April 2013. Sheikh Hasina is the current Prime Minister of the Bangladesh.

Kuwait emir reappoints Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid as PM

- **Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah reappointed Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah as Prime Minister** following parliamentary polls in the Gulf Arab state, which faces its worst economic crisis in decades.
- Sheikh Nawaf who took over the leadership of the Gulf state in September after the death of his brother, also asked Sheikh Sabah to nominate members of a new cabinet. The new cabinet would have to be approved by the Emir, according to a decree carried on state media.

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

India and Qatar to create special Task-Force to further facilitate investments by QIA into India

- **India and Qatar decided to create a special Task-Force to further facilitate investments by Qatar Investment Authority into India.** Prime Minister Narendra Modi while speaking on telephone with Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of Qatar also resolved to explore Qatari investments in the entire energy value-chain in India.
- Both the leaders discussed the robust cooperation between **both countries in the fields of investment flows and energy security, and reviewed recent positive developments** in this regard. The leaders agreed to look forward to meeting in-person after the normalisation of the public-health situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Qatar is a country located in Western Asia, occupying the small Qatar Peninsula on the northeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Its sole land border is with neighbouring Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) monarchy Saudi Arabia to the south, with the rest of its territory surrounded by the Persian Gulf. Doha is the capital and most populous city of the State of Qatar. The Qatari riyal is the currency of the State of Qatar. Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is the Emir of Qatar. Khalid bin Khalifa is serving as Prime Minister of Qatar and Minister of the Interior from 28 January 2020.

Morocco latest country to normalise relations with Israel in US-brokered deal

- **Morocco has become the latest Arab country to agree to normalise relations with Israel in a deal brokered with US help.**
- Under the agreement, Morocco will establish full diplomatic relations and resume official contacts with Israel, grant overflights and also direct flights to and from Israel for all Israelis. **Morocco is the fourth Arab country since August to strike a deal aimed at normalising relations with Israel after the UAE, Bahrain and Sudan.**

Morocco is a country located in the Maghreb region of North Africa. Rabat is the capital city. Saadeddine Othmani has been Prime Minister of Morocco. Moroccan dirham is the official monetary currency of Morocco.

Cuba's president to drop its dual currency system from next month

- **Cuba will unify its monetary system on New Year's Day, President Miguel Diaz-Canel closing the door on more than 25 years with two national currencies in circulation.**

- **Diaz-Canel said that the country will revert to using its peso, which has an official exchange rate of 24 for a U.S. dollar. It will drop the convertible peso, which is worth about \$1.**

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

Indian-origin Anil Soni appointed as CEO for WHO Foundation

- **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 Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus 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.

World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health. It was established on 7 April 1948, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The current Director-General of WHO is Tedros Adhanom, who started his five-year term on 1 July 2017.

New Height for Mount Everest

- **Nepal and China have announced the revised height of Mount Everest as 8,848.86 metres. The new height is 86 cm more than the previous measurement. The new height of 8,848.86 meters replaced the long-associated 8,848 metre-height, which was, as per a measurement carried out by the Survey of India in 1954.**
- **The common declaration meant that the two countries have shed their long-standing difference in opinion about the mountain's height — 8,844 m claimed by China and 8,847 m by Nepal.**
- **Everest is also known as Sagarmatha in Nepal and Mount Qomolangma in China.** The mountain lies on the border between Nepal and Tibet and the summit can be accessed from both sides.

Mount Everest 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. It was first scaled in 1953 by the Indian-Nepalese Tenzing Norgay and New Zealander Edmund Hillary. Mount K2, at 8,611 metres above sea level, is the second highest mountain in the world. Avtar Singh Cheema was the first Indian man and sixteenth person in world to climb Mount Everest.

Special Annual Meeting 2021 to take place in Singapore in May

- **The World Economic Forum will convene the Special Annual Meeting 2021 in Singapore from 13-16 May. It will return to Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, for the Annual Meeting 2022. The Special Annual Meeting 2021 in Singapore will be the first global leadership event to address worldwide recovery from the pandemic.** This in-person meeting will bring together leaders to focus on shaping solutions to the world's most pressing challenges.

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

San Isidro Movement, posing a stiff challenge to Cuba's authoritarian regime

- **In Cuba, a country under an authoritarian communist regime for more than six decades, a campaign by artists and activists demanding greater freedom of expression is fast grabbing the limelight.**
- **The Movimiento San Isidro, or the San Isidro Movement (MSI), started two years ago to protest state censorship of artistic works, and has now become a platform for Cuban dissidents both within and outside the Caribbean nation.**

- The country's president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, has called MSI "an imperialist reality show to destroy our identity & subjugate us again", calling for it to be "crushed."

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

Maldives launches world's first country-wide loyalty program to boost tourism

- Maldives is one the most popular tourist destinations but like every other country its tourism industry has taken a hit due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- To remedy the situation, the country has launched a country-wide reward program that is created in response to the general lack of tourism the country has witnessed as a result of the pandemic.
- The three-tiered loyalty program will offer luxury with the most exclusive privileges and unique benefits. It is the world's first loyalty program for a country and could be a pivotal point for Maldives where tourism is one of the major industries.

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

'Swadhinata Sarak' between Bangladesh and India will be opened on 26 March next year

- Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen has said that the 'SwadhinataSarak' between Bangladesh and India will be opened on 26 March next year to mark 50 years of the country's independence and to boost people-to-people ties. He said the road remains functional on the Indian side while it will be connected through Mujibnagar, Meherpur district in Bangladesh.
- He said that Chilahati-Haldibrari rail link which was active till 1965 was inaugurated during the summit meeting between the two Prime Ministers on December 17. The two sides completed negotiations on a water-sharing deal on the Teesta in 2011, but the agreement has been held up since then due to opposition from West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

Norway Research Institute signs an MoU with Clean Ganga Mission for development of sludge management framework

- Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research has signed an MoU with cGanga, a think-tank of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) for development of sludge management framework in India. In the 5th India Water Impact Summit held virtually, Ola Stedje, Research Scientist at NIBIO announced that his company has signed an agreement for development of sludge management framework in India with cGanga, the ministry said. On this occasion, Norwegian Diplomat in India Karina Asbjornsen, said, Norway intends to deepen relationship with India especially in prevention of climate change and conservation of environment.
- India Water Impact 2020 is a five-day long summit, hosting experts and academicians from all over the world to discuss and debate issues related to water conservation, water security and river rejuvenation. The event is co-organised by National Mission for Clean Ganga and Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies.

The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is the implementation wing of National Ganga Council which was set up in October 2016 under the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities order 2016. The order dissolved National Ganga River Basin Authority. The aim is to clean the Ganges and its tributaries in a comprehensive manner. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat is the present Union Cabinet Minister in Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Premier of last African monarchy is first world leader to die of Covid

- Eswatini Prime Minister Ambrose Dlamini died after contracting Covid-19, the first world leader to succumb to the disease.
- Eswatini is Africa's last monarchy. A landlocked nation of 1.1 million people, the southern African nation has been led by King Mswati III since 1986 and was previously known as Swaziland before changing its official name in 2018.
- Following the death of Prime Minister Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini in 2018, Dlamini was selected by King Mswati III to succeed him. He was the youngest prime minister in the country's history, and had no prior government experience.

Eswatini sometimes written in English as eSwatini, and formerly and still commonly known in English as Swaziland (officially renamed in 2018) is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. Mbabane is a city in Eswatini, and is one of the Two Capitals (along with Lobamba), Serving as the Executive capital. Themba Nhlanganiso Masuku is serving as Acting Prime Minister since 13 December 2020. The lilangeni is the currency of Eswatini.

Nepal: Parliament dissolved, Election will be held in two phases in April and May next year

- Triggering protests and the resignations of at least seven Cabinet-rank ministers, Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli dissolved the country's House of Representatives, which is the lower house of Parliament, two years short of its five-year tenure following months of bickering among factions within the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).
- Nepal President Bidhya Devi Bhandari dissolved parliament at the request of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's cabinet. President's office said in a statement that the elections will be held on April 30 and May 10 next year, more than a year ahead of schedule.

Nepal is a landlocked country in South Asia located in the Himalaya. Nepalese rupee is the official currency of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. Constitution of Nepal 2015 is the present governing Constitution of Nepal. Nepal is governed according to the Constitution which came into effect on Sept 20, 2015, regarding the Interim Constitution of 2007. The constitution of Nepal is divided into 35 parts, 308 Articles and 9 Schedules. Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli is currently serving as the Care Prime Minister of Nepal. He was the first elected prime minister under the newly adopted Constitution of Nepal.

Couscous joins UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list

- The United Nations added the Berber dish of couscous to its Intangible Cultural Heritage list after four countries submitted the entry to UNESCO.
- Despite major differences, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania got together to highlight their shared love for the dish, which joined Zambia's Budima dance, Spain's wine horses, Singapore's hawkker culture and other new entrants on UNESCO's list of intangible heritage.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris. Audrey Azoulay appointed as the Director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), becoming the second female leader of the organization.

PM Modi, Sheikh Hasina launch 5th rail link connecting India and Bangladesh

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina launched the fifth rail link connecting both nations during a virtual bilateral summit.
- The 10.5 km long rail link connecting Haldibari in West Bengal to Chilahati in Bangladesh is expected to further strengthen people to people contact and boost trade between the two neighbours.
- A goods train was flagged off by Bangladesh's railway minister Md Nurul Islam Sujan from Chilahati and it entered the Indian side after crossing the international border, said a release issued by Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR).

- At present there are four other operational rail links between both countries. They are, Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh), Gede (India)-Darshana (Bangladesh), Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh) and Radhikapur (India)-Birol (Bangladesh).
- The rail link, 3.5 km of which is on the Indian side and the rest in Bangladesh, was operational till 1965 and was part of the broad-gauge rail route from Kolkata to Siliguri during partition. But the link got disconnected in 1965 after the war with Pakistan.

Israel to hold snap polls next year as Parliament fail to meet deadline to pass Budget

- Israel's parliament, the Knesset, was dissolved after the two main parties in its unity government failed to meet a deadline in a row over state budgets.
- Israel will now hold its fourth elections in two years in March next year, just 12 months after the last round. Two previous elections were inconclusive, resulting in a rare government of national unity. Israel's parliament was automatically dissolved as required by law after a deadline to pass the 2020 state budget expired.

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

Indian submarine INS Sindhuvir officially inducted into Myanmar Navy

- Myanmar officially inducted a submarine handed over by India in the month of October. INS Sindhuvir was commissioned as UMS Minye Theinkhathu and inducted on the 73rd anniversary of the Myanmar Navy.
- This is the first time India has given a submarine to any country and shows growing defence cooperation between the 2 neighbouring countries. The Indian side has been training Myanmar Naval personnel. Last year, Indian and Myanmar naval undertook joint exercises IMNEX 2019 in Bay of Bengal.
- The kilo class submarine has a displacement of 3000 tonnes, a diving depth of 300 meters and top speed at 20 knots. UMS Minye Theinkhathu is named after an ancient warrior and can operate for 45 days. Myanmar has built a submarine base for it in a highly classified location. Kilo class submarines are operated by Indian, Chinese, Russian and Iranian Naval forces and were designed by the Rubin Central Maritime Design Bureau, St Petersburg.

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

Japan adopts green growth plan to go carbon free by 2050

- Japan aims to eliminate gasoline-powered vehicles in about 15 years, the government said in a plan to achieve Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's ambitious pledge to go carbon free by 2050 and generate nearly \$2 trillion growth in green business and investment.
- The "green growth strategy" urges utilities to bolster renewables and hydrogen while calling for auto industries to go carbon free by the mid-2030s.

Naruhito is the Emperor of Japan. He acceded to the Chrysanthemum Throne on 1 May 2019, beginning the Reiwa era, following the abdication of his father, Emperor Akihito, on 30 April 2019. He is the 126th monarch

according to Japan's traditional order of succession. Tokyo is the capital city of Japan and yen is the official currency of Japan and it is the third most traded currency in the foreign exchange market after the United States dollar and the euro.

EU, UK unveil vast trade pact set to enter force on Jan 1

- The European Union and the United Kingdom made public the vast agreement that is likely to govern future trade and cooperation between them from Jan. 1, setting the 27-nation bloc's relations with its former member country and neighbor on a new but far more distant footing.
- EU ambassadors and lawmakers on both sides of the English Channel will now pore over the "EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement," which contains over 1,240 pages of text. EU envoys are expected to meet to discuss the document, drawn up over nine intense months of talks. Businesses, so long left in the dark about what is in store for them, will also be trying to understand its implications.

Brexit ("British" and "exit") is the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom) on 31 January 2020. The UK is to date the first and only country to formally leave the EU after 47 years of membership and cautious integration within the bloc after it first joined its predecessor, the European Communities (EC), on 1 January 1973. It is also thought to be the first country to voluntarily withdraw from an economic and monetary union of countries (although the UK never adopted the Euro). The UK Parliament finally ratified the withdrawal agreement, and the UK left the EU at 11 p.m. GMT on 31 January 2020.

ECONOMY AND FINANCE



Economy News

India's economy slowing the pace of its contraction to 8.6% in the second quarter

- India's economy rebounded sharply in the wake of the reopening from lockdowns, slowing the pace of its contraction to 8.6% in the second quarter, a 'nowcast' in the RBI's monthly bulletin showed.
- Still, the estimate implies that India is likely to have entered a technical recession in the first half of 2020-21 for the first time in its history with two successive quarters of GDP contraction, wrote an RBI official who authored an article in the bulletin.
- An Economic Activity Index, which tracks real-time data from 27 monthly indicators, showed the economy had rebounded sharply from May/June, with industry normalising faster than contact-intensive service sectors, pointing to a short-lived contraction.
- "The index nowcasts GDP growth at (-) 8.6% in Q2, implying that India is likely to have entered a technical recession in the first half," Pankaj Kumar of the RBI's Monetary Policy Department wrote in the article titled 'An Economic Activity Index for India'.

Deflation is generally the decline in the prices for goods and services that occur when the rate of inflation falls below 0%. Deflation will take place naturally, if and when the money supply of an economy is limited. Deflation in an economy indicates deteriorating conditions. Deflation is normally linked with significant unemployment and low productivity levels of good and services. The term "Deflation" is often mistaken with "disinflation." While deflation refers to a decrease in the prices of goods and services in an economy, disinflation is when inflation increases at a slower rate. Stagflation is the combination of high inflation, high unemployment and sluggish economic growth. Inflation is caused by multiple factors, they are 1. Money Supply 2. National Debt 3. Demand-Pull Effect 4. Cost-Push Effect.

Saudi Arabia ranked first across Arab world in Global Artificial Intelligence Index

- Saudi Arabia has been ranked first across the Arab world and 22nd globally in the Global Artificial Intelligence Index, showed Tortoise Intelligence Index report.
- The kingdom ranked second worldwide in the "Government Strategy" standard, and took 9th place globally in the "Operating environment" standard, according to the report.
- The Global AI Index is underpinned by 143 indicators split across seven sub-pillars: Talent, Infrastructure, Operating Environment, Research, Development, Government Strategy and Commercial. Saudi Arabia moved up seven places compared to last year, as it came in 29th across the world in 2019.

India's Amul is now world's 8th largest milk processor

- Amul, a brand of dairy cooperative major Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF), is ranked 8th in the list of top 20 global dairy processors released by the International Farm Comparison Network (IFCN).

- The home-grown dairy giant has moved up one rank since last year's ranking. **In 2018, it emerged as the 9th largest milk processor by IFCN, a global dairy research network.**
- **Amul was ranked at 18th position in 2012, however, in flat 8 years; it has moved 10 notches above to the current 8th position.** New Zealand's Fonterra, Switzerland's Nestle Dairy, Canada's Saputo, US' Dairy Farmers of America, France' Groupe Lactalis, Netherlands' FrieslandCampina, and **Denmark's Arla Foods** have retained their rankings in 2020.

Amul is an Indian dairy cooperative society, based at Anand in the state of Gujarat. Formed in 1946, it is a cooperative brand managed by a cooperative body, the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd. (GCMMF), which today is jointly owned by 3.6 million milk producers in Gujarat. Amul spurred India's White Revolution, which made the country the world's largest producer of milk and milk products.

Bengaluru to host India's first AI-enabled conversational digital persona

- **Accenture and the Museum of Art & Photography (MAP), a private art museum based in Bengaluru, will collaborate to create a digital experience to engage art enthusiasts.**
- **MAP is the custodian of a growing collection of over 18,000 art works, predominantly from the subcontinent and dating from the 10th century to the present.** It will launch a digital version of the museum this month while its flagship physical space will come up in 2021.
- **Accenture Labs, through its Tech4Good initiative, combined advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) with human-centered design, and will create India's first conversational digital persona to help visitors have a more engaging experience.** With this, visitors to the museum will be able to have a lifelike conversation with the persona in the display.

HCL's Roshni tops list of India's richest women

- **HCL Technologies chairperson Roshni Nadar Malhotra, with a net worth of Rs. 54,850 crore, tops the Kotak Wealth Hurun list of India's wealthiest women.**
- **Trailing her is Biocon's Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw with a net worth of Rs. 36,600 crore.** In the third spot is **Leena Gandhi Tewari of the Mumbai-headquartered pharmaceuticals firm USV, with a net worth of Rs. 21,340 crore.**
- **Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw is the wealthiest self-made woman on the list, which features eight dollar billionaires and 38 women with wealth of Rs 1,000 crore and above.** The listing 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.

FM Nirmala Sitharaman releases the 'Smuggling in India Report 2019-20'

- **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated the 63rd Founding Day Celebrations of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI).** On the occasion, Mrs Sitharaman released the Smuggling in India Report 2019-20 which analyses organised smuggling trends on Gold and Foreign Currency, Narcotic Drugs, Security, Environment and Commercial Frauds.
- **On the occasion, Bravery Awards were conferred upon Najimudheen T S of DRI Cochin Zonal Unit and Sumer Sen, an independent witness of a case booked by DRI, Jaipur. The DRI Utkrisht Seva Samman, 2020 was awarded to B. Sankaran, an officer of the 1961 batch of the Indian Revenue Service.**

Nirmala Sitharaman is the current Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs of India. She is currently a member of the Rajya Sabha from Karnataka. Sitharaman formerly served as the Defence Minister of India, thereby becoming India's second female defence minister and also the second female finance minister after Indira Gandhi, and first full-time female Finance Minister. Santosh Kumar Gangwar is the Minister of State with independent charge in the Ministry of Labour and Employment in the Government of India.

Commerce Ministry and AYUSH Ministry decide to set up an AYUSH Export Promotion Council

- **Ministries of Commerce and Industry and AYUSH have decided to work together to set up an Export Promotion Council to boost AYUSH exports.** This decision was taken in a joint review of AYUSH trade and industry by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and AYUSH Minister Shripad Naik.
- **It was also decided that the entire AYUSH sector will work together to achieve price and quality competitiveness to boost exports.** The review was held through video conference. It was attended by nearly 50 industry and trade leaders from the AYUSH Sector. More than 2000 stake-holders of the AYUSH Sector also attended the e-event through live streaming on virtual platforms.

Ayurveda is an alternative medicine system with historical roots in the Indian subcontinent. The theory and practice of Ayurveda is pseudoscientific. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) characterises the **practice of modern medicine by Ayurvedic practitioners as quackery.** In Sushruta Samhita (Sushruta's Compendium), Sushruta wrote that Dhanvantari, Hindu god of Ayurveda, incarnated himself as a king of Varanasi and taught medicine to a group of physicians, including Sushruta. Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (abbreviated as AYUSH) is purposed with developing education, research and propagation of indigenous alternative medicine systems in India. **The Ministry is headed by a Minister of State (Independent Charge), which is currently held by Shripad Yesso Naik.**

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

- **The World Economic Forum announced that it will convene its annual meeting this summer in Singapore instead of the iconic Swiss ski town of Davos** "in light of the current situation with regards to COVID-19 cases."
- The high-profile gathering, which attracts leaders across government, finance and economics, will be **held in the Asian financial hub May 13-16 and return to Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, in 2022**, the World Economic Forum said. The meeting will also include a virtual component to allow greater participation, according to Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Invest India wins United Nations Investment Promotion Award for 2020

- **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.** 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.**

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was established in 1964 as a permanent intergovernmental body. UNCTAD is the part of the United Nations Secretariat dealing with trade, investment, and development issues. The organization's goals are to: "maximize the trade, investment and development opportunities of developing countries and assist them in their efforts to integrate into the world economy on an equitable basis". It is **headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.**

Global m-cap crosses \$100 trillion for the first time, India only 2.4% of it

- **Global market capitalisation or the total value of all listed stocks in the world crossed \$100 trillion mark for the first time led by the tech-driven market rally in the US and China.** On December 5, the world's market capitalisation was at \$100.5 trillion, or about Rs 7,400 lakh crore.
- **A V-shaped recovery of almost 63% from the March low of \$61.6 trillion has helped Global market cap global m-cap reach the milestone.** On March 24, the global market cap had fallen to \$61.6 trillion — a level that was not seen since 2016, according to Bloomberg data. It has risen 15.5% in the year so far from \$87 trillion at the close of 2019.

- A large part of this rally was led by tech stocks in the US, popularly known as FAANGM (Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Google and Microsoft), market players said. At close of trading last week, the US had an m-cap of \$41.6 trillion, while China's was \$10.7 trillion. **India, with a market cap of about Rs 180 lakh crore or \$2.4 trillion, was placed 10th.**

Urban local governance index: Odisha tops the list, Delhi at 13th spot

- Odisha tops the list of states in urban governance followed by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh while Manipur and Nagaland are at the bottom, according to the Urban Governance Index (UGI)-2020 released by the Praja Foundation. Delhi ranks 13th in the list.

Nomura projects India to be the fastest growing Asian economy in 2021

- Nomura projected India to be the fastest growing Asian economy in 2021, with an estimate of 9.9% gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the coming calendar year.
- The Japanese brokerage turned positive on India's cyclical outlook, with near term risks of a resurgent pandemic unlikely to derail growth. **The fastest-growing tag in 2021**, however, will come with its own challenges. A key concern in 2021 and beyond is the implication of the **K-shaped recovery seen till now**.

India rolls out its first LGBT+ workplace equality index

- For the first time in India, the country's 'Workplace Equality Index' has been rolled out for employers to check their progress on inclusion of people from LGBT+ communities at the workplaces. This workplace index was introduced and is considered as the first "comprehensive bench-marking tool for employers".
- The index has virtually announced winners from among 65 companies who had shared their data on their employee diversity as well as inclusion practices. It is to note that the **India Workplace Equality Index (IWEI)** has been introduced two years after the apex court read down Section 377 in 2018.
- The IWEI has been brought as the reference for Indian industries by hotelier-activist Keshav Suri via his non-profit Keshav Suri Foundation. Suri has partnered with FICCI, Stonewall UK and Pride Circle for this.
- The index has been brought after covering nine major areas that are employee lifecycle, policies and benefits, allies and role models, employee network group, monitoring, senior leadership, community engagement, procurement and additional work.

Roshni Nadar Malhotra, first woman to head a listed Indian IT firm, among Forbes most powerful women list 2020

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Biocon Founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and HCL Enterprise CEO Roshni Nadar Malhotra have been named among the world's 100 most powerful women by Forbes 2020.
- US Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, Biocon Founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and HCL Enterprise CEO Roshni Nadar Malhotra have also been named in the list which has been topped by German Chancellor Angela Merkel for the 10th year in a row.
- The women on the 17th annual Forbes Power List hail from 30 countries and were born across four generations that includes 10 heads of state, 38 CEOs and five entertainers.
- Sitharaman is ranked 41st on the list, Nadar Malhotra comes in at the 55th spot, Mazumdar-Shaw – described as India's richest self-made woman – is ranked 68th and chairwoman of Landmark Group Renuka Jagtiani is ranked 98th. Roshni Nadar Malhotra is also the youngest woman to achieve this feat in Forbes Technology category.

Forbes is an American business magazine owned by Integrated Whale Media Investments and the Forbes family. Published eight times a year, it features original articles on finance, industry, investing, and marketing topics. Forbes also reports on related subjects such as technology, communications, science, politics, and law. Its headquarters is located in Jersey City, New Jersey. B. C. Forbes, a financial columnist for the Hearst papers, and his partner Walter Drey, the general manager of the Magazine of Wall Street, founded Forbes magazine on September 15, 1917.

IESA, UNIDO tie up to boost energy storage innovations in India

- The India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization have joined hands to promote innovations in energy storage in India.
- The Facility of Low Carbon Technology Deployment (FLCTD) by UNIDO launched the 4th round of innovation challenge to support and encourage new innovations in Indian energy storage and e-mobility space. IESA is a supporting partner for this innovation challenge.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that assists countries in economic and industrial development. It is headquartered at the UN Office in Vienna, Austria, with a permanent presence in over 60 countries.

Centre Notifies Updated Viability Gap Funding Scheme to support Infrastructure Projects

- The Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme was notified by the Ministry of Finance under which various infrastructure projects will be selected for financial support to provide a boost to the sector.
- According to the VGF scheme, the Empowered Committee (EC) chaired by the economic affairs secretary will sanction a funding amount of up to Rs 200 crore, while projects requiring more than Rs 200 crore would be approved by the Empowered Committee, after the approval from the Minister of Finance.
- The VGF scheme will be known as the 'Scheme for Financial Support to PPPs' (Public-Private Partnerships) in the infrastructure sector. This will be a central sector scheme and administered by the Finance Ministry.
- The updated viability gap funding scheme will come into force with immediate effect, according to notifications from the Ministry of Finance. **Regarding the eligibility, the project will be implemented by a private sector company to be selected by the government or a statutory body through an open competitive bidding process.**

Viability Gap Finance means a grant to support projects that are economically justified but not financially viable. The scheme is designed as a Plan Scheme to be administered by the Ministry of Finance and amount in the budget are made on a year-to-year basis.

India, ADB sign 4.21 million dollar PRF facility for preparation of infrastructure development projects

- The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a 4.21 million dollar project readiness financing (PRF) facility for the preparation of infrastructure development projects to improve urban amenities and develop tourism infrastructure in Tripura. This is ADB's first PRF facility for a state in the northeastern region of India.
- The signatories to the PRF for Tripura Urban and Tourism Development Project were, Additional Secretary, in the Finance Ministry Dr. C. S. Mohapatra and Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission Takeo Konishi.

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

Hyderabad International Airport Gets India's First IoT Enabled Smart Trolleys

- GMR Hyderabad International Airport (GHIAL), also known as Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, has introduced an Internet of Things (IoT)-enabled smart baggage trolley system for tracking and maintaining the availability of baggage trolleys in real-time across the airport. The airport is claimed to have become India's first airport to deploy this technology, which is in line with the Digital India Programme of the Government of India.

- Under the Airport Baggage Trolley Project, the entire fleet of 3,000 baggage trolleys have been installed with the LoRa (Long Range) platform. This technology will reduce passenger waiting times and ensure adequate availability of the trolleys in real-time. Furthermore, it is claimed to be compatible on desktop, mobile and laptop.

Ola to set up world's largest factory in Tamil Nadu

- Ola has signed an agreement with the Tamil Nadu government to set up its first electric scooter factory worth Rs 2,400 crore in the state. "In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, Ola's factory is an important step in making an Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- The factory will create nearly 10,000 jobs and will be the world's largest scooter manufacturing facility upon completion. The facility will initially have an annual capacity of 2 million units.

Ola Cabs is an Indian ridesharing company offering services that include vehicle for hire and food delivery. The company is based in Bangalore, Karnataka, India and was developed by ANI Technologies Pvt. Ltd. As of October 2019, Ola was valued at about \$6.5 billion. A variety of venture capitalists including Softbank have large stakes in the company. Bhavish Aggarwal is an Indian entrepreneur and co-founder of Ola Cabs.

India drops two ranks in Human Development Index

- India dropped two spots to 131 out of 189 nations on the Human Development Index (HDI) this year, according to the Human Development Report (HDR) by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The country ranked 129 (out of 189) countries on the 2019 HDI. India's HDI value for 2019 stood at 0.645 which put it in the medium human development category.
- However, if the Index were adjusted to assess the planetary pressures caused by each nation's development, India would move up eight places in the ranking.
- For the first time, the United Nations Development Programme introduced a new metric to reflect the impact caused by each country's per-capita carbon emissions and its material footprint, which measures the amount of fossil fuels, metals and other resources used to make the goods and services it consumes.
- Life expectancy of Indians at birth in 2019 was 69.7 years, while Bangladesh had a life expectancy of 72.6 years and Pakistan 67.3 years, the 2020 Human Development Report said.
- Norway topped the index, followed by Ireland, Switzerland, Hong Kong, and Iceland, the report showed. Pakistan (154), Nepal (142), Bangladesh (133), India, and Bhutan (129) stand among countries with medium human development, the report stated.
- It further stated that under the Paris Agreement, India pledged to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP from the 2005 level by 33-35 per cent by 2030 and to obtain 40 per cent of electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.
- According to the report published by UNDP, India's gross national income per capita fell to \$6,681 in 2019 from \$6,829 in 2018 on purchasing power parity (PPP) basis.

Human Development Index (HDI) is a statistic composite index of life expectancy, education (Literacy Rate, Gross Enrollment Ratio at different levels and Net Attendance Ratio), and per capita income indicators, which are used to rank countries into four tiers of human development. A country scores a higher HDI when the lifespan is higher, the education level is higher, and the gross national income GNI (PPP) per capita is higher. It was developed by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq and was further used to measure a country's development by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Report Office.

India ranks 111 out of 162 countries on personal freedom index

- 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. A global ranking of personal, civil and economic freedom released placed India at 111 out of 162 countries.
- The Human Freedom Index 2020, which uses data from 2008 to 2018, by the Cato Institute in the United States and Fraser Institute in Canada, noted a decrease in personal freedoms since 2008 globally.

- The index covered 76 indicators of personal, civic and economic freedom. India was ranked 110 in terms of personal freedom and 105 on economic freedom, with an overall score of 6.43 out of 10.
- The countries that ranked in the top 10 are New Zealand, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Denmark, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Estonia, and Germany and Sweden (with the last two tied in the 9th place). While Japan ranked 11th, the UK and the US were tied in the 17th place. At the other end of the spectrum, Syria was ranked the worst, followed by Sudan, Venezuela, Yemen and Iran.

India's first maritime arbitration centre to be set up in GIFT City

- On the lines of maritime hubs like Singapore, Hong Kong and China, India's first arbitration and mediation centre focusing on disputes related to the shipping sector will come up in the Gujarat International Finance-Tech (GIFT) City in Gandhinagar.
- The Gujarat Mediation and Arbitration Centre (GMAC) being built under the aegis of Gujarat Maritime University and is a key part of the Gujarat Maritime Cluster that will be housed in GIFT City. The centre is expected to start early next year and a space of nearly 8,000 sq ft space has been taken at the GIFT City.

World's biggest, hybrid renewable energy park in Gujarat

- On December 15, Prime Minister Narendra Modi traveled to Kutch to lay the foundation stone for a 30,000 MW (megawatt) hybrid renewable energy park close to the Indo-Pak border in Kutch district. The project is billed as the largest of its kind in the world. The first of its kind energy project is spread over 72,600 hectares of waste land.
- The energy park will come up in land of more than 70,000 hectares area, which is equal to the size of countries like Bahrain and Singapore. The upcoming hybrid renewable energy park will be bigger than the biggest metro cities in India.
- With the Government of India committing itself to installing 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022, the Gujarat government identified 1,00,000 hectares of wasteland near Khavda, 72 km north of Bhuj, close to the international border with Pakistan in Kutch, for an energy park.

5 states complete the stipulated reforms in the Ease of Doing Business

- Reform linked borrowing permissions are facilitating Ease of Doing Business reforms. Five states have so far completed the stipulated reforms in the Ease of Doing Business.
- Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana have been granted permission to mobilize additional financial resources to the tune of 16,728 crore rupees through open market borrowings.
- The Ease of Doing Business is an important indicator of the investment friendly business climate in the country. Improvement in the ease of doing business will enable faster future growth of the state economy. Therefore, the government had in May this year decided to link grant of additional borrowing permissions to states which undertake reforms to facilitate ease of doing business.

The reforms stipulated in this category are—Completion of the first assessment of “District Level Business Reform Action Plan, elimination of the requirements for renewal of registration certificates/approvals/licences obtained by businesses for various activities at least under the following Acts—The Shops & Establishment Act, The Contracts Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, The Factories Act, 1948, The Legal Metrology Act, The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (RE&CS) Act, 1979, Drug Manufacturing/ Selling/ Storage License, Trade License issued by the Municipal Corporations.

Ease of doing business: China's rank drops as World Bank corrects 'irregularities', India unaffected

- The World Bank has corrected two recent reports ranking countries on ease of doing business, based on an internal audit following officials' allegations of “undue pressure” by management to alter ratings, Bloomberg reported.

- The bank's changes to its ease of doing business reports for 2018 and 2020 has resulted in change of scores for four countries, including China, which also saw its ranking slip in one of the reports due to the correction.
- India's ranking, however, has remained unaffected. India has ascended 17 notches, ranking at 63rd position in the report published by The World Bank. The 'Make in India' campaign started by Prime Minister Narendra Modi focused on attracting foreign investment, boosted the private sector (especially manufacturing) and enhanced India's overall competitiveness.
- In a review of its report published on December 16, World Bank said that in the 2018 report released in October 2017, China should have been shown dropping seven places to 85th rather than remaining 78th, as in the 2017 report.
- "In Doing Business 2018, the published score including irregularities affecting the Starting a Business, Getting Credit, and Paying Taxes indicators was 65.3 with a global ranking of 78," the World Bank said in its release. "After correcting the irregularities described above, the Doing Business 2018 score is 64.5."
- Similarly, after corrections to the 2020 report, released in October 2019, Saudi Arabia is no longer the top improving economy, while Azerbaijan moved up to become one of the top 10 improvers. The country's 2020 ranking improved to 28, instead of its previous global ranking of 34.

Ease of Doing Business Report is published by the World Bank. The index has been created to evaluate the impact of the economic policies/reforms implemented by the government in the respective countries to promote and make it easier to do business. This report is published after evaluating the performance of countries under the following 11 parameters (for this year's ranking, the labour market parameter is not considered, hence this year's ranking is based on ten parameters).

Indian entrepreneur named among 'Young Champions of the Earth' winners by UN environment agency

- A 29-year-old Indian entrepreneur, Vidyut Mohan is among the seven winners of the prestigious "Young Champions of the Earth" 2020 prize given by the UN environment agency to global change-makers using innovative ideas and ambitious action to help solve some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.
- Vidyut Mohan, an engineer, is the co-founder of "Takachar", a social enterprise enabling farmers to prevent open burning of their waste farm residues and earn extra income by converting them into value-added chemicals like activated carbon on-site, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said in a statement
- This year's Young Champions were selected by a global jury of experts following a competitive public nomination. Each will receive USD 10,000 in seed funding and tailored training to help scale up their ideas. The Young Champions of the Earth prize is awarded every year to seven entrepreneurs under the age of 30 with bold ideas for sustainable environmental change.

In a first, Indian Railways freight train attained 100 kmph speed on Bhaupur-Khurja section

- Indian Railways will boast super-fast freight train services. An important USP of Indian Railways' biggest infra project- Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) project is freight trains running at a speed of 100 km per hour. For the first time in the history of Indian Railways, a freight train attained a speed of 100 km per hour on the Eastern DFC's Bhaupur – Khurja section.
- According to details shared by the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL), the first simultaneous and seamless Up and Down trial trains on Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor's 351 km long Bhaupur-Khurja section commenced successfully.

Ratan Tata honoured with 'Global Visionary of Sustainable Business and Peace' award

- Veteran industrialist Ratan Tata was honoured by the Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce for promoting innovation that supports sustainability and peace in the region, including with the Palestinians. The chairman emeritus of the Tata group was honoured with 'Global Visionary of Sustainable Business and Peace' award

during the launch of the Federation of Indo-Israel Chamber of Commerce's international chapter in Dubai on December 21.

- The virtual ceremony was attended by senior officials from Israel, India and UAE. The 82-year-old industrialist and philanthropist **Ratan Tata** is the **recipient of two of India's highest civilian awards - Padma Vibhushan and Padma Bhushan**.
- The opening of the **Federation of Indo-Israel Chamber of Commerce's international chapter in Dubai** is the **first such initiative aiming at tapping business opportunities together in other countries**, and developing trilateral collaborations.

Centre and WB sign USD 500 million project to build Green National Highway Corridors

- **The Centre and the World Bank signed a USD 500 million project to build safe and green national highway corridors in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.** The project will also enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in mainstreaming safety and green technologies.
- **The Green National Highways Corridors Project will support the Road Transport and Highways Ministry to construct 783 kilometres of highways** in various geographies by integrating safe and green technology designs such as local and marginal materials, industrial byproducts and other bioengineering solutions. **The project will help reduce GHG emissions in the construction and maintenance of highways.**

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) said **11 industrial corridors consisting of 30 projects** will come up across the country in four phases by 2024-2025. **National Highway 5**, which is part of the **Golden Quadrilateral and Kolkata-Chennai route** have been identified as crucial for the **East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC)**. The **Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL)** is a **Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) corporation** run by the **Government of India's Ministry of Railways** to undertake planning, development, and mobilisation of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the **"Dedicated Freight Corridors" (DFC)**. The DFCCIL was registered as a company under the Companies Act 1956 in 2006.

DigiBoxx: India's first indigenous digital asset management platform launched

- **CEO of NITI Aayog Amitabh Kant** virtually launched **India's first digital asset management platform DigiBoxx**. **DigiBoxx has free 2 GB storage space and the file shared stays for 45 days**, the company said in a statement.
- **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 **National Institution for Transforming India**, also called **NITI Aayog**, was formed via a **resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015**. It was established to replace the **Planning Commission** which followed a top-down model. **NITI Aayog is the premier policy 'Think Tank' of the Government of India**, providing both directional and policy inputs. The **current chairman of NITI Aayog is Shri Narendra Modi**, **current vice chairman is Dr. Rajiv Kumar** and the **current chief executive officer is Shri Amitabh Kant**.

Bangladesh moves 2 steps up on Human Development Index (HDI)

- **Bangladesh has improved its Human Development Index (HDI) ranking by 2 notches** in the recently released report by the UNDP. According to the **HDI 2020 for Bangladesh** released, **Bangladesh now stands at 133rd position out of 189 countries**.
- **In South Asia it remains on the 5th position out of 8 countries** included in the report. However, the country also improved its ranking by 9 places in the planetary pressure-adjusted Human Development Index.
- In the 2020 edition of the report, **UNDP has added two more elements in the calculation of the HDI**. It now takes into account **Carbon Dioxide emission of the country** and its material footprint in addition to the earlier included health, education and living standards based parameters.

- The inclusion of these new parameters has resulted in **50 countries dropping out of the very high human development group**, reflecting their dependence on fossil fuels and material footprint.

Centralised investment clearance cell by April 15

- The Centralised ‘Investment Clearance Cell’, under the proposed **single window system**, aimed at facilitating businesses through a **one-stop digital platform**, is planned to be launched with **relevant Ministries and Departments and select States by April 15, 2021**.
- The **Investment Clearance Cell**, which is an **integral part of the single window system** being worked out by the Commerce and Industry Ministry, was **announced by Finance Minister in this year’s Union Budget**.
- “The idea behind the **Central Investment Clearance Cell** is to ensure that an investor gets all information and clearances on one platform, instead of visiting multiple platforms”.
- There are at least **six States, including Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Odisha and Goa**, that are **already part of the GIS enabled land bank under Industrial Information System (IIS)** and it has been launched in a phased manner by the Department on August 27, 2020.

Government has **integrated Industrial Information System (IIS) portal with the GIS System of six States in first phase to provide updates on land availability and plot level information to investors anywhere in the world on real time basis and help them make informed decisions. For the development of National Land Bank, Government intends to solicit the details of industrial land with plot level information, connectivity thereto, basic facilities, other facilities available and contact details of authorities/developer of the park.**

Gujarat: State to host India’s first Lithium refinery

- India’s first **Lithium refinery** which will process **Lithium ore to produce battery-grade material** will be set up in Gujarat.
- **Manikaran Power Limited**, one of the country’s largest power trading and renewable energy company will be investing over **Rs 1,000 crore to set up this refinery**.

Reserves of lithium, a rare metal critical to build batteries for electric vehicles, have been discovered in Mandya, 100 km from Bengaluru - a find that should boost local manufacturing of EV batteries. Researchers at the Atomic Minerals Directorate, a unit of India’s Atomic Energy Commission, have estimated lithium reserves of 14,100 tonnes in a small patch of land surveyed in the Southern Karnataka district, according to a paper to be published in the forthcoming issue of journal Current Science.

Banks in News

Lloyds Bank is first in the world to connect to Swift gpi Instant

- **Lloyds Bank in the UK has become the first bank to switch on Swift gpi Instant**, a new service from the Brussels-based interbank co-operative that **enables consumers and businesses to send tracked payments in seconds across borders**.
- **The gpi Instant service works by connecting Swift gpi**, the **high-speed cross-border rails with real-time domestic infrastructure**, in this case the UK's Faster Payments.
- **Remittance payments from anywhere in the world destined for the UK routed through Lloyds can now arrive in seconds**, with clarity on fees and predictability on when an end beneficiary's account will be credited.

Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), legally S.W.I.F.T. SCRL, provides a network that enables financial institutions worldwide to send and receive information about financial transactions in a secure, standardized and reliable environment. In 2019, SWIFT announces the results of a global trial to integrate SWIFT gpi Instant, the co-operative's cross-border instant payments service, into Singapore's domestic instant payment service, Fast And Secure Transfers (FAST).

RBI asks HDFC to stop new digital business launches; avoid adding new Credit Card customers

- **The Reserve Bank of India has asked country's largest private bank, HDFC, to stop new digital business launches and avoid adding new Credit Card customers** after repeated reports by its customers facing multiple cases of technical glitches.
- **HDFC Bank said over the last two years, it has taken several measures to fortify its IT systems and will continue to work swiftly to close out the balance** and would continue to engage with the regulator in this regard.

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

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

ICICI Bank Launches iMobile Pay, Offers Payments, Banking Services For All

- **ICICI Bank announced that it has transformed its mobile banking app, iMobile, into an app that offers payments and banking services to customers of any bank**. Called **iMobile Pay**, the app offers a unique combination of facilities of a payment app — such as enabling customers to pay to any UPI (Unified Payments Interface) ID or merchants, pay bills and do online recharges among others — with instant banking services namely savings account, investments, loans, credit cards, gift cards, and travel cards, along with other banking services.
- **The users of iMobile Pay can also transfer money to any bank account, payment app and digital wallet**. Another prominent feature of iMobile Pay is 'pay to contacts' that enable users to automatically see the UPI IDs of their phone book contacts, registered on the ICICI Bank UPI ID network, of any payment app and digital wallet. This unique functionality provides users a significant convenience of inter-operability, as they no longer have to remember the UPI IDs and can easily transfer money across payment app and digital wallet.

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

RBI issues draft circular on declaration of dividend by NBFCs

- Reserve Bank of India has issued draft circular on declaration of dividend by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) in pursuance to the announcement made in the monetary policy.
- Accordingly, deposit-taking NBFCs and systemically important non-deposit-taking NBFCs must have their net non-performing assets below six percent and a capital adequacy ratio of at least 15 percent for the last three years, including the accounting year for which it proposes to declare dividend.
- RBI has added that non-systemically important, non-deposit-taking NBFCs should have a leverage ratio of less than seven while core investment company - CIC should have Adjusted Net Worth (ANW) of at least 30 percent of its aggregate risk-weighted assets on balance sheet.

A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 2013 of India, engaged in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares, stock, bonds, hire-purchase insurance business or chit-fund business, but does not include any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods (other than securities) or providing any services and sale/purchase/construction of immovable property. NBFC is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956 before 2013 act. The working and operations of NBFCs are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) within the framework of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (Chapter III-B) and the directions issued by it. NBFC cannot accept demand deposits. NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself. Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs.

Equitas Small Finance Bank launches 3-in-1 account for saving, trading & demat

- Widening the product net offered to its customers, the Equitas Small Finance Bank has launched a tripartite account to help customers keep their saving, trading and demat investments under one umbrella entity.
- To allow customers to invest across the products using a single platform, the bank has decided to provide broking and demat services through a referral arrangement with brokerage firms for trading and depository services. "This product allows customers a secure, seamless and convenient way to invest in their choice of investment instruments, including equity, FDs, govt securities and mutual fund products.

Equitas Small Finance Bank is a small finance bank founded in 2007 by Equitas as a microfinance lender, with headquarters in Chennai, India. Small finance banks are a type of niche banks in India. Banks with a small finance bank license can provide basic banking service of acceptance of deposits and lending. The aim behind these to provide financial inclusion to sections of the economy not being served by other banks, such as small business units, small and marginal farmers, micro and small industries and unorganised sector entities. They are governed by the provisions of Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and other relevant statutes. The firms must have a capital of at least Rs. 200 crore. 75% of its net credits should be in priority sector lending and 50% of the loans in its portfolio must in Rs. 25 lakh range.

RTGS is available 24x7 and became operational from December 14, says RBI

- The Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS) money transfer facility has become operational 24x7 from December 14, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said.
- The minimum amount to be remitted through RTGS is Rs 2,00,000 with no upper or maximum ceiling. "This comes within a year of operationalising NEFT 24x7 by the Reserve Bank," the RBI earlier said in a statement. The settlement system began its operations on March 26, 2004 with a soft launch involving four banks, presently handles 6.35 lakh transactions daily for a value of Rs 4.17 lakh crore across 237 participant banks.

- India has become one of the few countries in the world to operate its RTGS system round the clock throughout the year. The move is aimed at giving a push to digital payments in the country.
- Earlier, RTGS transaction facility was available for customers from 7 am to 6 pm on all working days of a week, except the second and fourth Saturdays. The RTGS system is meant for high-value transactions, on a real-time basis. The minimum amount that can be remitted through RTGS is 2 lakh rupees and there is no maximum limit.
- The beneficiary bank receives instructions to transfer the funds immediately after the transaction is carried out, and the transfer is instantaneous. On the other hand, NEFT handles fund transfers up to 2 lakh rupees and such transactions are usually executed in a couple of hours.
- RBI has also decided to increase the limit for contactless card transactions to 5,000 rupees from 2,000 at Point of Sale (PoS) terminals from January 1 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and feedback from stakeholders.

RTGS (real time gross settlement) and NEFT (national electronic funds transfer) are electronic payment systems that allow individuals to transfer funds between banks. Both these systems are maintained by the Reserve Bank of India. It is applicable only for money transfer within the country. Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) is another payment system in which the money is credited in the beneficiary's account in real-time and on a gross basis. The RTGS system is primarily meant for large value transactions that require and receive immediate clearing.

RBI approves reappointment of Uday Kotak as chief of Kotak Mahindra Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India has approved the reappointment of Uday Kotak as the managing director and chief executive officer of Kotak Mahindra Bank. Kotak who has already served as the chief of the bank for over 17 years will continue at the position of MD & CEO for another three years.

Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited is an Indian private sector bank headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra. In 1985, Uday Kotak founded what later became an Indian financial services conglomerate. In February 2003, Kotak Mahindra Finance Ltd. (KMFL) became the first non-banking finance company in India to be converted into a bank. As of April 2020, it is the second largest Indian private sector bank by market capitalization.

India Post Payments Bank launches digital payment services 'DakPay'

- The Department of Posts and the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) unveiled a new digital payment application "DakPay" as part of its ongoing efforts to provide digital financial inclusion at the last mile across the country.
- DakPay is not just a digital payment app but a suite of digital financial and assisted banking services provided by India Post and India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) through the postal network across the nation to cater to the financial needs of various sections of the society - be it sending money to the loved ones (Domestic Money Transfers - DMT), Scan QR code and make payment for services/merchants digitally (Virtual debit card and with UPI), enabling cashless ecosystem through biometrics, providing interoperable banking services to the customers of any bank (AePS) and Utility Bill Payment services.
- "Our motto is - Every customer is important, every transaction is significant and every deposit is valuable," said J Venkatramu, MD & CEO, India Post Payments Bank.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) on September 1, 2018. It is an initiative of the government aimed at making banking services available at people's doorstep. IPPB is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Department of Post, with 100 percent Government of India equity. It will be governed by Reserve Bank of India (RBI). It will accept deposits, offer remittance services, mobile banking and third-party fund transfers. The maximum limit on deposits for current and savings account is Rs 1 lakh. The bank offers a 4 per cent interest rate on savings account. They can issue debit cards and ATM cards, but they cannot issue credit cards and cannot loan money.

Central Bank of India launches contactless debit card in association with NPCI

- State-owned Central Bank of India has launched contactless ‘RuPay Select’ debit card in association with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- Users of Central Bank RuPay Select Debit Card can avail complementary membership and concessional access to golf courses, gyms, spas and restaurants, the bank said.
- Additionally, they would be entitled for discounted health check-ups with this National Common Mobility Debit Card (NCMC), which also has the unique feature of facilitating offline transactions in both transit as well as retail purchases.

Central Bank of India, a government-owned bank, is **one of the oldest and largest commercial banks in India**. It is based in **Mumbai** which is the financial capital of India and **capital city of state of Maharashtra**.

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

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to introduce the ‘positive pay system’

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to introduce the ‘positive pay system’ for cheque a couple of months ago. Under the new rule re-confirmation of key details may be needed for payments beyond Rs. 50,000. This new cheque payment rule will **come into effect from 1 January 2021**.
- The announcement by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das in August MPC came in order to keep consumer safety in focus and to lower the cases of fraud and abuse with respect to cheque payment.
- Positive Pay is essentially an automated fraud detection tool. It matches specific information related to the cheque presented for clearing, such as the **cheque number, cheque date, payee name, account number, amount, and other details against a list of cheques previously authorized** and issued by the issuer.

ICICI Bank offers online platform for MNCs

- ICICI Bank has introduced an online platform called ‘Infinite India’ for foreign companies looking to set up or expand business in India.
- This platform offers 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.

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

Firms in News

Indian Oil Corporation launches India's first 100 Octane petrol

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

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

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

Instagram launches 'Live Rooms' feature

- **Instagram rolled out the 'Live Rooms' feature that allows up to three additional users to go live in the same session.** Users can now accommodate three guests to expand their reach on the platform.
- **Creators can conduct talk shows or podcasts, host jam sessions or collaborate with other artists**, and engage in Q&As in the live session. **With the introduction of this feature, an Instagram live session will now be able to hold 4 people instead of 2 which was the previous limit.** Users will now not have to end their live session with the current user to add another participant.

Instagram is an American photo and video sharing social networking service owned by Facebook, created by **Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger** and originally launched on iOS in October 2010. The Android version was released in April 2012, followed by a feature-limited desktop interface in November 2012, a Fire OS app in June 2014, and an app for Windows 10 in October 2016. **The app allows users to upload media that can be edited with filters and organized by hashtags and geographical tagging.**

Shantanu Narayen, Ajay Banga named among Fortune Businessperson of the Year 2020

- **Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen and Mastercard CEO Ajay Banga have been named by Fortune among the Businessperson of the Year 2020, a list topped by Tesla CEO Elon Musk.**
- **The Fortune 2020 Businessperson of the Year is Musk for a second time.** The publication said in a year dominated by crisis and uncertainty, other leaders also stood out and "achieved the remarkable".

- **On Narayan, ranked 8th on the list, Fortune** said under his leadership, the 38-year-old provider of design and publishing tools has continued to evolve into a massive subscription-based business.

Fortune is an American multinational business magazine headquartered in New York City. It is published by **Fortune Media Group Holdings**, owned by Thai businessman **Chatchaval Jiaravanon**. The publication was founded by **Henry Luce** in 1929.

Sonalika becomes first player to launch electric tractor in India

- **International Tractors Ltd-owned Sonalika Tractors** has become the first manufacturer to commercially launch a field-ready electric tractor for the domestic market with an introductory price of Rs. 5.99 lakh (ex-showroom).
- Calling its new product **Tiger Electric**, Sonalika's electric tractor is equipped with a **11 kW induction motor** and a **25.5 kWh lithium ion battery**, which can be fully charged in 10 hours using a regular home charging socket and in just 4 hours using a fast charging system. Positioned for agricultural applications usually made by an under-35 hp tractor, the company said **Tiger Electric** could run for 8 hours while running a 2-ton trolley on a single charge.

The **Sonalika Group** is an Indian multinational company headquartered in **Hoshiarpur (Punjab)**, India and is active mainly in the automobile sector. The **Sonalika Group** is headed by **Lakshman Das Mittal**. **Sonalika** produces tractors with two brands **Sonalika & Solis**.

Kotak MF launches REIT Funds of Funds scheme

- **Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company** has launched of **Kotak International REIT Fund of Funds**, which is **India's first diversified Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT) Mutual Fund**.
- The open-ended scheme will invest in units of **SMAM Asia REIT Sub Trust Fund**. This MF scheme will have a **diversified investment portfolio comprising of listed REITs** which will invest in real estate projects such as residential, office, data centres, warehousing, retail and hospitality.
- **Minimum Application Amount – First investment Rs. 5,000/- and in multiple of Rs. 1/- thereafter.**

BSNL in partnership with Skylo to introduce worlds' first, satellite-based narrowband-IoT network in India

- **BSNL in partnership with Skylotech India** announced a **breakthrough in satellite-based NB-IoT (Narrow Band-Internet of Things)**. It is in pursuance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a truly Digital India starting with fishermen, farmers, construction, mining and logistics enterprises.
- With this solution, **India will now have access to a ubiquitous fabric of connectivity for millions of yet unconnected machines, sensors and industrial IoT devices**. This new 'Made in India' Solution, which is indigenously developed by Skylo, will connect with BSNLs satellite- ground infrastructure and provide PAN-India coverage, including Indian seas.
- The coverage will be so vast that it will **not leave any dark patch within the boundary of India, from Kashmir and Ladakh to Kanyakumari, and from Gujarat to the North East**, including the Indian seas.

Uday Shankar takes over as FICCI President

- **Media executive Uday Shankar** has taken over as **Ficci President for 2020-2021**. Currently, Shankar is President, The Walt Disney Company APAC & Chairman, Star & Disney India.
- He has taken over from **Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group**.

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) is the **largest and oldest apex business organisation in India**. FICCI is established in 1927, on the advice of **Mahatma Gandhi** by **GD Birla** and **Purushottam Das Thakurdas**. It is headquartered in the national capital **New Delhi**.

BSE, NSE, MCX gear up for India's first bullion exchange at Gift City

- **Gift City International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)** is set to get **India's first spot bullion exchange** and this may happen in the next six months. The government has notified **regulations for setting up the bullion exchange in Gift City IFSC**.
- **All the three major Indian bourses like BSE, National Stock Exchange (NSE) and Multi-Commodity Exchange (MCX) plan to compete at Gift City's special economic zone (SEZ)** by setting up their own bullion exchanges after getting formal approval from regulator International Financial Services Centre.

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

Daimler to launch India's first electric truck

- **Daimler, the heavy-duty truck and bus maker**, is planning to **launch India's first electric truck** as it continues to bet on the domestic market. **The German auto giant**, which makes medium and heavy trucks and buses under the BharatBenz and Fuso brands, is scheduled to have an event next year titled **'Future Mobility'**.
- **The light-duty Fuso eCanter is Daimler's first all-electric truck** that is set to go into series production. It has a payload capacity of up to 3,200 kg and can travel up to 100 km on a single charge.

Japanese Powerhouse SBI becomes world's first financial conglomerate to open cryptocurrency

- **SBI Financial Services, the subsidiary of SBI Holdings ("SBI")**, announced the **acquisition of B2C2**, the trading counterparty of choice in the institutional crypto markets. The transaction follows SBI Financial Services' agreement to take a minority stake in B2C2 in July this year.
- **The combination positions SBI at the centre of the cryptocurrency markets, becoming the natural entry point for financial institutions seeking a bank counterparty to trade digital assets. B2C2's brand, talent, technical expertise and trading capabilities enable SBI to open a principal dealing desk in a world first.**

Sandeep Kataria is Bata's global head; first Indian to hold top post

- International footwear company **Bata Brands** has **elevated Sandeep Kataria to the post of global CEO**. **Kataria is the first Indian to hold this prestigious role and will be taking over Alexis Nasard**, who has been leading the 126-year old company for almost five years now.

Reliance, BP start gas production from Asia's deepest project

- **Reliance Industries and its partner BP plc of the U.K.** announced the **commencement of natural gas production from Asia's deepest project**, putting the second wave of discoveries in the KG-D6 block onstream.
- **The production from ultra-deepwater R-Cluster, the first of the three deepsea projects Reliance-BP are developing in the eastern offshore block, started production.** Located at a water depth of greater than 2,000 metres, it is the deepest offshore gas field in Asia.
- **Reliance and BP are developing three deepwater gas projects in block KG D6 – R Cluster, Satellites Cluster and MJ – which together are expected to meet about 15 per cent of India's gas demand by 2023".**

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

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile in Anti-Ship mode successfully test fired

- **BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile in Anti-Ship mode** was successfully test fired against a decommissioned Ship. The test firing was carried out by Indian Navy.
- The missile performed highly complex manoeuvres and hit Bull's eye of the target. Ministry of Defence in a statement said that **BrahMos is the supersonic cruise missile jointly developed by DRDO and NPOM of Russia as a Brahmos Aerospace joint venture**, which became Brahmos Aerospace Private Limited.
- The missile has established itself as **a major force multiplier in modern-day complex battlefields** with its **impeccable anti-ship and land-attack capabilities** with multi-role and multi-platform abilities.
- It has been deployed in all the three wings of the Indian Armed Forces. **The first launch of Brahmos took place in 2001** and till date numerous launches have taken place from various ships, Mobile Autonomous Launchers and Su-30 MKI aircraft, making it a versatile weapon.

The **BrahMos** missile is named after two rivers, the **Brahmaputra** and the **Moskva**. India is a member of the **MTCR**, India and Russia are now planning to jointly develop a new generation of Brahmos missiles with **600 km-plus range**.

HAL Delivers Biggest Ever Cryogenic Propellant Tank to ISRO

- The public sector aerospace manufacturing company, the **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited** delivered the **biggest cryogenic propellant tank C 32 LH 2** to the **Indian Space Research Organisation** in Bengaluru.
- The **biggest cryogenic propellant tank of aluminium alloy** is designed for **improving the payload capability of GSLV MK III heavy lift satellite launch vehicle of ISRO**.

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is an **Indian state-owned aerospace and defence company** headquartered in **Bangalore, India**. It is **governed under the management of the Indian Ministry of Defence**. The government-owned corporation is **primarily involved in the operations of the aerospace and is currently involved in the design, fabrication and assembly of aircraft, jet engines, helicopters and their spare parts**.

Bezos says Blue Origin will take the first woman to moon's surface

- **Jeff Bezos' space company Blue Origin** will take the **first woman to the moon's surface**, the billionaire said as NASA nears a decision to **pick its first privately built lunar landers capable of sending astronauts to the moon by 2024**.
- **"This (BE-7) is the engine that will take the first woman to the surface of the Moon,"** Bezos said in a post on Instagram with a video of the engine test this week at **NASA Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama**.
- The **BE-7 engine**, which **Blue Origin** has been developing for years, has **tallied 1,245 seconds of test-fire time** and will power the company's **National Team Human Landing System lunar lander**.
- **Blue Origin** leads a **"national team"** as the **prime contractor** that it assembled in 2019 to help build its **Blue Moon lander**. That team includes **Lockheed Martin Corp, Northrop Grumman Corp and Draper**.

Jeffrey Preston Bezos is an American internet entrepreneur, industrialist, media proprietor, and investor. He is best known as the founder, CEO, and president of the multi-national technology company Amazon. The first centi-billionaire on the Forbes wealth index, Bezos has been the world's richest person since 2017 and was named the "richest man in modern history" after his net worth increased to \$150 billion in July 2018. According to Forbes, he is the first person in history to have a net worth exceeding \$200 billion. Bezos founded the aerospace manufacturer and sub-orbital spaceflight services company Blue Origin in 2000. Blue Origin's New Shepard vehicle reached space in 2015, and afterwards successfully landed back on Earth.

Madras University student develops India's first seaweed beer

- U Vignesh, a postgraduate student and researcher at the biotechnology department in the University of Madras, has made a beer from seaweed, which, he claims, has anti-cancer, anti-genotoxic, and antiinflammatory properties.
- "This beer is made from a seaweed found in abundance along the Tamil Nadu coast, and meets all key parameters laid out by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) for commercial beer brands". Vignesh is planning to approach the authorities to apply for a patent. He has submitted a dissertation on the subject as part of his course in the university. "India has about 844 species of seaweeds. Our investigation showed a specific brown seaweed found near Mandapam coast has high nutritional value compared to any other variety.

IIT-Guwahati develops method to harvest water from air

- A team of researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) has developed a pitcher plant-inspired inexpensive method for harvesting water from humid air.
- The method, developed by spraying a sponge-like porous polymeric material on a simple A4 printer paper, can also used in underwater hulls of ships and submarines to prevent bio-fouling as well as to prevent icing on aircraft windows. The IIT-G researchers used the concept of chemically patterned slippery liquid-infused porous surface, or SLIPS for the first time to effectively harvest water from moist or foggy air.

Ministry of AYUSH, AIIMS to set up Department of Integrative Medicine

- Ministry of AYUSH and AIIMS have decided to initiate work on setting up a Department of Integrative Medicine at AIIMS. This was decided in a joint visit and review by Secretary, AYUSH Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha and Director, AIIMS, New Delhi Dr. Randeep Guleria.
- It was decided that Centre for Integrative Medicine and Research(CIMR) AIIMS may develop an integrated protocol with Ayurveda and Yoga for study on Post COVID treatment. Secretary AYUSH assured that the Ministry of AYUSH will strive to continue its support to CIMR till the dedicated Department is developed.

Indian-American among 18 astronauts selected for NASA's manned Moon mission

- An Indian-American is among the 18 astronauts selected by NASA for its manned mission to the Moon and beyond. NASA named the 18 astronauts – half of them women – who will train for its Artemis moon-landing programme.
- Raja Jon Vurputoor Chari, a graduate of the US Air Force Academy, MIT, and US Naval Test Pilot School, is the only Indian-American in the list.

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

Rajnath Singh inaugurates the advanced Hypersonic Wind Tunnel test facility in Hyderabad

- Defence minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the advanced Hypersonic Wind Tunnel test facility in Hyderabad. The state-of-the-art facility is pressure vacuum driven enclosed free jet facility with nozzle exit of

one-meter diameter. According to a defence release, this will simulate Mach 5 to 12. Mach represent the multiplication factor to the speed of sound, **making India the third country after the US and Russia to have such a facility.**

- **With this India has become the third country to have such a huge facility in size and capability after America and Russia.** The project is an indigenous development and an outcome of synergistic partnership with Indian industries.
- **Hyderabad-based DRDO labs showcased various indigenously developed systems and technologies** in wide ranging areas including missiles, avionics systems, advanced materials and electronic warfare. **Two anti-drone technologies were also demonstrated by DRDO labs on the occasion.**

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is charged with coordinating and supervising all agencies and functions of the government relating directly to national security and the Indian armed forces. The President of India is the ceremonial commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the country. The Indian Armed Forces (including Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and Indian Navy) and Indian Coast Guard under the Ministry of Defences are primarily responsible for ensuring the territorial integrity of the nation. A military department was created by the supreme government of the British East India Company at Kolkata in the year 1776. Rajnath Singh is currently serving as the Defence Minister of India. He has been representing the 17th Lok Sabha from Lucknow constituency. He also served as Union Home Minister of India from 2014 to 2019.

Indigenous artillery gun to complete trials by mid-2021

- User trials of the indigenous Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) jointly with private industry are scheduled to be resumed.
- 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.
- The DRDO is also writing to the Army to involve their teams right away so that the approval can be speeded up and compress the timelines.
- The Defence Acquisition Council had accorded approval for the purchase of 150 of these guns at an approximate Rs 3,365 crore which would be split between the two companies.

ISRO sets up dedicated control centre for Space Situational Awareness

- A dedicated control centre for Space Situational Awareness (SSA) activities in the country, aimed at monitoring, tracking and protecting Indias space assets, has been set up. “ISRO SSA Control Centre, ‘NETRA’, is set up within the ISTRAC campus at Peenya.
- The Directorate of Space Situational Awareness and Management (DSSAM) engages in evolving improved operational mechanisms to protect Indian space assets through effective coordination amongst ISRO/DOS Centres, other space agencies and international bodies.

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

ISRO successfully launches country's communication satellite CMS-01

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), has successfully launched the country's new communication satellite CMS-01 in the intended orbit in space.
- The workhorse rocket PSLV-C50 carrying the satellite lifted off from the second launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. In just about 21 minutes, the launch mission was accomplished and the satellite was injected into the geo-synchronous transfer orbit.

Indian government mulls E20 ethanol mixed petrol to curb vehicle emissions

- **Ethanol blended petrol is an alternative fuel** which the transport ministry in India is currently exploring. The **E20 blend of ethanol with petrol is expected to curb vehicular emission** and also **help reduce oil imports**.
- The government of India has **proposed the adoption of E20 fuel for vehicular use**. **E20 is a blend of 20% ethanol with gasoline (petrol)** and can be used as an alternative to the fuels currently available.
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has published a draft notification as it opens up to comments from the **public for the adoption of E20 fuel**. The government is looking at the **adoption of mass emission standards for this fuel for transport application**.
- Additionally, it also wishes to facilitate the development of E20 compliant vehicles. The government believes that the **E20 blend will not only curb vehicle emissions but help reduce the country's oil import bill**.

The government of India has **set targets of 10 per cent bioethanol blending of petrol by 2022 and to raise it to 20 per cent by 2030 under the ethanol blending programme to curb carbon emissions** and reduce India's dependence on imported crude oil. **1G and 2G bioethanol plants are set to play a key role in making bio-ethanol available for blending** but face challenges in attracting investments from the private sector.

World's first wooden satellite to be launched by Japan in 2023

- **Japanese logging company Sumitomo Forestry and Kyoto University are planting the seeds for a 2023 launch of the world's first satellite made out of wood**. The partners announced their intentions saying the aim was basic research and proof of concept.
- They have agreed to conduct research on **tree growth and the use of wood materials in space**. They hope to **promote technology for using wood in extreme environments on Earth**.

DRDO conducts successful trial of Medium Range Surface to Air MR-SAM missile from Chandipur off Odisha coast

- **DRDO conducted the successful trial of the Medium Range Surface to Air MR-SAM missile from Chandipur off the Odisha coast**. This was the army version of the **MR-SAM missile** which has been designed jointly by India and Israel.
- 'Bansi'-a target missile was launched from the launch pad no.1 of the **Integrated Test Range at Chandipur**. **MR-SAM was test fired only to hit the target successfully**. The missile is designed to **provide the armed forces with air defence capability against a variety of air-borne targets at medium ranges**.

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

Inventions/Discoveries

NASA finds ‘Asteroid 2020 SO’ which skimmed Earth this week was actually old rocket part

- NASA has confirmed the ‘asteroid’ which swung by Earth on December 1 was actually a piece of an old rocket the space agency launched in the 1960s.
- Asteroid 2020 SO flew by Earth at an extremely close distance. The object came within just 13 percent of the distance between the Earth and the Moon, giving astronomers the perfect opportunity to witness the event. It had been suspected Asteroid 2020 SO was not an asteroid, and NASA observations have now confirmed that.
- NASA collected data from the Infrared Telescope Facility (IRTF) and orbit analysis from the Center for Near-Earth Object Studies (CNEOS) at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory to determine the orbit of 2020 SO.

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

In weird planet 336 light-years away, clues about our own Planet

- A strange exoplanet, orbiting a double-star 336 light years away, has caught the interest of astronomers. The oddball behaviour of the planet, HD106906 b, provide clues about our own mysterious Planet Nine — if it exists.
- HD106906 b is not a new discovery: It appears in archival images taken by the Hubble Space Telescope in 2004. But at the time, people did not recognise the object to be a planet. “It was not until follow-up observations were taken in 2013 of the system using a different telescope (specifically the Magellan Telescopes in Chile) that people figured out that this was actually a distinct planet,” lead researcher Meiji Nguyen, from the University of California-Berkeley, told. Using data on the object’s motion over 14 years, astronomers have now precisely calculated its orbit and other key details.
- Planet Nine is an elusive, distant planet in our own Solar System. Although it has not been found yet, it has been predicted by a series of studies over the last few years, and has been described by astronomers as “hiding in plain sight”. If it exists, Planet Nine is 10 times as massive as Earth.

The ‘SolarWinds hack’, a cyberattack discovered in the United States

- The ‘SolarWinds hack’, a cyberattack recently discovered in the United States, has emerged as one of the biggest ever targeted against the US government, its agencies and several other private companies. In fact, it is likely a global cyberattack.
- It was first discovered by US cybersecurity company FireEye, and since then more developments continue to come to light each day. The sheer scale of the cyber-attack remains unknown, although the US Treasury, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Commerce, parts of the Pentagon are all believed to have been impacted.
- News of the cyberattack technically first broke on December 8, when FireEye put out a blog detecting an attack on its systems. The firm helps with security management of several big private companies and federal government agencies.

Jupiter-Saturn great conjunction

- The December 21, 2020 great conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn is highly conspicuous in the west after sunset each evening now. On December 21, the pair was only 0.1 degree apart.
- Astronomers use the word conjunction to describe meetings of planets and other objects on our sky’s dome. They use the term great conjunction to describe meetings of Jupiter and Saturn, which are the two biggest worlds in our solar system. Though the two planets will appear spectacularly close together on the sky’s dome

now, Jupiter and Saturn are actually 456 million miles (734,000 km) apart. Saturn is nearly twice as far away as Jupiter.

- **Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions happen every 20 years; the last one was in the year 2000. But these conjunctions aren't all created equal. The 2020 great conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn was the closest since 1623 and the closest observable since 1226! 2020's extra-close Jupiter-Saturn conjunction won't be matched again until the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction of March 15, 2080.**

Saturn is the sixth planet from the Sun and the second-largest in the Solar System, after Jupiter. Saturn is named after the Roman god of wealth and agriculture; its astronomical symbol (♄) represents the god's sickle. At least 82 moons are known to orbit Saturn. Jupiter is the fifth planet from the Sun and the largest in the Solar System. It is named after the Roman god Jupiter. Jupiter has 79 known moons.

IIT Kharagpur, Cardiff University to develop waste water treatment solutions

- **Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur and UK's Cardiff University have bagged a funding to develop waste water treatment solutions.**
- **The joint funding received by scholars from both the top institutes comes from the Global Challenges Research Fund – Impact Acceleration Account (GCRF-IAA) Project 2020 towards the development of a photo-electro-catalytic (PEC) reactor for wastewater treatment, according to a statement issued by IIT Kharagpur.**

China completes its first-ever docking in lunar orbit

- **A Chinese probe carrying samples from the lunar surface successfully docked with a spacecraft orbiting the moon, in another space first for the nation.**
- **The manoeuvre was part of the ambitious Chang'e-5 mission – named after a mythical Chinese Moon goddess – to bring back the first lunar samples in four decades. The cargo capsule carrying lunar rocks and soil lifted off from the surface and docked with the orbiter.**
- **The cargo capsule's departure from the lunar surface was also a first: the first liftoff of a Chinese craft from an extraterrestrial body. The capsule transferred the moon samples to the orbiter, which will separate and return to Earth.**
- **If the return journey is successful, China will become only the third country to have retrieved samples from the Moon, following the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s. Scientists hope the samples from Chang'e-5 will help them learn more about the Moon's origins and volcanic activity on its surface.**

Moon is a rounded astronomical body that orbits the Earth as its only natural satellite. It has a rocky silicate composition and is of planetary mass but has no significant atmosphere, hydrosphere or magnetic field. Its surface gravity is 0.1654 g, about one-sixth of Earth's. The Moon's average orbital distance from Earth is 384,402 km (238,856 mi) or 1.28 light-seconds. Its gravitational influence produces Earth's tides and slightly lengthens Earth's day. The first human-made object to reach the Moon was the Soviet Union's uncrewed Luna 2 spacecraft in September 1959, which was intentionally crashed onto the lunar surface. This was followed by the first successful soft landing on the Moon by Luna 9 in 1966. The only human lunar missions to date have been those of the United States' NASA Apollo program. Chandrayaan-1 was the first Indian lunar probe under Chandrayaan program. Chandrayaan-2 is the second lunar exploration mission developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), after Chandrayaan-1. Chandrayaan-3 is a planned third lunar exploration mission by the ISRO. Following Chandrayaan-2 where a snag in communication led to the failure of the lander's soft landing attempt, after a successful orbital insertion, another lunar mission for demonstrating soft landing was proposed.

Health/Disease

Govt. announces Rs 900 crore package for COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission

- The Centre has announced the third stimulus package of Rs 900 crore for the Mission COVID Suraksha- The Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission. This grant will be provided to the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) for Research and Development of Indian COVID-19 vaccines with end-to-end focus from preclinical development through clinical development and manufacturing and regulatory facilitation for deployment.
- It would consolidate all available and funded resources towards an accelerated product development. The Ministry of Science and Technology said that this will help accelerate development of approximately 5 to 6 vaccine candidates.
- This will also ensure that these are brought closer to licensure and introduction in the market for consideration of regulatory authorities for introduction in public health systems, to combat further spread of COVID infection. Phase-I of the COVID Suraksha Mission has been allotted 900 Crore rupees for a period of 12 months.

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

Cleared in UK, Pfizer first in India to apply for emergency use

- PFIZER India has become the first pharmaceutical firm to seek from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) emergency use authorisation for its Covid-19 vaccine in the country, after its parent company secured such clearance in the UK and Bahrain. In its application to the drug regulator, Pfizer has sought permission to import the vaccine for sale and distribution in the country, besides waiver of clinical trials on Indian population in accordance with the special provisions under the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019.
- The UK became the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19, with the UK regulator Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency granting temporary authorisation for its emergency use. The British regulator said the jab, which claims to offer up to 95 per cent protection against COVID-19, is safe for roll-out.
- Serum Institute of India (SII) has already produced 50 million doses of its covid-19 vaccine 'Covishield' at-risk even as the world's largest vaccine producer reached one step closer to its launch by completing enrolment of 1,600 participants for its phase 3 trial. The company has partnered with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for the trials. ICMR has funded the clinical trial site fees while Serum Institute has funded other expenses for Covishield.
- Bharat Biotech - Based in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, the company is developing a whole-virion inactivated vaccine called COVAXIN in partnership with state-run Indian Council of Medical Research. It recently applied for emergency use authorisation in the country and is in talks with more than 10 countries in South America, Asia and Eastern Europe to sell it there.
- Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd is conducting clinical trials of Sputnik V in India and expects late-stage trials to be completed by March 2021. It will also distribute the finished vaccine in India once approved but there is no current plan for it to produce it. Sputnik V is the world's first registered vaccine based on a well-studied human adenoviral vector-based platform.

India's first indigenous mRNA vaccine candidate receives approval to initiate Phase 1 and 2 human clinical trials

- India's first indigenous mRNA vaccine candidate has received approval from Indian Drug regulators to initiate Phase one and two human clinical trials. The novel mRNA vaccine candidate, HGC019 has been

developed by Gennova, Pune and supported with seed grant under the Ind-CEPI mission of the Department of Biotechnology.

- **The mRNA vaccines do not use the conventional model to produce immune response.** Instead, they carry the molecular instructions to make the protein in the body through a synthetic RNA of the virus. **mRNA-based vaccines are scientifically the ideal choice to address a pandemic because of their rapid developmental timeline.** The mRNA vaccine is considered safe as is non-infectious, non-integrating in nature, and degraded by standard cellular mechanisms.
- **Scientists say,** these vaccines can be quickly manufactured in an **inexpensive manner under cGMP conditions** to ensure their availability and accessibility for mass vaccination on a sustainable basis.

Messenger RNA (mRNA) is a **single-stranded RNA molecule** that is **complementary to one of the DNA strands** of a gene. **The mRNA is an RNA version of the gene** that **leaves the cell nucleus and moves to the cytoplasm** where proteins are made. **During protein synthesis, an organelle called a ribosome moves along the mRNA,** reads its base sequence, and uses the genetic code to translate each three-base triplet, or codon, into its corresponding amino acid.

The most alarming finding from the latest NFHS is on child nutrition

- The ministry of health and family welfare **released the first set of findings from the fifth and the latest round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), conducted in 2019-20.** The survey has been conducted after a gap of about three years.
- The first set of findings has been **released for only 22 states and Union territories,** which together are home to **almost half of the country's population.** It includes big states such as **Maharashtra, Bihar and West Bengal, but does not include the country's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh.** The data collection for the survey was reportedly suspended in May due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the final report with data for all states is expected to be ready in another six months.
- **NFHS 4, which was conducted in 2015-16, had recorded a drop in child malnutrition levels.** These gains seem to have been reversed, the NFHS 5 findings show. The share of children who were stunted (low height for their age) increased in 13 states, while the share of children who had low weight for their height increased in 12 states.
- **The share of underweight and overweight children also increased in 16 and 20 states, respectively.** These four are common indicators of undernutrition and malnutrition among children.
- To be sure, another indicator, **under-five mortality rate (refers to the probability of dying between birth and five years of age expressed per 1,000 live births),** decreased in 18 of the 22 states for which the data has been released.

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

Deadly brain-eating amoeba spreading fast in US, says report

- **A deadly brain-consuming amoeba — Naegleria fowleri — is crawling its way northward from the southern states of the US.** According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the geographic range of these cases has been advancing northward. Now, **more cases are being reported in midwestern states in the US.**
- **Naegleria fowleri is a free-living microscopic amoeba.** It can cause a rare and devastating infection of the brain called **primary amebic meningoencephalitis (PAM).** The amoeba is commonly found in **warm freshwater and soil.** Naegleria fowleri usually infects people when contaminated water enters the body through the nose, CDC explained.
- **Once the amoeba enters the nose, it travels to the brain, where it causes PAM, which is usually fatal.** Infection typically occurs when people go swimming or diving in warm freshwater places, like lakes and rivers. In very rare instances, Naegleria infections may also occur due to contaminated water from other sources.

90-year-old British woman becomes first person in world to receive Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

- A 90-year-old woman from Northern Ireland became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine — marking the start of the UK's mass vaccination programme against the deadly disease. Margaret Keenan, from Enniskillen receives the jab at University Hospital, Coventry. Keenan became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine outside trial conditions.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a first-of-its-kind intentional genomic alteration (IGA)

- The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a first-of-its-kind intentional genomic alteration (IGA) in a line of domestic pigs referred to as GalSafe pigs.
- These pigs may be used for food and human therapeutics. This will be the first time that the regulator has approved an animal biotechnology product for both food and biomedical purposes.
- Intentional genomic alteration in animal's means making specific changes to the genome of the organism using modern molecular technologies that are popularly referred to as "genome editing" or "genetic engineering".
- Such changes in the DNA sequence of an animal may be carried out for research purposes, to produce healthier meat for human consumption and to study disease resistance in animals among other reasons.

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA or USFDA) is a federal agency of the Department of Health and Human Services. The FDA has its headquarters in unincorporated White Oak, Maryland. Stephen M. Hahn, MD is the current commissioner.

ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT



First-ever study has grim prognosis: native squirrel could vanish from NE after 2050

- **The Malayan Giant Squirrel**, one of the world's largest squirrel species that has a dark upper body, pale under parts, and a long, bushy tail, is **currently found in parts of West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Nagaland.**
- A first-of-its-kind study by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, has projected that numbers of the Malayan Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor*) could decline by 90 per cent in India by 2050, and if urgent steps are not taken, the species could be extinct in the country in subsequent decades. **Destruction of its habitat could restrict the squirrel to only southern Sikkim and North Bengal by 2050**, according to the ZSI.

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

In world's first, lab-grown meat to go on sale in Singapore

- Singapore has given U.S. start-up Eat Just the green light to sell its lab-grown chicken meat, in what the firm says is the **world's first regulatory approval for so-called clean meat** that does not come from slaughtered animals.
- **Cultured meat, produced in bioreactors without the slaughter of an animal, has been approved for sale by a regulatory authority for the first time.** The development has been hailed as a landmark moment across the meat industry.

Namibia to auction 170 elephants over drought, increased population

- **Namibia has put 170 "high value" wild elephants up for sale due to drought** and an increase in elephant numbers, the southern African country's environmental ministry.
- **In October it put 70 female and 30 male buffalos from Waterberg Plateau Park in central Namibia up for sale in a bid to ease pressure on grazing land.** The arid southern African nation also auctioned 1,000 animals from national parks, including 500 buffalos in 2019 as it faced the worst drought in a century.

Indo Gangetic plain global hotspot of atmospheric ammonia: IIT Kharagpur study

- The Indo- Gangetic Plain (IGP) is the global hot-spot of atmospheric ammonia (NH₃) due to intense agricultural activities and fertilizer production there, according to researchers at The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur.
- The study titled **"Record high levels of atmospheric ammonia over India: Spatial and temporal analyses"** has also been published in the international Elsevier journal "Science of the Total Environment".

- The study by the IIT team was conducted along with researchers from Indian Institute Of Tropical Meteorology, Pune and few European researchers. The team has also recommended wider adoption of precision farming along with seasonal restrictions on the use of fertilizers.

World carbon dioxide emissions drop 7% in pandemic-hit 2020

- A locked-down pandemic-struck world cut its carbon dioxide emissions this year by 7%, the biggest drop ever, new preliminary figures show.
- The Global Carbon Project, an authoritative group of dozens of international scientists who track emissions, calculated that the world will have put 37 billion US tons (34 billion metric tons) of carbon dioxide in the air in 2020. That's down from 40.1 billion US tons (36.4 billion metric tons) in 2019.
- Scientists say this drop is chiefly because people are staying home, traveling less by car and plane, and that emissions are expected to jump back up after the pandemic ends. Ground transportation makes up about one-fifth of emissions of carbon dioxide, the chief man-made heat-trapping gas.

Sri Lanka records highest elephant deaths in world

- Sri Lanka has set a world record for the highest number of elephant deaths in the world after more than 400 died across the island nation this year.
- Sri Lanka has recorded the highest number of elephant deaths in the world due to the human-elephant conflict. The island-nation's Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) had ordered a special audit into the human-elephant conflict by renowned elephant expert Dr Prithviraj Fernando, the head of the Centre for Conservation and Research.

Uttarakhand to get its first crocodile safari in Kumaon's Khatima

- Uttarakhand is planning to set up the state's first crocodile safari in Surai forest range in Kumaon. A crocodile safari in Khakra nullah of Surai range in Khatima area in US Nagar district. Our aim is not only to conserve crocodiles but also earn revenue from this for the department by attracting tourists and boosting ecotourism."
- The spot where the safari is being planned is 12 km from Khatima town of US Nagar and 20 km from Pilibhit tiger reserve in Pilibhit district of Uttar Pradesh. Khakra had 170 crocodiles in the last count held in 2018.

Maharashtra becomes first state in India to get dedicated action plan to protect pangolins

- The Maharashtra forest department is set to be the first state in India to have a dedicated action plan for conservation of pangolins – the world's most trafficked animal.
- Pangolins are listed in Schedule I of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, implying the highest degree of protection.

Pangolins sometimes known as scaly anteaters are mammals of the order Pholidota. As of January 2020, there are eight species of pangolin whose conservation status is listed in the threatened tier.

Mahindra World City, Chennai becomes India's first integrated city to be certified 'Zero Waste to Landfill'

- Mahindra World City, Chennai, a first-of-its-kind integrated city built on environment-friendly principles, has achieved yet another milestone by becoming the first integrated city in India to receive third-party Zero Waste to Landfill (ZWL) certification.
- As part of its ZWL commitments, MWC Chennai is diverting 99 percent of waste (amounting to nearly 135 tons of waste) generated within its industrial zone away from landfills, thereby avoiding ~115 tonnes of CO2 emissions every month.

- The certification was conferred on MWC Chennai by Intertek, a globally recognised organisation responsible for auditing and certifying ZWL sites. On average, MWC Chennai generates nearly 40 tonnes of compost and 3,000 kg of biogas per month.

11% of Indian sharks, rays and chimaeras face high risk of extinction, finds IUCN assessment

- A recent assessment of sharks, rays and chimaeras by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Shark Specialist Group in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has revealed that of the 170 species found across the oceans of the country, 19 (about 11%) are facing high risk of extinction.
- "The new assessment of sharks rays and chimaeras point out that 11% of the 170 extant species of sharks, rays and chimaeras from Indian EEZ are classified as Critically Endangered (CE)".

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

Karnataka second in country in leopard numbers

- Karnataka — home to a high density of tigers — harbours the second highest number of leopards in the country after Madhya Pradesh, according to a new report. The 'Status of Leopard in India, 2018' report released reinforces Karnataka's position as a pre-eminent wildlife State that has some of the highest number of tigers, elephants, and now leopards.
- The report released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, noted that Karnataka has 1,783 leopards and the results are in sync with similar studies on the spotted cat conducted by wildlife biologists in the State.
- Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar released the Status of Leopard in India 2018 report. Mr Javadekar announced that India now has 12,852 leopards. More than 60 per cent increase has been recorded in the leopard population over the previous estimate which was conducted in 2014.

Shift towards sustainable fisheries in Mediterranean, Black Sea region

- The number of stocks subject to overfishing has decreased for the first time in decades in the Mediterranean and Black Sea marine ecosystems, though most fish stocks remain overexploited.
- While 75 per cent of fish stocks remained subject to overfishing, the percentage fell by more than 10 per cent between 2014 and 2018, according to a new report on the State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (SoMFi 2020).
- Fisheries form an essential part of the socio-economic fabric of the Mediterranean and Black Sea life, with an economic contribution of an estimated \$9.4 billion. At least one in every 100 coastal residents in some areas there is a fisher.
- The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is responsible for overseeing the fishing fleet in the region.
- GFCM works with the region's 25 coastal countries to monitor and manage vessels of all types and sizes — from the wide variety of small-scale fishing boats that account for 83 per cent of the total fleet to the industrial trawlers, purse seiners, longliners and others that make up the rest.

SPORTS



Sports Personalities in News

Hamilton wins crash-hit Bahrain Grand Prix

- **Lewis Hamilton won the Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix for Mercedes after French driver Romain Grosjean had a miraculous escape from a fiery first lap crash that ripped his car in two.**
- **The win, from pole position, was the 95th of seven times world champion Hamilton's career and came with the safety car leading the field to the chequered flag. Red Bull's Max Verstappen finished second.**

Kohli becomes fastest cricketer to score 12000 ODI runs, beats Tendulkar's record

- **India captain Virat Kohli became the fastest cricketer to score 12,000 ODI runs, breaking a record held by legendary compatriot Sachin Tendulkar.**
- **Kohli, who needed 23 runs for the landmark coming into the match, touched the figure in his 242nd innings. In comparison, it took Tendulkar 300 games to get there.**
- **The 32-year-old Indian captain was playing in his 251st ODI and averages close to 60 in the format with 43 hundreds and 59 half centuries. He made his debut in 2008.**
- **Tendulkar scored 18426 runs from 463 ODIs between 1989 and 2012 at an average of 44.83 with the help of 49 hundreds and 96 half centuries**

Jehan Daruvala creates history, becomes first Indian to win F2 race

- **Jehan Daruvala created history when he became the first Indian to win a Formula 2 race during the Sakhir Grand Prix. A thrilling battle against F2 champion Mick Schumacher and Daniel Ticktum saw the 22-year-old Indian emerge on top in the support race of the season-ending Formula 1 Grand Prix.**

Manipur's Bala Devi becomes the first Indian Woman Footballer to score in Europe

- **Manipur's Ngangom Bala Devi created history by becoming the first Indian woman to score in a professional European football league. She scored against Motherwell for Rangers FC and won the match 9-0.**
- **Bala Devi plays forward in the game. She joined the Scottish club in January 2020 and became the first Indian woman to sign a professional football contract overseas.**

Suyash Mehta set to become first-ever Indian-origin referee to officiate in NBA

- **Suyash Mehta is set to become the first-ever Indian-origin official to officiate in the National Basketball Association (NBA) league. Mehta, who has been part of G League and Summer League Games' officiating teams, was named in the officiating staff for the 2020-21 season of the league.**

Ankita Raina wins ITF doubles title in Dubai

- **Top Indian tennis player Ankita Raina won her third doubles title of the pandemic-hit 2020 season, clinching the Al Habtoor challenge with Ekaterine Gorgodze.**

- The unseeded Indo-Georgian pair won against Aliona Bolsova and Zadoinov from Spain and Slovakian Kaja Juvan in the final of the USD 100,000 hard court event

Antara and Prisha, winners of the World Robot Olympiad 2020

- As climate change rattles the world, technology has come to the fore to help the environment. Over the years, youngsters around the world have come up with different innovations to do their small bit for the environment. Two such young minds are Prisha Patel and Antara Patel from Mumbai, India.
- The students of Jamnabai Narsee School, Mumbai, won the recently concluded World Robot Olympiad held in Canada. Antara and Prisha formed Team Technonerds under the tutelage of On My Own Technology (OMOTEC), Mumbai, and the team was placed first in the Open Category of the olympiad.

Verstappen wins season-ending Abu Dhabi GP in dominant style

- Red Bull driver Max Verstappen won the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in dominant style for his second victory of the season and 10th of his career.
- It was the first time Mercedes has not won at the Yas Marina circuit since Sebastian Vettel's 13th win of the season cemented his fourth world title with Red Bull back in 2013.

Brijesh Patel to continue as IPL GC chairman, Rajiv Shukla to be back as BCCI VP

- Former Test player Brijesh Patel is set to continue as the chairman of the IPL Governing Council (GC). Former IPL chairman Rajiv Shukla is set to return to BCCI administration as vice president, being the only applicant for the post.
- Brijesh Patel is an Indian cricketer who played for the Indian national cricket team as a right-handed batsman from 1974 until 1979.

Wrestler Anshu Malik clinches silver, India's first medal at Individual World Cup

- Promising wrestler Anshu Malik won India's first medal – a silver – at the ongoing Individual World Cup in Belgrade, Serbia.
- The 19-year-old put up a valiant fight before losing to reigning European champion Anastasia Nichita of Moldova 5-1 in the 57 kg women's freestyle final.

The Best FIFA Football Awards 2020

- Robert Lewandowski and Lucy Bronze were respectively named the men's and women's player of the year at the Best FIFA Football Awards 2020.
- Bayern Munich striker Lewandowski saw off competition from Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo to be crowned the best men's player.
- The forward has been in frightening form over the last year, scoring 55 goals and firing Bayern Munich to an impressive treble last season. He was widely tipped to win the Ballon d'Or this year before it was scrapped amid the pandemic.
- Lewandowski has continued his form and, since the start of the 2019/20 season, he has scored 73 goals in 64 club games – 22 more than any other men's player in Europe's top five leagues.
- Jurgen Klopp earned a surprise second consecutive Men's coach of the Year honour for his Premier League success with Liverpool while Sarina Wiegman won the Women's honour for her work with the Dutch national team.

Lewis Hamilton pips Jordan Henderson to win BBC's Sports Personality of the Year

- Seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton capped another successful year by claiming the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year prize.

- The 35-year-old driver, who last month equaled Michael Schumacher's record of seven F1 titles, overcame Jordan Henderson and Hollie Doyle to win the British broadcaster's prestigious prize in a public vote.

Cristiano Ronaldo Wins Prestigious Golden Foot 2020 Award

- **Cristiano Ronaldo has won the prestigious Golden Foot 2020 award on in Monaco** for his outstanding performance over the previous season. He netted the ball on 44 occasions in 44 games and **helped Juventus top Group G in the ongoing UEFA Champions League.**
- **Despite missing out on the coveted FIFA The Best Award to Bayern Munich icon Robert Lewandowski, Ronaldo picked up the Golden Foot 2020 award** – something that is missing from arch-rival Lionel Messi's trophy cabinet.

Rashford named first FIFA Foundation Award recipient

- **Marcus Rashford has become the inaugural recipient of FIFA Foundation Award.** Manchester United & England forward campaigned on child hunger. **FIFA Foundation will donate USD \$100,000 to support his social and charity work.**

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju virtually inaugurates 8 Khelo India State Centres of Excellence across India

- **Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju virtually inaugurated 8 Khelo India State Centres of Excellence across India** in the presence of State Sports Ministers. The 8 States include Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Kerala, Telangana, Nagaland, Karnataka and Odisha.
- **With a vision to make India one of the top 10 countries in 2028 Olympics, the Khelo India State Centres of Excellence will ensure that athletes proficient in a certain sport** can be given the world-class specialised training and these centers become the best facilities in the country to train athletes in the priority sport for which they have been earmarked.

Chetan Sharma is chairman of selectors

- **Former India pace troika of Chetan Sharma, Abey Kuruvilla and Debasis Mohanty have been appointed as national selectors.** Chetan will replace Sunil Joshi as the chairman of the panel on the basis of having earned more Test caps (23 to 15).
- The appointment was announced after the **Cricket Advisory Committee of Madan Lal, Rudra Pratap Singh and Sulakshana Naik interviewed 11 candidates** shortlisted for the three vacant posts in the five-member selection committee. Joshi and Harvinder Singh, who is with India's squad in Australia, will continue as selectors.

Sport Events

FIFA extends 7-team Club World Cup to 2021; Japan to host

- **FIFA extended the smaller Club World Cup format for one more year after a 24-team revamp scheduled for China** in June 2021 was delayed because of the coronavirus pandemic.
- **Japan was chosen to host a traditional**, seven-team Club World Cup in December 2021. FIFA wanted a December 2020 edition in Qatar to be the last with seven teams six continental champions and the host nations domestic league winner. The format often attracts little interest and is routinely won by the European club.

The 2018 FIFA World Cup was an international football tournament contested by men's national teams and took place between 14 June and 15 July 2018 in Russia. It was the 21st FIFA World Cup, a worldwide football tournament held once every four years. In the final, France played Croatia on 15 July at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow. France won the match 4–2 to claim their second World Cup. Zabivaka was the official mascot for the event—an anthropomorphic wolf dressed in the colours of the Russian national team. The 2022 FIFA World Cup is scheduled to be the 22nd edition of the FIFA World Cup, the quadrennial international men's association football championship contested by the national teams of the member associations of FIFA. It is scheduled to take place in Qatar from 21 November to 18 December 2022.

BCCI governing body approves 10 teams for 2022 IPL

- The BCCI's governing body ratified the entry of two new franchises in the IPL to make it a 10-team affair from 2022 during its Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- The Board, in principle, decided to back the ICC's bid for inclusion of cricket, in the T20 format, in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics "after getting some clarifications from the International Olympic Committee". "Two new teams will be introduced in the 2022 IPL".

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

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

Kiren Rijiju launches 2nd edition of Fit India Cyclothon

- **Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has launched the second edition of Fit India Cyclothon** via social media. The mega cycling event which started will run for 25 days till 31st December.
- The event will be held across the country in each district and citizens can participate by registering on Fit India website, cycle daily a distance of their choice, and share their images and videos on social media.

Qatar to host 2030 Asian Games, 2034 edition in Saudi Arabia

- The 2030 Asian Games were awarded to Doha and the 2034 event went to Riyadh after a deal was struck between the rival nations.
- Doha beat Riyadh for the 2030 Games in the vote at the Olympic Council of Asia's (OCA) general assembly.

ICC announces 2022 World T20 qualification system, Hungary and Romania to play for first time

- The ICC has announced the **qualifying system for the 2022 World T20** that will be played in Australia. 11 regional qualification tournaments across five regions have been rescheduled to 2021, due to COVID-19 and will now feed into the 2022 Australia event.
- For the first time ever Hungary, Romania and Serbia will be competing for Men's T20 World Cup qualification and Finland will play host to an ICC event for the very first time.
- At regional level there will be 67 Associate Members taking part. Due to the depth of strength within Africa and Europe, both regions have sub regional qualifiers feeding into a final qualifier for the region.

Centre to promote yoga as a competitive sport

- The Central government is promoting yoga as a competitive sport within the country, with an aim to bring awareness about yoga, its benefits and spiritual background in young community.
- India has also recently established the National Yogasana Sport Federation of India (NYSFI) for preservation and development of yoga as a competitive sport.
- “Yogasana as a competitive sport can develop an interest in yoga among people across the world. The Fit India Movement initiated by the Indian Government has gained impetus and the Government has promoted yoga as a healthy practice to stay fit.

Sports Ministry approves inclusion of four indigenous games in Khelo India Youth Games

- The Sports Ministry has approved the inclusion of four indigenous Games to be a part of Khelo India Youth Games 2021, scheduled to take place in Haryana. The games include Gatka, Kalaripayattu, Thang-Ta and Mallakhamba.
- Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said, India has a rich heritage of indigenous sports and it is a priority for the Sports Ministry to preserve, promote and popularise these games. He said, there is no better platform than the Khelo India Games where athletes of these games can compete.
- The four selected games represent different parts of the country. Kalaripayattu has its origin from Kerala and has practitioners all over the world. Mallakhamba has been well-known across India and Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have been the hotspots of this sport. Gatka originates from Punjab and this traditional fighting style of the Nihang Sikh Warriors is used both as self-defense as well as a sport. Thang-Ta, a Manipur martial art has passed into oblivion in the recent decades, but the sport will get national recognition again with the help of the Khelo India Youth Games 2021.

Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG), formerly Khelo India School Games (KISG), means Play India Youth Games, held annually in January or February, are the national level multidisciplinary grassroots games in India held for two categories, namely under-17 year's school students and under-21 college students. Every year best 1000 kids will be given an annual scholarship of Rs. 5 lakh (US\$7,000) for 8 years to prepare them for the international sporting events. The Training of Trainers (TOT) Programme will be held in December 2018- January 2019 in the first phase. Here total of 160 trainers will be trained in 4 batches of 40 each in December-January period.

Govt to start 1000 Khelo India small centres to encourage sports culture in country

- Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said that the government has made various policy changes and taken up initiatives to encourage and support sportspersons and the sporting community even after they retire.
- Addressing the 10th Global Sports Summit, TURF 2020, organized by FICCI, Mr. Rijiju said, that we are also starting 1000 Khelo India small centres across the country that will help retired sports persons get employment or some role in shaping the sports culture of the country.

Russia can't use its name and flag at the next 2 Olympics

- Russia will not be able to use its name, flag and anthem at the next two Olympics or at any world championships for the next two years after a ruling by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.
- The Lausanne-based court halved the four-year ban proposed last year by the World Anti-Doping Agency in a landmark case that accused Russia of state-ordered tampering of a testing laboratory database in Moscow. The ruling also blocked Russia from bidding to host major sporting events for two years.
- Russian athletes and teams will still be allowed to compete at next year's Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing, as well as world championships including the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, if they are not banned for or suspected of doping.

AWARDS



Maharashtra zilla parishad educator first in India to win \$1-million teacher prize

- A primary school teacher from India was named the winner of the USD 1-million annual Global Teacher Prize 2020 in recognition of his efforts to promote girls' education and trigger a quick-response (QR) coded textbook revolution in India.
- **Ranjitsinh Disale** from Paritewadi village in Maharashtra's Solapur district emerged the winner from 10 finalists from across the world for the annual prize founded by London-based Varkey Foundation and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) in 2014 to recognise an exceptional teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession.
- The award is bestowed by The winners were announced by actor-writer Stephen Fry in an online ceremony from the Natural History Museum, London. Disale, a teacher at the zilla parishad school in Solapur's Paritewadi, was among the 12,000 educators from 140 countries, who had been nominated for the prize. The prize was set up to recognise one exceptional teacher making an outstanding contribution to the profession as well as to shine a spotlight on the important role teachers play in society.

Indian-American Gitanjali Rao named by TIME as first-ever 'Kid of the Year' for work in technology

- Indian-American Gitanjali Rao, a "brilliant" young scientist and inventor, has been named by TIME magazine as the first-ever Kid of the Year for her "astonishing work using technology to tackle issues ranging from contaminated drinking water to opioid addiction and cyberbullying.
- "The world belongs to those who shape it. And however uncertain that world may feel at a given moment, the reassuring reality seems to be that each new generation produces more of what these kids have already achieved: positive impact, in all sizes.

Hina Khan wins big At the Dadasaheb Phalke Icon Awards 2020

- Actor Hina Khan has recently received Dadasaheb Phalke Icon Award 2020 for Iconic Diva 2020.
- Hina Khan was felicitated with the Style Icon of Television Industry (female) and Style Icon of Social Media (female). She recently posted pictures of herself posing with her trophies. She informed her fans about it on social media.

Parkash Singh Badal returns his Padma Vibhushan award in solidarity with farmers protesting against farm laws

- Former Punjab Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal patron Parkash Singh Badal has returned his Padma Vibhushan award in solidarity with the farmers protesting against the three farm laws. Mr. Badal received Padma Vibhushan Award in 2015.

- In addition to Badal, another Punjab leader, Shiromani Akali Dal (Democratic) chief and Rajya Sabha MP Sukhdev Dhindsa, has returned his Padma Bhushan award and said it is useless if the farm laws are enacted. He was given the award in January 2019.

ICAR bags global award from FAO for creating awareness about soil health

- India's agri-research body Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has bagged the prestigious 'International King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award' from the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for raising awareness about importance of soil health among all stakeholders.
- The award was conferred to ICAR on the occasion of World Soil Day, celebrated on December 5, through a virtual function. India bagged the award for ICAR's awareness initiative undertaken in December 2019, involving participation of more than 13,000 people through a social media campaign.

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris named Time 'Person of the Year'

- US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have been chosen as Time magazine's 2020 "Person of the Year," the publication announced.
- The Democratic pair were chosen ahead of three other finalists: frontline health care workers and Anthony Fauci, the racial justice movement, and President Donald Trump who Biden defeated in November's election.
- Time's magazine cover has a picture of Biden, 78, and Harris, 56, with the subtitle "Changing America's story".

Person of the Year (called Man of the Year or Woman of the Year until 1999) is an annual issue of the United States news magazine and website Time that features and profiles a person, a group, an idea, or an object that "for better or for worse... has done the most to influence the events of the year". The tradition of selecting a "Man of the Year" began in 1927, with Time editors contemplating the news makers of the year. The idea was also an attempt to remedy the editorial embarrassment earlier that year of not having aviator Charles Lindbergh on its cover following his historic trans-Atlantic flight. In 1949, Winston Churchill was named "Man of the Half-Century", and the last issue of 1989 named Mikhail Gorbachev as "Man of the Decade". The December 31, 1999 issue of Time named Albert Einstein the "Person of the Century". Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mahatma Gandhi were chosen as runners-up.

HelpAge India presented the UN Population Award for 2020

- HelpAge India has been presented the UN Population Award for 2020 (institutional category), as per a release issued by the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1981, the United Nations Population Award recognises contributions in the fields of population and reproductive health.
- The Committee for the United Nations Population Award, which made the selections, is chaired by Ion Jinga, Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations, and is composed of representatives of nine other UN Member States.
- For the first time in the history of the UN Population Award, the honour is being conferred on an Indian institution.
- The last time the Award came to an Indian was 28 years ago, back in 1992, when it was awarded to Mr. J.R.D. Tata as an individual laureate. HelpAge India, which has been working for 'the cause and care of disadvantaged older persons to improve their quality of life' for over four decades, is the first Indian institution to receive this award.

Brazil's Carolina Araujo becomes First Non-Indian to win Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians

- The Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians 2020 has been awarded to Carolina Araujo, Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in a virtual ceremony on December 9, 2020.

- **Ms Araujo**, who is Vice President of the Committee for Women in Mathematics at the International Mathematical Union, is the **first non-Indian to receive this prize**. Ms Araujo work area focuses on birational geometry, which aims to classify and describe the structure of algebraic varieties.
- The prize awarded annually to a researcher from a developing country funded by the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India in collaboration with ICTP (International Centre for Theoretical Physics), and the International Mathematical Union was given for her outstanding work in algebraic geometry. Her work area focuses on birational geometry, which aims to classify and describe the structure of algebraic varieties.

UNESCO to launch international prize in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib

- The UNESCO has decided to launch an international prize in the field of ‘creative economy’ in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Starting November 2021, the dollar 50 thousand award will be given away once in two years for global economic initiatives of the youth.
- 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.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of Bangladesh in a Facebook release quoted UNESCO that the award will recognise exceptional initiatives taken by cultural workers and organizations in the development of the creative economy.
- Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen told reporters in Dhaka that the award will create an opportunity to spread the ideology of Bangabandhu in the world and inspire the cultural workers to develop the creative economy.
- UNESCO has declared 2021 as ‘International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development’. Currently, there are 23 UNESCO International Awards in the name of international celebrities and organisations.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris. **Audrey Azoulay** appointed as the **Director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**, becoming the **second female leader of the organization**.

SAIL gets Golden Peacock Environment Management Award

- **Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)** has been awarded with the prestigious **Golden Peacock Environment Management Award** for the year 2020 in the Steel Sector by the Institute of Directors.
- The company has been the winner of this award for successive two years and this bears testimony to the efforts made by it for sustainable and environmentally responsible steel making. This award is one of the most coveted awards in the category.

Raj Kamal Jha wins Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2020 for The City and the Sea

- **Raj Kamal Jha**, has won the **Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2020** for his book, **The City and the Sea**. Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, the late Sultan of Oman and The People of Oman, and choreographer Sandip Soparrkar from India received the Tagore Prize for Social Achievement.
- The Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize is a literary honour in India conferred annually to published works of Indian authors (residing in India or abroad) in novel, short stories, poetry and drama, originally written in any of Indian official languages and dialects, but translated to English. It was founded in 2018 by US-based independent and non-profit publishing house Maitreya Publishing Foundation (MPF) as a platform for world peace, literature, art, education and human rights. The winners receive USD 10,000 as the prize money along with a Rabindranath Tagore statuette while the shortlisted authors each receive USD 500.

RS Tolia Memorial Award presented in ninth Sustainable Mountain Development Summit

- Ninth edition of the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS-IX) held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand was the valedictory session with a presentation of the R. S. Tolia Memorial Award. This award

recognises the efforts of individuals and organisations that have made an impact in integrating and addressing the issues of mountain communities.

- **SMDS is an annual event of the Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI)** which brings together legislators, bureaucrats, academicians, NGOs, and members of the civil society. This year the programme is being held virtually, hosted by the Sustainable Development Forum of Uttarakhand (SDFU).

US President presents ‘Legion of Merit’ award to PM Modi for his leadership in elevating US-India strategic partnership

- **US President Donald Trump presented the prestigious Legion of Merit award to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership** in elevating strategic partnership of the two countries and emergence of India as a global power.
- **India’s Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, accepted the award on behalf of the prime minister** from the US National Security Advisor Robert O’Brien at the White House. Mr Modi was presented with the highest degree Chief Commander of the Legion of Merit which is given only to the Head of State or Government
- **Mr Modi was given the award in recognition of his steadfast leadership and vision that has accelerated India’s emergence as a global power** and elevated the strategic partnership between the United States and India to address global challenges.
- **The US President also presented the Legion of Merit to Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.** The awards were received by their respective ambassadors in Washington DC.

CtrlS bags world’s first Golden Peacock Eco-Innovation Award for datacenters

- **Hyperscale datacenter provider CtrlS, was awarded the prestigious Golden Peacock Award for Eco-Innovation.** The company became the World’s first datacenter to be awarded in the datacenter category.
- **The jury selected CtrlS Datacenters, after having evaluated 234 companies on parameters such as innovation, environment, health and safety, energy conservation, and impact on climate Change.**
- **The winners in other than data center category include Tata Motors (ERC), ITC, JSW Cement, and ITC Life Sciences & Technology Centre.** The past winners include Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, and Reliance Industries.

Western Railway wins first prize in energy conservation awards 2020

- **Western Railway bagged three prestigious National Energy Conservation Awards (NECA) in ‘Transport’ and ‘Building – Govt offices’ categories for the year 2020,** by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power.
- **It has been awarded the First Prize in the Transportation Category along with first and third prize in Buildings Category for Divisional Railway Manager’s offices at Bhavnagar and Rajkot respectively.**

Haryana government’s e-governance project — Antyodaya Saral — won the Digital India Awards 2020 under the category — Excellence in Digital Governance — State/UT

- **Haryana government’s e-governance project Antyodaya Saral won the Digital India Awards 2020 under the category Excellence in Digital Governance State/UT.** The award is conferred on December 30 by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- **Antyodaya Saral is government to citizen focused public service delivery online platform** that can be used to apply for over 549 schemes and services of the state government.
- **Currently, services from 40 departments, boards and corporations are being provided with the help of Common Service Centre (CSC) and 117 Antyodaya Saral Kendras**

PERSONS IN NEWS

World's first graduate-level AI University appoints world-renowned academic Eric Xing as President

- **The Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI), the world's first graduate-level, research-based artificial intelligence (AI) university, has appointed renowned AI academic Professor Dr. Eric Xing as President.** Professor Dr. Xing will lead MBZUAI as the first intake of graduate students are set to commence studies in January 2021.

In a first for India, Kolkata Air Traffic Control gets a woman general manager

- **Shyamli Haldar becomes first woman air traffic heads at Kolkata Air Traffic Control (ATC).** She was among the **first batch of women air traffic controllers recruited three decades ago.** Haldar took over as the general manager of Kolkata ATC.

Joe Biden chooses an all-female senior White House press team

- **President-elect Joe Biden will have an all-female senior communications team at his White House,** reflecting his stated desire to build out a diverse White House team as well as what's expected to be a return to a more traditional press operation.
- **Biden campaign communications director Kate Bedingfield will serve as Mr. Biden's White House communications director.** Jen Psaki, a longtime Democratic spokesperson, will be his press secretary.

US President elect Joe Biden names Jenett Yellen as Treasury Secretary & Neera Tanden as Director of Office of Management & Budget

- **US President-elect Joe Biden has named ex-Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen as his nominee for treasury secretary.** If confirmed by the Senate, she will be the **first woman ever to hold the post.** She is among several women chosen for top economic positions.
- **Indian American Neera Tanden has been named as director of the Office of Management and 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. He also unveiled his White House economic team, consisting of economists Cecilia Rouse, Jared Bernstein and Heather Boushey.

Joe Biden picks Vivek Murthy as Surgeon General

- **US President-elect Joe Biden has selected two former Obama administration officials for senior roles to help fight COVID-19, including the appointment of Jeff Zients as White House coronavirus coordinator.**
- **Biden adviser Vivek Murthy will return to his role as Surgeon General but with a broader portfolio as the pandemic rages through the country.**

Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhry assumes the charge as Director General Border Roads

- **Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhry assumed the charge as 27th Director General Border Roads (DGBR) on the 01 December 2020.**
- **Lt Gen Chaudhry was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers from Indian Military Academy, Dehradun in 1983 and has attended all prestigious courses of the Indian Army including staff Course at Defence Service Staff College, Wellington, Higher Command Course at Army War College, Mhow and the National Defence College, New Delhi. He is also an M-Tech from IISc Bangalore.**

Ashraf Patel named Social Entrepreneur of the year

- **Many NGOs and social workers are working tirelessly during the COVID 19 pandemic. Ashraf Patel is one such person who has recently 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 last month. 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. ComMutiny members across 17 states reached 30 thousand vulnerable households with relief supplies in the times of COVID 19 crisis.

Joe Biden picks retired General Lloyd Austin for Defense Secretary

- U.S. President-Elect Joe Biden has nominated retired General Lloyd Austin as his Defence Secretary according to reports, making Gen. Austin the first African American in the post, if he is confirmed by the Senate.

Sushil Kumar Modi unanimously elected to Rajya Sabha

- Senior BJP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar Sushil Kumar Modi has been unanimously elected to Rajya Sabha. Byelection was necessitated following the death of Lok Janshakti Party founder and union minister Ram Vilas Paswan. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad have congratulated Sushil Kumar Modi for becoming member of Rajya Sabha.

Indian-origin Raj Chouhan elected Speaker of Canada's British Columbia Province

- Raj Chouhan, an Indian-origin legislator in Canada, has been elected as the Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, becoming first from the community to occupy the post.

Indian-American Pramila Jayapal elected as chair of powerful Congressional Progressive Caucus

- Indian- American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal has been elected as the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), making her one of the most powerful US lawmakers for the 117th Congress.

Kylie Jenner tops Forbes' list of highest-paid celebrities of 2020

- American media personality and reality TV star Kylie Jenner has been crowned the highest-paid celebrity of 2020 by Forbes.
- The top-earning stars in the world earned a combined of \$6.1 billion in 2020 with Kylie Jenner and Kanye West at the top of the list. Setting aside Kylie's history with Forbes, the financial experts there calculated her earning this year to be at \$590 million after she sold a majority of her beauty brand's stake to Coty Inc.

Siddharth Chatterjee appointed as United Nations Resident Coordinator in China

- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed senior UN official Siddharth Chatterjee of India as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in China.
- Resident Coordinators are the UN Secretary-General's representatives for development at the country level. They lead UN teams supporting countries to recover better from the COVID-19 pandemic through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mr. Guterres appointed Mr. Chatterjee as the Resident Coordinator in China, with the host government's approval.

Biden names Indian-American Vedant Patel as Assistant WH Press Secretary

- US President-elect Joe Biden has named Indian-American Vedant Patel to be the Assistant Press Secretary as he announced the additional members of the White House Communications and Press Staff.
- Born in the Indian state of Gujarat and raised in California, Patel is a graduate of the University of California-Riverside and the University of Florida. He is the third Indian-American in the White House press shop.
- Priya Singh was the first Indian-American in the White House Press and Communication wing. She was White House Press Assistant from Jan 2009 to May 2010 in the Obama administration.
- Another Indian-American, Raj Shah, served as the White House Deputy Press Secretary and Deputy Assistant to the President from 2017 to 2019 under the Trump administration.

Shashi Sekhar Vempati elected as Vice President of Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union

- Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar has congratulated **Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Sekhar Vempati on being elected as Vice President of Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union.**
- **Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) is one of the largest broadcasting associations in the world.** The election was held during the General Assembly of the Union which was held virtually due to COVID-19.
- Mr Vempati has been elected to the office of the Vice President, ABU for three years with immediate effect. Almost all of the Public Broadcasters of the member countries in the Asia Pacific region strongly supported the candidature of India's Public Broadcaster which was forwarded by NHK Japan.
- **The candidature of the nominee from China's NRTA was unsuccessful,** failing to garner support from any of the members, paving the way for CEO Prasar Bharati India's election to the Vice Presidency of ABU.
- **The Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union was formed in 1964 as a professional association of broadcasting organisations with over 286 members in 57 countries and regions,** reaching the potential population of about three billion people.

Prachanda-led CPN removes PM Oli from party's chairman post

- The Central Committee meeting of **Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'-led faction of the ruling Nepal Communist Party removed Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli from the post of chairman,** hours after the embattled premier announced a new 1,199-member committee to organise the party's general convention in an effort to strengthen his hold on it.
- The Central Committee meeting of the **Prachanda-led faction unanimously nominated senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal as the party's second chairman. Mr. Prachanda is the first chairman of the party.**

Ujwal Nirgudkar appointed as Member of Oscar Academy's Science & Technology Council

- **Ujwal Nirgudkar appointed as Member of Oscar Academy's Science & Technology Council** Ujwal Nirgudkar, Oscar Academy Member and Chairman of SMPTE-India Section who is promoting standards for Digital Cinema in India is now appointed by Oscar Academy to serve on the 2020-21 Science and Technology Council.
- **An Indian Resident is being invited as the Member for the first time in the history of 17 Years of the council.**

Joe Biden names Indian American Bharat Ramamurti as National Economic Council member

- **US President-elect Joe Biden named Indian American Bharat Ramamurti as one of the three new members of the National Economic Council** that coordinates domestic and international economic policymaking process for the administration.
- Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris named three additional NEC members: **Joelle Gamble**, Special Assistant to the US President for Economic Policy; **David Kamin**, Deputy Director NEC along with **Ramamurti as Deputy Director of NEC for Financial Reform and Consumer Protection.**

MISCELLANEOUS

Police station at Manipur's Thoubal district chosen best in country

- **Nongpok Sekmai police station in Manipur's Thoubal district** has been selected as the best police station in the country, fresh rankings for 2020 announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- The other nine top police stations are AWPS-Suramangalam in Tamil Nadu's Salem city, Kharsang in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang, Jhilmili (Bhaiya Thana) at Surajpur in Chhattisgarh, Sanguem in South Goa, Kalighat in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Pakyong in Sikkim's East District, Kanth in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad district, Khanvel in Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Jammikunta Town police station in Telangana's Karimnagar district.

First Child-friendly Police Station Launched in Maharashtra's Pune

- A first of its kind, 'child-friendly' police station has been inaugurated in Maharashtra's Pune. The police station has been set up in accordance with guidelines laid down by the National Commissioner for Protection of Child Rights.

Fertility index boards should be set up in every gram panchayat in Maharashtra

- Maharashtra Agriculture Minister Dadaji Bhuse has said that **Fertility index boards should be set up in every gram panchayat in the state informing the farmers in simple language** about the components of soil present in the village lands and the amount of fertilizer required for it. He directed that a workshop should be organized in every village on the occasion of World Soil Day on 5th December.

Assam launched 'Orunodoi' scheme

- **Assam government launched the 'Orunodoi' scheme.** Over 18 lakh families in the state will receive 830 rupees per month in their bank accounts under the scheme. **Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal** launched the scheme in presence of Finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati.
- **Touted as the biggest ever scheme in post-Independence Assam,** this scheme would **strengthen the role of the women as the money will be deposited in the bank accounts of the women of the families.** The scheme will be rolled out in 29 districts at the moment, with 18.2 lakh beneficiaries. The scheme will be implemented in the four districts under BTC once the Council election process is over.

India's first wilderness park opened near Hyderabad

- **India's first wilderness park with focus on biodiversity conservation, rewilding and a stated objective to be focused on total inclusivity was opened near Hyderabad.**

Piyush Goyal inaugurates newly electrified Dhigawara-Bandikui section of NW Railway

- **Minister of Railways Piyush Goyal inaugurated the newly electrified Dhigawara-Bandikui section of North Western Railway.** He also flagged off the first train on this newly electrified route at the function organized at Dhigawara station.

Five-star village postal scheme launched in Uttarakhand

- **The Union Minister of State for Communication Sanjay Dhotre launched five star village postal scheme to ensure the universal coverage of flagship postal schemes in Dehradun for rural areas of Uttarakhand.**

Prime Minister Modi inaugurated construction work of Agra Metro Project

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the construction work of Agra Metro Project** through video conferencing. **The project comprises two corridors with a total length of 29.4 kilometers and connects major tourist attractions like Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Sikandra with railway stations and bus stands.**
- **The project will be completed in 5 years with an estimated cost of over 8 thousand 379 crore rupees.** It will **benefit 26 lakh population of the city of Agra** and will also cater to more than 60 lakh tourists who visit Agra every year. It will provide an environment friendly Mass Rapid Transit System to the historical city of Agra.

‘PM Modi and his Government’s Special Relationship with Sikhs’ Book released on the occasion of Gurupurab

- **Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri released a Book titled ‘Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Government’s Special Relationship with Sikhs’** on the occasion of Gurupurab.
- The book was released in New Delhi in presence of Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar. **The book, published by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**, was released in English, Hindi and Punjabi languages.

India’s first female, comic book superhero tackles COVID-19 in ‘Priya’s Mask’

- **India’s first female superhero, Priya, and her trusted flying tiger Sahas, find themselves amid a global, ongoing crisis: COVID-19.** Save the flying tiger, this is a familiar premise to us all, by now. Priya’s Mask is the newest edition of the Augmented Reality-enabled comic book series featuring the teenage, female superhero.
- **For the first time, it is accompanied by an animated short film.** Voiced by actors from India and the US (Mrunal Thakur as Priya, Vidya Balan and Rosanna Arquette as Sahas and Sairah Kabir as eight-year-old Meena), the film visually narrates a segment from the comic. Set against the city of Jodhpur, Priya befriends Meena to show her how indispensable frontline workers are and instills a sense of hope and courage in her.

Lahore again tops list of world’s most polluted cities

- **Pakistan’s cultural capital Lahore has once again topped the list of world’s most polluted cities.** “Lahore ranks the most polluted city in the world,” according to air pollution data **released by the US Air Quality Index**
- According to the index, Lahore reported a particulate matter (PM) rating of 423. Pakistan’s financial capital Karachi ranked at 7 on the AQI. **New Delhi came in second with a PM of 229, while Nepal’s capital Kathmandu ranked the third-worst city with a PM of 178.**

Delhi-Meerut Corridor, India’s 1st RRTS, to become operational in 2023

- With financing concerns having been resolved after loan approval from multilateral institutions in recent months, India’s urban transport landscape is set for a major transformation **when the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS Corridor, India’s first regional rapid transit system (RRTS), becomes operational in 2023**, ushering seamless connectivity in the National Capital Region (NCR).
- The corridor would connect **regional nodes in NCR and shorten the Delhi-Meerut transit to less than 60 minutes from the 3-4 hours taken by road**, besides reducing congestion and pollution.

Ladakh LG virtually inaugurates second edition of Ladakh Literature Festival 2020

- **Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur virtually inaugurated the second edition of Ladakh Literature Festival, 2020, in Leh.** The three Day festival hosted a series of talks, importance of the region, ancient knowledge of Ladakh, Folk music, cultural Dance, geology and wildlife of Himalayas and several interesting topics on YouTube and Facebook streaming.

Govt. takes several steps to develop infrastructure in aviation sector in North East

- **The Centre has taken several steps to develop the infrastructure in the aviation sector in the North East.** Regional Executive Director (North East) of Airport Authority of India M Suresh said that efforts are on to operationalise 10 unused airports.
- **The new air terminal in Guwahati will be completed in March 2022**, which would have 14 million passengers handling capacity per year. An initiative is being taken to start a water aerodrome in Assam.

PM Modi addressed International Bharati Festival 2020

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the International Bharati Festival, 2020** 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.**

Northeast's first human milk bank opens in Guwahati

- The first human milk bank in the northeast was opened in Guwahati, Assam. Opened in Satribari Christian Hospital (SCH), the bank, which is the 15th such unit in India, will be able to store human milk for up to six years.

National Centre for Divyang Empowerment inaugurated at CRPF Group Centre in Hakimpet

- Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy has inaugurated the National Centre for Divyang Empowerment at the CRPF Group Centre in Hakimpet near Hyderabad. This 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.

Ludhiana for securing 1st rank amongst State Veterinary Universities

- Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh has congratulated the Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), Ludhiana for securing the first rank amongst State Veterinary Universities in India for the year 2019. GADVASU topped the ranking, conducted by the Education Division of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi.

Akshay Kumar and Rana Daggubati to launch Socialswag

- Actors Akshay Kumar and Rana Daggubati announced that they are coming together to create India's first influencer led online market place called- Socialswag. Poised to take over India's digital world by storm, the app is set to be launched nationwide in February 2021. Socialswag is a new age platform that will enable consumers to connect with - celebrities, influencers, bloggers and other inspirational individuals, through personal interactions and learning forums.

Dharmendra Pradhan dedicates West Bengal's first oil and gas reserve to nation

- Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Steel, dedicated West Bengal's first oil and gas reserve, the Bengal Basin, to the nation.
- He said production from the petroleum reserve in Ashoknagar, about 47 km from Kolkata, has started with the extracted oil being sent to Haldia refinery of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).

Nitin Gadkari inaugurated and laid foundation stone for 33 highway projects in Karnataka

- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari inaugurated and lay the foundation stone for 33 highway projects in Karnataka.
- These projects for inauguration and foundation laying carry a Road length of nearly 1200 kilometers, involving construction value of nearly 11 thousand crore rupees. Paving the way for development of Karnataka, these roads will enhance better connectivity, convenience and economic growth in the State.

India's first Waqf liaison centre set up in Pune

- The country's first Waqf liaison centre will be set up in Pune by prominent philanthropist, Fareed Tungekar, in association with a city-based NGO.
- The office will serve as a platform for Waqf research and development in the country, where legal experts, serving and retired Waqf board officials, including officials from the central and state governments, will guide trustees on various aspects of the Waqf's SOPs.

PM Modi addressed International Bharati Festival

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the International Bharati Festival, 2020 via video conferencing. The event is being conducted as part of the 138th birth anniversary celebration of Tamil poet and writer Mahakavi Subramanya Bharati. Every year the award is conferred on eminent persons who have done laudable service in any field of social relevance.

Eight-member expert panel set up to supervise Ram temple foundation-laying work

- The Ram temple construction committee has set up an eight-member panel of India's top engineers and structural experts headed by IIT-Delhi's former Director V S Raju to supervise the foundation laying work

for the temple. The other members of the panel are CBRI-Rookie Director N Gopal Krishnan, NIT-Surat Director S R Gandhi, IIT-Guwahati Director T G Sitaram, IIT-Delhi's professor emeritus B Bhattacharji, TCI advisor A P Mull besides Manu Santhanam of IIT-Madras and Pradipt Banerjee of IIT-Bombay.

Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi Palaniswamy launches 2,000 mini-clinics

- **In Tamil Nadu, 2,000 mini-clinics** have been **launched**. Chief minister Edappadi Palaniswamy inaugurated them at a function held in Chennai.
- These clinics will serve the poorest of the poor even in the remotest parts of the state. The new health facilities in the state have been named as the **“Amma Mini-Clinics,”** where **Amma** is considered a reference to the late AIADMK leader **J. Jayalalithaa**.

“Shakti Bill” intended to curb crimes against women, tabled in the Maharashtra Assembly

- **The winter session of the Maharashtra State Legislature began in Mumbai.** The session is also witnessing protests from the opposition on various issues. **The much discussed Shakti Bill intended to curb crimes against women has been tabled in the house.**

India's Case Fatality Rate lowest in world

- **Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan** has said that **India's Case Fatality Rate, CFR is amongst the lowest in the world.** At present India's CFR is 1.45 per cent, whereas globally it is 2.26 per cent.
- Mr Bhushan said, **India's recovery rate has crossed 95 per cent.** A Multi-Level Governance Mechanism have been set up in the nation to **monitor the work related to COVID19 vaccination.**

UP launched ‘Kisan Kalyan Mission’ to double the income of farmers

- **Uttar Pradesh government launched a special program to double the income of farmers.** The program named as **Kisan Kalyan Mission** will cover all assembly constituencies of the state.
- **Under the Kisan Kalyan mission various programs will be organised across the state.** Exhibitions of agriculture and Associate sectors will be organised which will include the products of MSME sector units and livelihood missions.
- **Farmer meetings will also be organised in which progressive farmers, scientist and workers associated with Agriculture Department will explain the scientific farming and provide information about the schemes of government.** Farmers will be given benefit under the various schemes of agriculture department during these events.

Maritime Theatre Command to take shape next year

- The country's first Maritime Theatre Command (MTC) is set to take concrete shape by next year, with its commander-in-chief having full operational control over the western and eastern naval fleet, maritime strike fighter jets and transport aircraft, two amphibious infantry brigades and coastal patrol vessels.

MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the 23rd Hunar Haat in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh

- **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the 23rd Hunar Haat of indigenous master artisans in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh.** Briefing reporters in Rampur, **Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi** said that Hunar Haat has become an effective mission of the Government to provide Backup to Brilliance and Encouragement to Expertise. **Mr Naqvi said that indigenous products of master artisans are a major attraction at Hunar Haat.** The people will also enjoy traditional delicacies from almost every corner of the country at this Hunar Haat.

Ladakh celebrates New Year ‘Losar’

- **People in Ladakh region are celebrating Ladakhi New Year, Losar.** Due to considerable Covid19 cases in Leh and strict SOPs in place, this year Losar is observed in a low key.

Prakash Javadekar announces the selection films in Indian Panorama for the 51st IFFI

- **Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar** announced the selection of **23 Feature and 20 non-feature films in Indian Panorama for the 51st International Film Festival of India, IFFI to be held in Goa in January next year.**

- In the Feature films section, 23 films are selected that include Kripal Kalita directed Assamese movie Bridge, Hindi Films Saand Ki Aankh and Chichhore, Govind Nihlani's English movie Up Up & Up, Nila Madhab Panda's Odia movie Kalira Atita, Marathi Movie Prawaas, Sanskrit Movie Namo and Malayalam Movie safe directed by Pradheep Kailipurayath.
- In non-feature films, 20 films were selected that include Ankit Kothari's Gujarati movie Panchika, Bimal Poddar's Bengali movie Radha, English movie Ahimsa-Gandhi : The power of powerless directed by Ramesh Sharma and Manipuri movie Highways of Life directed by Maibam Amarjeet Singh.

CBI gets new Crime Manual after 15 years

- Union Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh released the **Central Bureau of Investigation's revised Crime Manual**, which will be instrumental in guiding the agency on legal matters and tools for an efficient probe. The exercise of updating the manual in accordance with the **current requirements** took almost 18 months, under CBI chief Rishi Kumar Shukla. It was last revised in 2005.

Govt to launch coal import monitoring system

- The government plans to launch the coal import monitoring system from February, making it mandatory for importers to disclose future shipments. Importers of coking coal, steam coal and bituminous coal would have to gain a permit ahead of deliveries, the commerce and industry ministry said.

Prime Minister inaugurated India's first-ever driverless train on Delhi Metro's Magenta Line

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first-ever driverless train operations on Delhi Metro's Magenta Line through video conferencing.
- The Prime Minister also inaugurated the fully operational National Common Mobility Card service on the Airport Express Line. This will enable anyone carrying a RuPay Debit Card issued from any part of the country to travel on the Airport Express Line using that card. This facility will become available on the entire Delhi Metro network by 2022.

Union Minister Arjun Munda inaugurates Tribes India showrooms in Kolkata and Gwalior

- Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda inaugurated Two Tribes India showrooms (Kolkata in person and Gwalior virtually) in a grand opening ceremony in Kolkata. The Minister spoke extensively about the significance of preserving and promoting the art and culture of the tribal population who form roughly 8% of the population. Digital India Awards 2020: Haryana wins e-gov award for Antyodaya Saral project.

UP Govt launches 'Varasat' campaign to curb property & land-related disputes in rural areas

- In Uttar Pradesh, the government has launched 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. 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 15th February next year.
- The campaign started on the initiatives of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath 'Varasat' will not only end the long pending land disputes, but will also put a check on the land mafia who generally target disputed lands especially in the rural areas.

Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar launches DGNCC Digital Forum in New Delhi

- The Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar launched the DGNCC Digital Forum in New Delhi. This Digital Forum hosted on the DGNCC website, will provide a platform to National Cadet Corps cadets all over the country to share their experiences of various NCC activities.
- Dr Kumar said that this forum will help NCC cadets to share their opinions and suggestions on NCC training, Social Service and Community Development and host of other issues related to National Security, National Integration and National Building.

PM Modi pays floral tributes and release a book titled ‘Atal Bihari Vajpayee’ in Parliament

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid floral tributes and also released a book titled **Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Parliament : A Commemorative Volume on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee**.
- The book also contains some rare photographs from Atal Bihari Vajpayee's public life. **December 25th**, this year marks the **96th** birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee. This day is also celebrated as **Good Governance Day**.

CSIR-NISCAIR, MoES, Vijnana Bharati jointly organise inaugural session of International Science Literature Festival, Vigyanika

- **CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (CSIR-NISCAIR)**, Ministry of Earth Sciences and Vijnana Bharati jointly organised the inaugural session of the International Science Literature Festival, Vigyanika.
- The literature festival was organised on the opening day of the **India International Science Festival 2020** to mark the birth anniversary of renowned Indian mathematician, **Srinivasa Ramanujan**.

Delhi's Sunder Nursery Chosen for 2 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards For Conservation

- **Delhi's iconic Sunder Nursery**, a 90-acre garden which was transformed into a horticultural paradise after a decade-long conservation work, is among the winners in the **UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation** this year.
- Also, **Koothambalam** at Guruvayoor Temple in Kerala's Thrissur has been chosen in the **Award of Distinction** category.
- The innovative revitalisation of the **Lai Cho Wo Rural Cultural Landscape** in Hong Kong SAR, China and the transformative management of the **historic Sunder Nursery of New Delhi** have received the newly introduced **Special Recognition for Sustainable Development**. The Sunder Nursery has also been recognised as the **Award of Excellence** in this year's **UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation**.



IMPORTANT DAYS

Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare, 30 November

- The Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, at its 20th Session, **decided that a memorial Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare would be observed on 30 November each year or, when appropriate**, on the first day of the regular session of the Conference.
- The day marks tribute to the victims of chemical warfare, as well as to reaffirm the commitment of the **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)** to the elimination of the threat of chemical weapons, thereby promoting the goals of peace, security, and multilateralism.

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery: 2 December

- **The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December, marks the date of the adoption**, by the General Assembly, of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.
- The day is observed **annually around the globe to spread awareness about slavery and stop all kinds of slavery that exist in the present-day world**. Governments and organisations as well as common people take this opportunity of the day to express their views on slavery.

International Day of Banks 4 December

- On 19 December 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution, which designated **4 December as the International Day of Banks in recognition of the significant potential of multilateral development banks and other international development banks** in financing sustainable development and providing know-how; and also in recognition of the vital role of the banking systems in Member States in contributing to the improvement of the standard of living.

World Soil Day: 5 December

- **World Soil Day (WSD) is held annually on 5 December as a means to focus attention on the importance of healthy soil** and to advocate for the sustainable management of soil resources.
- An international day to celebrate Soil was **recommended by the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) in 2002. Under the leadership of the Kingdom of Thailand** and within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership, FAO has supported the formal establishment of WSD as a global awareness raising platform.
- **The FAO Conference unanimously endorsed World Soil Day in June 2013** and requested its official adoption at the 68th UN General Assembly. In December 2013, the UN General Assembly responded by designating 5 December 2014 as the first official World Soil Day.
- **The theme for World Soil Day 2020 is “Keep soil alive, protect soil biodiversity”.**

International Civil Aviation Day: 7 December

- **In 1996 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed that 7 December was to be the International Civil Aviation Day**. Every five years, coinciding with ICAO anniversaries the ICAO Council establishes a special anniversary theme for International Civil Aviation Day.
- Between these anniversary years, Council representatives select a single theme for the full four-year intervening period. The Council has decided that from now until 2023, **the theme will be: “Advancing Innovation for Global Aviation Development”.**

International Anti-Corruption Day: 9 December

- **The Assembly also designated 9 December as International Anti-Corruption Day**, to raise awareness of corruption and of the role of the Convention in combating and preventing it. The Convention entered into force in December 2005.
- **International Anti-corruption day 2020 theme is ‘United Against Corruption’**. The theme focuses on corruption as one of the biggest obstacles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Human Rights Day: 10 December

- **Human Rights Day** is celebrated annually across the world on 10 December every year. The date was chosen to honor the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation, on 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global enunciation of human rights and one of the first major achievements of the new United Nations.
- **2020 Theme: Recover Better - Stand Up for Human Rights.**

International Mountain Day: 11 December

- This year, for International Mountain Day (11 December), FAO focuses in celebrating mountains as the home to half of the world's biodiversity hotspots and addresses the threats they face.

UNICEF Day

- **UNICEF Day** is observed every year on December 11. The United Nations General Assembly created UNICEF on December 11, 1946, as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

International Universal Health Coverage Day, 12 December

- On 12 December 2012, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed a resolution urging countries to accelerate progress toward universal health coverage (UHC) – the idea that everyone, everywhere should have access to quality, affordable health care - as an essential priority for international development.
- On 12 December 2017, the United Nations proclaimed 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day).
- The theme for UHC Day 2020 is "Health for All: Protect Everyone"-To end this crisis and build a safer and healthier future, we must invest in health systems that protect us all—now.

International Day of Neutrality: 12 December

- The General Assembly decided to declare 12 December the International Day of Neutrality, and called for marking the day by holding events aimed at enhancing public awareness of the value of neutrality in international relations.

UN Arabic Language Day

- **UN Arabic Language Day** is observed annually on December 18. 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".
- 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".
- **Arabic Language Academies: Necessity or Luxury?** is the theme of World Arabic Language Day celebration in 2020.

International Migrants Day 2020

- Every year, December 18, is celebrated as **International Migrants Day**. The day was appointed by the General Assembly of United Nations on December 4, 2000, taking into account the large and increasing number of migrants in the world.
- Each year, International Migrants Day observed around a specific theme. **The International Migrants Day 2020 theme is Reimagining Human Mobility.**

National Consumer Rights Day

- **National Consumer Rights Day** is observed on 24 December every year in India. The day aims to highlight the importance of the consumer movement as well as the need to make them aware and informed of their rights and responsibilities.

- 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. The movement highlights the changes in lifestyle of consumers.

Good Governance Day 2020

- Good governance is observed annually on December 25. The day aims to let the citizens, the students, who are the future of the country know about the government’s responsibilities and duties that it needs to fulfill.
- The day is also celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of India’s former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. On December 23, 2014, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya (posthumously) were announced as recipients of India’s highest civilian award, Bharat Ratna.

International Day of Epidemic Preparedness, 27 December

- The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed December 27 the “International Day of Epidemic Preparedness.”
- A year into the global battle against the coronavirus, the international body hopes the designation will help strengthen global measures against and preparedness for future health crises.



QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following cities has become the first Indian city to get an ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001:2015 Certification for 'Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) services'?
(a) Ranchi (b) Prayagraj (c) Shimla (d) Bhubaneswar
2. Which of the following is set to become the first Arab Gulf country to generate electricity from coal?
(a) Saudi Arabia (b) Kuwait
(c) United Arab Emirates (d) Jordan
3. Recently, The Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI), the world's first graduate-level, research-based artificial intelligence (AI) university, has appointed renowned AI academic _____ as President.
(a) Professor Dr. Eric Xing (b) Professor Dr. Chin Chan
(c) Professor Dr. Johnson Matthew (d) Professor Dr. Mohammad Salah
4. Which of the following airports became India's first airport to introduce 'Internet of Things' (IoT) enabled smart baggage trolleys which is in line with Government of India's flagship Digital India Programme?
(a) Indira Gandhi International Airport
(b) Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport
(c) Rajiv Gandhi International Airport
(d) Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport
5. The Centre has announced the third stimulus package of _____ crore for the Mission COVID Suraksha- The Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission.
(a) Rs 500 (b) Rs 700 (c) Rs 900 (d) Rs 1200
6. Recently, India's first wilderness park with focus on biodiversity conservation, rewilding and a stated objective to be focused on total inclusivity was opened near _____.
(a) Mysuru (b) Hyderabad (c) Bengaluru (d) Kochi
7. Who won the Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix?
(a) Recardo Powell (b) Lewis Hamilton (c) Max Verstappen (d) Romain Grosjean
8. Who launched the India Climate Change Knowledge Portal?
(a) Shri Narendra Modi (b) Shri Ramnath Kovind
(c) Shri Prakash Javadekar (d) Dr. Harshvardhan
9. Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare is observed on:
(a) 21st November (b) 24th November (c) 27th November (d) 30th November
10. Name the Indian cricketer who became the fastest Indian batsman to score 1000 ODI runs.
(a) Shreyash Iyer (b) Mayank Aggarwal (c) Hardik Pandya (d) K L Rahul
11. Which of the following states hosted the first virtual celebration of Hornbill Festival 2020?
(a) Sikkim (b) Nagaland (c) Manipur (d) Mizoram
12. Recently, A first of its kind, 'child-friendly' police station has been inaugurated in _____.
(a) Maharashtra's Pune (b) Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj
(c) Haryana's Rewari (d) Punjab's Kapurthala

13. Which of the following states launched the 'Orunodoi' scheme?
(a) Haryana (b) West Bengal (c) Assam (d) Odisha
14. Recently, the Central Government has launched _____ crore rupees Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF).
(a) one lakh (b) two lakh (c) five lakh (d) ten lakh
15. Which of the following countries made sanitary products free to all women, becoming the first nation in the world to take such a step against "period poverty"?
(a) Ireland (b) Iceland (c) Scotland (d) Mexico
16. The 10-day-long _____ a festival of tribes was launched by Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda in a virtual format.
(a) Áadi Mahotsav (b) Tri Mahotsav
(c) Vano Mahotsav (d) Adivashi Mahotsav
17. Recently, US President-elect Joe Biden has named ex-Federal Reserve chair _____ as his nominee for treasury secretary.
(a) Janet Yellen (b) Neera Tanden (c) Jared Bernstein (d) Wally Adeyemo
18. Hundreds of homes in _____ will soon become the first in the world to use 100% green hydrogen to heat their properties and cook their meals as part of a new trial that could help households across the country replace fossil fuel gas.
(a) Scotland (b) United Kingdom (c) France (d) Germany
19. According to air pollution data released by the US Air Quality Index, which of the following cities has topped the list of world's most polluted cities?
(a) Mumbai (b) Lahore (c) Munich (d) Beijing
20. Who among the following actors has received Dadasaheb Phalke Icon Award 2020 for Iconic Diva 2020?
(a) Divyanka Tripathi (b) Mona Singh
(c) Hina Khan (d) Kanikka Kapoor
21. Recently, The Union Minister of State for Communication Sanjay Dhotre launched five star village postal schemes to ensure the universal coverage of flagship postal schemes for rural areas of _____.
(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Uttarakhand (c) Jharkhand (d) Chhattisgarh
22. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India signed a \$132.8 million loan to strengthen and modernize the distribution network and improve the quality of power supplied to households, industries, and businesses in India's northeastern state of _____.
(a) Manipur (b) Meghalaya
(c) Mizoram (d) Nagaland
23. Which of the following countries plans to impose a tax on corporations providing digital services from 2022 that will stay in place until major nations come up with a coordinated approach on taxation?
(a) Canada (b) Switzerland (c) Finland (d) Ireland
24. Which of the following countries completed reclaiming territory ceded by Armenia under a Russia-brokered peace deal that ended six weeks of fierce fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh?
(a) Azerbaijan (b) Tajikistan
(c) Turkmenistan (d) Kazakhstan

25. Which of the following rolled out the 'Live Rooms' feature that allows up to three additional users to go live in the same session?
(a) Google (b) Instagram (c) Facebook (d) Whatsapp
26. Which of the following International footwear companies has recently elevated Sandeep Kataria to the post of global CEO?
(a) Nike (b) Adidas (c) Fila (d) Bata
27. Which of the following companies launched India's first 100 Octane petrol, helping India join a select league of nations globally that have such superior quality fuel?
(a) Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (b) Gas Authority of India Limited
(c) Indian Oil Corporation (d) Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited
28. Recently, a Book titled Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Government's Special Relationship with Sikhs was released on the occasion of Gurupurab. This book is not available in which of the following languages?
(a) Hindi (b) English (c) Urdu (d) Punjabi
29. Recently, the public sector aerospace manufacturing company, the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited delivered the biggest cryogenic propellant tank C 32 LH 2 to the _____ in Bengaluru.
(a) Indian Space Research Organisation (b) Bharat Electronics Limited
(c) DRDO (d) Military Engineering Services
30. The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery is observed on:
(a) 28th November (b) 30th November (c) 1st December (d) 2nd December
31. Recently, Government of India has constituted a High-level Ministerial Committee for implementation of Paris Agreement. The Apex Committee for Implementation of Paris Agreement (AIPA) will be chaired by:
(a) Cabinet Secretary (b) Health Secretary (c) Environment Secretary (d) PMO
32. Recently, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan launched India's first indigenously developed _____ Octane premium petrol through video conferencing.
(a) 50 (b) 100 (c) 200 (d) 500
33. Which of the following Indian cities hosted India's first AI-enabled conversational digital persona?
(a) Chennai (b) Gautam Buddha Nagar (c) Hyderabad (d) Bengaluru
34. In world first, _____ approved Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use recently?
(a) United Kingdom (b) Canada
(c) United States of America (d) France
35. Recently, who has set up a task force for preparing a roadmap on imparting technical education in Mother Tongue?
(a) Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'
(b) Prime Minister Narendra Modi
(c) President Ramnath Kovind
(d) Union Information & Broadcasting minister Ravi Shankar Prasad
36. The United Nations and _____ government have signed a deal to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to the embattled Tigray region, at least the parts under federal government control.
(a) Ethiopia's (b) Eritrea's (c) Uganda's (d) Liberia's

37. Which of the following states approved the unified emergency helpline number 112 to provide all forms of police assistance to people in distress?
(a) Jharkhand (b) Karnataka (c) Odisha (d) Uttarakhand
38. In world's first, lab-grown meat to go on sale in _____.
(a) Singapore (b) Malaysia (c) Indonesia (d) Mauritius
39. Who among the following has become the fastest cricketer to score 12,000 ODI runs, breaking a record held by legendary compatriot Sachin Tendulkar?
(a) Steven Smith (b) Virat Kohli (c) Shikhar Dhawan (d) Shoaib Malik
40. India's first female, comic book superhero tackles COVID-19 in _____.
(a) 'Priyanka's Mask' (b) 'Pooja's Mask' (c) 'Priya's Mask' (d) 'Prerak's Mask'
41. According to fresh rankings for 2020 announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), which of the following has been selected as the best police station in the country?
(a) Sanguem (b) Nongpok Sekmai
(c) Jhilmili (Bhaiya Thana) (d) AWPS-Suramangalam
42. Name the Indian-American young scientist and inventor who has been named by TIME magazine as the first-ever Kid of the Year' for her "astonishing work using technology to tackle issues ranging from contaminated drinking water to opioid addiction and cyberbullying."
(a) Gitanjali Rao (b) Anamika Ganguly (c) Anika Chowdhury (d) Deepa Mukherjee
43. Which of the following banks has become the first bank to switch on Swift gpi Instant, a new service from the Brussels-based interbank co-operative that enables consumers and businesses to send tracked payments in seconds across borders?
(a) JPMorgan Chase & Co. (b) Lloyds Bank
(c) Credit Agricole SA (d) Industrial and Commercial Bank Of China Ltd.
44. Who among the following topped the Kotak Wealth Hurun list of India's wealthiest women?
(a) Savitri Jindal (b) Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw
(c) Roshni Nadar Malhotra (d) Leena Gandhi Tewari
45. The Reserve Bank of India has asked country's private bank _____ to stop new digital business launches and avoid adding new Credit Card customers after repeated reports by its customers facing multiple cases of technical glitches.
(a) HDFC (b) Axis (c) ICICI (d) Yes
46. Which of the following countries has put 170 "high value" wild elephants up for sale due to drought and an increase in elephant numbers?
(a) Liberia (b) Nigeria (c) Sudan (d) The Gabon
47. According to researchers at The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur, the Indo- Gangetic Plain (IGP) is the global hot-spot of atmospheric _____ due to intense agricultural activities and fertilizer production.
(a) Nitrogen (b) Ammonia (c) Methane (d) Argon
48. International Day of Banks is celebrated on:
(a) 1st December (b) 2nd December
(c) 4th December (d) 6th December

49. Who has become the first teacher from India to win the prestigious \$1-million Global Teacher Prize for innovation in teaching?
(a) Shreyas Mulgaonkar (b) Mahesh Dipankar (c) Ranjitsinh Disale (d) Tusshar Deshpande
50. Who among the following has recently returned his Padma Vibhushan award in solidarity with the farmers protesting against the three farm laws?
(a) Teejan Bai (b) Chhannulal Mishra (c) Mary Kom (d) Parkash Singh Badal
51. India's first homes for transgender children in need of care and protection will soon be established in _____.
(a) Bengaluru (b) Hyderabad (c) Lucknow (d) Bhopal
52. The theme for Hunar Haat to be organized in Rampur in December 2020 is:
(a) Awareness for Craft (b) Vocal for Local (c) Hunar to be Praised (d) Come On India
53. The Indian Navy (IN) is undertaking a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with _____ in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
(a) American Navy (b) Russian Federation Navy (c) German Navy (d) Japanese Navy
54. Who has been appointed as Surgeon General of USA but with a broader portfolio as the pandemic rages through the country?
(a) Mahesh Prasad (b) Vivek Murthy (c) Thomas Buchanan (d) Rosefaet Andrews
55. Who has recently topped the list by Fortune for the Businessperson of the Year 2020?
(a) Mark Juckerberg (b) Lary Page (c) Roshani Nadar (d) Elon Musk
56. Who is the new president elect of FICCI for the year 2020-21?
(a) Amit Bhattacharya (b) Uday Shankar (c) Rahul Kumaria (d) Mukund Jain
57. Who has recently released the 'Smuggling in India Report 2019-20'?
(a) Narendra Modi (b) Dr Harshvardhan (c) Nirmala Sitharaman (d) Amit Shah
58. Which of the following countries was chosen to host a traditional, seven-team Club World Cup in December 2021?
(a) Japan (b) USA (c) Portugal (d) Chile
59. According to recent prospects by Finance Ministry of India, India's economy is firmly on the path of a _____ recovery.
(a) D-shaped (b) V-shaped (c) U-shaped (d) Z-shaped
60. World Soil Day (WSD) is held annually on:
(a) 1st April (b) 2nd April (c) 5th December (d) 7th December
61. Which of the following states first solar power plant has been commissioned at Tlungvel recently?
(a) Nagaland (b) Manipur (c) Nagaland (d) Mizoram
62. 'Azad Pattan Hydropower Project', is located on _____ River in Sadhanoti district of PoK.
(a) Indus (b) Jhelum (c) Chenab (d) Ravi
63. Which of the following countries is examining the world's first 'foul air death'?
(a) France (b) United Kingdom (c) Germany (d) Ireland
64. Which of the following dairy brands is ranked 8th in the list of top 20 global dairy processors released by the International Farm Comparison Network (IFCN)?
(a) Mother Dairy (b) Amul (c) Gyan (d) Patanjali

65. Which of the following institute ranks as the number one university in India, and stands at the 172nd position in the world ranking in the QS World University Ranking 2021?
(a) Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (b) Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur
(c) Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (d) Indian Institute of Technology Delhi
66. The _____ Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) is part of a comprehensive response to the massive explosion on the Port of Beirut.
(a) Syria (b) Libya (c) Lebanon (d) Sudan
67. A first-of-its-kind study by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, has projected that numbers of the Malayan Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor*) could decline by _____ in India by 2050.
(a) 50% (b) 60% (c) 80% (d) 90%
68. Asteroid 2020 SO flew by Earth at an extremely close distance. The object came within just _____ percent of the distance between the Earth and the Moon, giving astronomers the perfect opportunity to witness the event.
(a) 7 (b) 13 (c) 16 (d) 20
69. India's agri-research body _____ has bagged the prestigious 'International King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award' from the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for raising awareness about importance of soil health among all stakeholders.
(a) Indian Veterinary Research Institute (b) Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education
(c) Indian Council of Agricultural Research (d) India Agricultural Research Institute
70. Which of the following states is holding a bird festival for the first time as part of its initiative to save migratory birds that arrive in the state in large numbers every year?
(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Bihar (c) Andhra Pradesh (d) Rajasthan
71. Recently, Bangladesh signed its first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with _____ allowing duty free access to a range of goods between the two countries.
(a) Indi (b) Nepal (c) Bhutan (d) Myanmar
72. Who became the first Indian to win a Formula 2 race during the Sakhir Grand Prix?
(a) Anshul Kumari (b) Jehan Daruvala (c) Pushkar Ritharia (d) Mihir Bharadwaj
73. Which of the following countries recently declared victory in an eight-year drive to eradicate extreme poverty?
(a) Japa (b) South Korea (c) China (d) Thailand
74. International Civil Aviation Day 2020 is observed on:
(a) 2nd Decembe (b) 4th December (c) 7th December (d) 9th December
75. Which of the following countries has been ranked first across the Arab world and 22nd globally in the Global Artificial Intelligence Index, showed by Tortoise Intelligence Index report?
(a) Oma (b) Kuwait (c) Saudi Arabia (d) Jordan
76. Which of the following ministries and AYUSH have decided to work together to set up an Export Promotion Council to boost AYUSH exports?
(a) Ministry of Corporate Affairs (b) Ministries of Finance
(c) Ministry of Commerce and Industry (d) Ministries of Home

77. Recently, _____ India has become the first pharmaceutical firm to seek from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) emergency use authorisation for its Covid-19 vaccine in the country, after its parent company secured such clearance in the UK and Bahrain.
(a) PFIZER (b) CRIXER (c) MRITED (d) GRIZEN
78. Jeff Bezos' space company _____ will take the first woman to the moon's surface, the billionaire said as NASA nears a decision to pick its first privately built lunar landers capable of sending astronauts to the moon by 2024.
(a) Blue Origin (b) Oxen Given (c) Through Hist (d) Luno Cox
79. Which of the following universities student recently developed India's first seaweed beer?
(a) University of Delhi (b) University of Kolkata (c) University of Madras (d) IISc Bengaluru
80. Which of the following countries scientists claim to have created the world's first light-based quantum computer which can solve problems far faster than a classical supercomputer?
(a) Japan (b) South Korea (c) China (d) Thailand
81. Which of the following cities of Madhya Pradesh has been included in the list of World Heritage City by UNESCO?
(a) Gwalior and Orchha (b) Indore and Mandu (c) Bhopal and Raisen (d) Guna and Bina
82. Recently, World Health Organisation has appointed Indian-origin _____ as the Chief Executive Officer for the WHO Foundation.
(a) Sunil Panwar (b) Anil Soni (c) Sandeep Marwah (d) Aniruddh Jain
83. Recently, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has declared _____ as winner of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.
(a) 'Invest India' (b) 'Test India' (c) 'Revisit India' (d) 'Divest India'
84. Recently, the World Economic Forum announced that it will convene its annual meeting this summer in _____ instead of the iconic Swiss ski town of Davos "in light of the current situation with regards to COVID-19 cases."
(a) Manila (b) Singapore (c) New Delhi (d) Tokyo
85. Which bank recently announced iMobile Pay, the app which offers a unique combination of facilities of a payment app?
(a) HDFC Bank (b) Axis Bank (c) ICICI Bank (d) RBL Bank
86. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given the inaugural address at the virtual _____.
(a) India Mobile Congress 2020 (b) India Mobile Confederation 2020
(c) India Mobile Ceremony 2020 (d) India Mobile Conference 2020
87. Which of the following ranked first amongst State Veterinary Universities in India for the year 2019?
(a) Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Chennai
(b) Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Bareilly
(c) Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University, Tirupati
(d) Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), Ludhiana
88. Who has recently launched the second edition of Fit India Cyclothon via social media?
(a) Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju (b) President Ramnath Kovind
(c) Prime Minister Narendra Modi (d) Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

89. Who will inaugurate the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention to be held in virtual format on January 9?
(a) President Ramnath Kovind (b) Prime Minister of Mauritius Aneeruddh Jagannath
(c) Prime Minister of Britain Boris Johnson (d) Prime Minister Narendra Modi
90. Recently, Senior BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi has been unanimously elected to Rajya Sabha from:
(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Bihar (c) Odisha (d) Madhya Pradesh
91. Name India's first regional rapid transit system (RRTS), which becomes operational in 2023.
(a) Bengaluru-Mysuru-Dharwad (b) Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut
(c) Kolkata- Darjeeling- New Jalpaiguri (d) Mumbai-Pune-Nagpur
92. Recently, Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah has been reappointed as prime minister of:
(a) Oman (b) Jordan (c) Kuwait (d) UAE
93. U.S. President-Elect Joe Biden has nominated retired General Lloyd Austin as his _____.
(a) Defence Secretary (b) Foreign Secretary (c) Home Secretary (d) Environmental Secretary
94. Name the Indian-origin legislator in Canada, who has been elected as the Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, becoming first from the community to occupy the post.
(a) Anuj Saxena (b) Viraj Deshmukh (c) Raj Chouhan (d) Mukund Narvane
95. Recently, Global market capitalisation or the total value of all listed stocks in the world crossed _____ trillion mark for the first time led by the tech-driven market rally in the US and China.
(a) \$50 (b) \$100 (c) \$250 (d) \$500
96. Recently, A team of researchers at the _____ has developed a pitcher plant-inspired inexpensive method for harvesting water from humid air.
(a) Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (b) Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi
(c) Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur (d) Indian Institute of Technology-Kharagpur
97. Who became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine — marking the start of the UK's mass vaccination programme against the deadly disease?
(a) Alexandra Rotwood (b) Margaret Keenan (c) Mitchell Mek (d) Rose Atwood
98. Who created history by becoming the first Indian woman to score in a professional European football league?
(a) Loitongbam Ashalata Devi (b) Ngangom Bala Devi
(c) Nongmaithem Ratanbala Devi (d) Oinam Bembem Devi
99. Who is set to become the first-ever Indian-origin official to officiate in the National Basketball Association (NBA) league?
(a) Mahesh Burman (b) Aniket Gupta (c) Suyash Mehta (d) Viresh Modi
100. International Anti-Corruption Day is observed every year on:
(a) 2nd December (b) 4th December (c) 6th December (d) 9th December
101. Recently, Indian Army chief General M.M. Naravane had the first visit by an Indian Army chief to the countries of:
(a) Saudi Arabia and Kuwait
(b) Oman and Jordan
(c) Lebanon and Jordan
(d) Saudi Arabia and UAE

102. In a first-ever virtual summit with a Central Asian country, PM Narendra Modi was held a virtual summit with _____.
(a) Kyrgyzstan (b) Uzbekistan (c) Tajikistan (d) Turkmenistan
103. Recently, the historic _____ scheme was cleared by Cabinet which will revolutionalise the tech world and significantly improve WiFi availability across the length and breadth of India.
(a) PM-WANI (b) PM-WAPA (c) PM-WAYU (d) PM-YUVA
104. Recently, The first human milk bank in the northeast was opened in _____.
(a) Imphal, Manipur (b) Shillong, Meghalaya (c) Guwahati, Assam (d) Kohima, Nagaland
105. According to the Urban Governance Index (UGI)-2020 released by the Praja Foundation, which of the following states topped the list of states in urban governance?
(a) Maharashtra (b) Haryana (c) Gujarat (d) Odisha
106. Recently, Nomura projected India to be the fastest growing Asian economy in 2021, with an estimate of _____ gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the coming calendar year.
(a) 6.9% (b) 7.4% (c) 8.2% (d) 9.9%
107. Recently, Government of India announced to start _____ Khelo India small centres to encourage sports culture in country.
(a) 300 (b) 500 (c) 750 (d) 1000
108. Recently, Ministry of AYUSH and _____ have decided to initiate work on setting up a Department of Integrative Medicine.
(a) AIIMS (b) AFMC
(c) JIPMER (d) King George Medical University, Lucknow
109. Human Rights Day is celebrated across the globe every year on:
(a) 5th December (b) 7th December (c) 10th December (d) 12th December
110. Recently, Actors Akshay Kumar and Rana Daggubati announced that they are coming together to create India's first influencer led online market place called _____.
(a) Socialswag (b) Socialculture (c) Socialswing (d) Socialwin
111. Which of the following telecom companies in partnership with Skylo is set to introduce worlds' first, satellite-based narrowband-IoT network in India?
(a) Reliance Jio (b) BSNL (c) Bharti Airtel (d) VI
112. Who have been chosen as Time magazine's 2020 "Person of the Year"?
(a) Vladimir Putin (b) Narendra Modi & Amit Shah
(c) Joe Biden & Kamala Harris (d) Donald Trump & Melania Trump
113. Which of the following countries has become the latest Arab country to agree to normalise relations with Israel in a deal brokered with US help?
(a) Oman (b) Morocco (c) Somalia (d) Tunisia
114. Reserve Bank of India has issued draft circular on declaration of dividend by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), Deposit-taking NBFCs and systemically important non-deposit-taking NBFCs must have their net non-performing assets below _____ percent.
(a) Three (b) Five (c) Six (d) Nine

115. Who among the following has not been named in the world's 100 most powerful women by Forbes 2020?
(a) Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (b) Renuka Jagtiani (c) Roshni Nadar Malhotra (d) Nita Ambani
116. The Reserve Bank has announced that the Real Time Gross Settlement System or the RTGS facility will now be available for _____ hours.
(a) 12 Hours (b) 15 Hours (c) 18 Hours (d) 24 Hours
117. According to the Global Carbon Project, an authoritative group of dozens of international scientists who track emissions, a locked-down pandemic-struck world cut its carbon dioxide emissions this year by _____ the biggest drop ever.
(a) 5% (b) 7% (c) 9% (d) 15%
118. Name the Indian-American, who is among the 18 astronauts selected by NASA for its manned mission to the Moon and beyond.
(a) Sudhakar Rao Anand (b) Tom Verghese
(c) Raja Jon Vurputoor Chari (d) Manmohan Ram Shetty Hari
119. International Mountain Day is celebrated every year on:
(a) 8th December (b) 10th December (c) 11th December (d) 14th December
120. Which of the following has been presented the UN Population Award for 2020 (institutional category), as per a release issued by the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)?
(a) OldAge India (b) Jai India (c) HelpAge India (d) Aasra India
121. Recently, India has dropped to the _____ position in Bloomberg New Energy Finance's (BNEF) 2020 Climatescope survey ranking from first last year.
(a) second (b) third (c) fourth (d) fifth
122. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Global Climate Summit on the occasion of the _____ anniversary of the landmark Paris Climate Agreement.
(a) third (b) fourth (c) fifth (d) tenth
123. Name the person who has recently won the Social Entrepreneur of the Year award instituted by the Schwab Foundation and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation.
(a) Nitin Singh (b) Deepak Jayant (c) Amit Mangat (d) Ashraf Patel
124. Ladakh Lieutenant Governor _____ virtually inaugurated the second edition of Ladakh Literature Festival, 2020, in Leh.
(a) Girish Chandra Murmu (b) R K Mathur (c) Deepak Mathur (d) Mahesh Chandra Jain
125. Indian- American Congresswoman _____ has been elected as the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CP c), making her one of the most powerful US lawmakers for the 117th Congress.
(a) Riya Jain (b) Pramila Jayapal (c) Amita Binaya (d) Niharika Vrinda
126. Which of the following countries will drop its dual currency system from next month?
(a) Mexico (b) Canada (c) Cuba (d) Sri Lanka
127. For the first time in India, the country's _____ has been rolled out for employers to check their progress on inclusion of people from LGBT+ communities at the workplaces.
(a) Work Equality Index at Offices (b) Workplace Equality Indices
(c) Workplace Equality Index (d) Workplace Equality Reference

128. The India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA) and _____ have joined hands to promote innovations in energy storage in India.
(a) World Bank (b) United Nations Industrial Development Organization
(c) International Monetary Fund (d) United National General Assembly
129. India's first indigenous _____ vaccine candidate has received approval from Indian Drug regulators to initiate Phase one and two human clinical trials.
(a) mDNA (b) mRNA (c) mRBC (d) mWBC
130. The Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians 2020 has been awarded to _____ Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in a virtual ceremony.
(a) Martha Janem (b) Chritina Bret (c) Carolina Araujo (d) Desreg Varutha
131. Which is the first Union Territory of India to become 100 per cent organic as all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides?
(a) Puducherry (b) Lakshadweep
(c) Andaman & Nicobar Islands (d) Ladakh
132. Which of the following state is all set to launch an ambitious scheme for distribution of assistive devices to lakhs of persons with disabilities through MahaSharad Digital Platform?
(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Maharashtra (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Haryana
133. Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade mentioned this exemption in _____ (Quality Control) Second Amendment Order, 2020.
(a) Cookies (b) Toys (c) Crafts (d) Transistor
134. The first Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, _____ and Uzbekistan on joint use of Chabahar Port will be held.
(a) Iraq (b) Afghanistan (c) Iran (d) Turkmenistan
135. Which was the first nation to plant flag on the Moon?
(a) USA (b) China (c) Japan (d) Germany
136. The World Economic Forum will convene the Special Annual Meeting 2021 in _____ from 13-16 May, 2021.
(a) Cambodia (b) Vietnam (c) Singapore (d) USA
137. Which of the following small banks has launched a tripartite account to help customers keep their saving, trading and demat investments under one umbrella entity?
(a) Jana Small Finance Bank (b) Equitas Small Finance Bank
(c) Utkarsh Small Finance Bank (d) Fincare Small Finance Bank
138. Recently, The Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme was notified by the _____ under which various infrastructure projects will be selected for financial support to provide a boost to the sector.
(a) Ministry of Health (b) Ministry of Corporate Affairs
(c) Ministry of Home (d) Ministry of Finance
139. Which of the following countries has recorded the highest number of elephant deaths in the world due to the human-elephant conflict?
(a) Thailand (b) Sri Lanka (c) Seychelles (d) Mauritius

140. Who won her third doubles title of the pandemic-hit 2020 season, clinching the Al Habtoor challenge with Ekaterine Gorgodze?
(a) Seeba Rehman (b) Shital Sharma (c) Ankita Raina (d) Bhakti Dalal
141. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the International Bharati Festival, 2020 via video conferencing. The event is being conducted as part of the 138th birth anniversary celebration of Tamil poet and writer _____.
(a) Mahakavi Harsha (b) Mahakavi Subramanya Bharati
(c) Mahakavi Rakesh Dhawal (d) Mahakavi Subramanian Bhaskar
142. The Uttar Pradesh government has recently embarked upon a scheme to take the unique culture of its ethnic _____ tribe across the world.
(a) Agariya (b) Bhotia (c) Tharu (d) Baiga
143. Which of the following states launched 'Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi' scheme to distribute 2, 49,151 sheep and goat units to the beneficiaries of YSR Cheyutha and YSR Aasara?
(a) Telangana (b) Andhra Pradesh (c) Arunachal Pradesh (d) Assam
144. The UNESCO has decided to launch an international prize in the field of 'creative economy' in the name of _____.
(a) Sheikh Haseena (b) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
(c) Indira Gandhi (d) Jhulfiqar Ali Bhutto
145. The minimum amount that can be remitted through RTGS is _____ rupees and there is no maximum limit.
(a) 50 thousand (b) 1 lakh (c) 2 lakh (d) 5 lakh
146. Which of the following states is planning to set up the state's first crocodile safari in Surai forest range in Kumaon?
(a) Himachal Pradesh (b) Uttarakhand (c) Haryana (d) Uttar Pradesh
147. Who won the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in dominant style for his second victory of the season and 10th of his career?
(a) Valtteri Bottas (b) Max Verstappen (c) Alex Carto (d) Michael Johnson
148. Who has won the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2020 for his book, The City and the Sea?
(a) Deepak Luthra (b) Bhaskar Gupta (c) Raj Kamal Jha (d) Aniket Tripathi
149. Recently, _____ which was conducted in 2015-16, had recorded a drop in child malnutrition levels. These gains seem to have been reversed, the NFHS 5 findings show.
(a) NFHS 2 (b) NFHS 4 (c) NFHS 5 (d) NFHS 6
150. Which of the following two Asian countries are to have 'SwadhinataSarak'?
(a) Bangladesh and Myanmar (b) India and Nepal
(c) Bangladesh and India (d) India and Pakistan
151. Recently, A new mechanism for approval and renewal of fire safety certifications for buildings has been put in place in _____ by bringing the entire process online through a portal called Fire Safety COP.
(a) Maharashtra (b) Gujarat (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Assam
152. Recently, The Ram temple construction committee has set up an eight-member panel of India's top engineers and structural experts headed by IIT-Delhi's former Director _____ to supervise the foundation laying work for the temple.
(a) N S Namdev (b) B P Rama (c) V S Raju (d) D S rajput

153. Recently, Centre is considering setting up for new tribunal for Krishna water sharing between _____.
(a) Telangana and Andhra Pradesh (b) Tamil Nadu and Kerala
(c) Telangana and Chhattisgarh (d) Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh
154. Which of the following states launched new health facilities to have been named as the “Amma Mini-Clinics”?
(a) West Bengal (b) Assam (c) Kerala (d) Tamil Nadu
155. Recently, NITI Aayog released a _____ Vision 2035 - Public Health Surveillance in India.
(a) Red paper (b) White paper (c) Pink paper (d) Green paper
156. Recently, Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research has signed an MoU with _____ a think-tank of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) for development of sludge management framework in India.
(a) eGanga, (b) cGanga (c) qGanga, (d) mGanga,
157. The Reserve Bank of India has approved the reappointment of _____ as the managing director and chief executive officer of Kotak Mahindra Bank.
(a) Mahesh Mahindra (b) Devesh Gupta (c) Uday Kotak (d) Amit Mishra
158. Which of the following states is set to be the first state in India to have a dedicated action plan for conservation of pangolins – the world’s most trafficked animal?
(a) Maharashtra (b) Rajasthan (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Gujarat
159. Who has become the first rapper from India to be featured on a billboard in Times Square?
(a) Badshah (b) Raftaar (c) Divine (d) Yo Yo Honey Singh
160. In 2017, The United Nations proclaimed _____ as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day).
(a) 10 December (b) 12 December (c) 14 December (d) 16 December
161. Who will be the chief guest at the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi on 26th of January next year?
(a) Joe Biden (b) Boris Johnson (c) Emanuel Macron (d) Justin Trudeau
162. Name the first of the three Project 17A ships being built at Kolkata’s Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE) which made her first contact with the waters of Hoogly River?
(a) Himsagar (b) Himgiri (c) Himadri (d) Himsafal
163. The Movimiento San Isidro, or the San Isidro Movement (MSI), started two years ago to protest state censorship of artistic works in:
(a) Cuba (b) Philippines (c) Singapore (d) Mauritius
164. Which of the following countries launched the world’s first loyalty program for a country where tourism is one of the major industries?
(a) Mauritius (b) Seychelles (c) Maldives (d) Sri Lanka
165. Name the heavy-duty truck and bus maker which is planning to launch India’s first electric truck as it continues to bet on the domestic market.
(a) Mahindra (b) Daimler (c) Ashok Leyland (d) Tata
166. Japanese cryptocurrency exchange TaoTao has been bought by _____ Group.
(a) SBI (b) HDFC (c) ICICI (d) PNB

167. The Department of Posts and the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) unveiled a new digital payment application _____ as part of its ongoing efforts to provide digital financial inclusion at the last mile across the country.
(a) “DakPay” (b) “Dakia” (c) “DakPost” (d) “DakProcess”
168. Recently, A strange exoplanet, HD106906 b orbiting a double-star _____ light years away. provide clues about our own mysterious Planet Nine — if it exists.
(a) 127 (b) 189 (c) 287 (d) 336
169. Recently, Ninth edition of the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS-IX) was held in _____.
(a) Mandi (b) Dehradun (c) Tawang (d) Rangpo
170. “Losar”, a New Year festival is celebrated in:
(a) Sikkim (b) Ladakh (c) Tamil Nadu (d) Andaman & Nicobar Islands
171. Recently, who has been elected as Vice President of Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union?
(a) Anuj Khanna (b) Dibaker Bannerjee
(c) Shashi Sekhar Vempati (d) Manoj Diwakar Tripathi
172. The world’s tallest rail bridge on the _____ in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory is expected to be completed by next year.
(a) Ravi (b) Beas (c) Chenab (d) Sutluj
173. Recently, The Government of India and _____ signed a loan agreement for one thousand million dollar to provide support to Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan through MGNREG Scheme.
(a) New Development Bank (b) World Bank
(c) International Monetary Fund (d) Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
174. Recently, who has been appointed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in China?
(a) Anshul Mehta (b) Siddharth Chatterjee (c) Mukesh Jaitley (d) Anuj Jain
175. Ola is to set up world’s largest electric scooter factory in Indian state of:
(a) Gujarat (b) Maharashtra (c) Kerala (d) Tamil Nadu
176. What is the rank of India in the United Nations’ Human Development Index this year?
(a) 123 (b) 126 (c) 131 (d) 136
177. Which of the following has been awarded with the prestigious Golden Peacock Environment Management Award for the year 2020 in the Steel Sector?
(a) Essar Steel India Ltd. (b) Steel Authority of India Limited
(c) Tata Steel Ltd. (d) JSW Steel Ltd.
178. Which of the following countries is set to host 2030 Asian Games?
(a) India (b) Myanmar (c) Thailand (d) Qatar
179. Recently, ICC announced 2022 World T20 qualification system, which of the following countries are set to play for first time?
(a) Bulgaria and Fiji (b) Hungary and Romania
(c) Somalia and Egypt (d) Mexico and Suriname

180. Who has been recently crowned as the highest-paid celebrity of 2020 by Forbes?
(a) Emma Watson (b) Dwayne Johnson (c) Kylie Jenner (d) Brad pitt
181. India's first arbitration and mediation centre focusing on disputes related to the shipping sector will come up in _____.
(a) Panaji (b) Vishakhapatnam (c) Gandhinagar (d) Surat
182. Recently, Researchers from the _____ and UK's Cardiff University have bagged a funding to develop waste water treatment solutions.
(a) Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur
(b) Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur
(c) Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay
(d) Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi
183. Name the special program which was launched by Uttar Pradesh government to double the income of farmers.
(a) Krishak Kalyan Mission (b) Kisan Kalyan Mission
(c) Anadaata Kalyan Mission (d) Kisan Vikas Yojana
184. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina launched the _____ rail link connecting both nations during a virtual bilateral summit.
(a) Second (b) Third (c) Fifth (d) Seventh
185. Recently, The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully launched the country's new communication satellite _____ in the intended orbit in space.
(a) LBD -06 (b) GRS-09 (c) CMS-01 (d) NHY-03
186. India's first Waqf liaison centre will be set up in _____ by prominent philanthropist, Fareed Tungekar, in association with a city-based NGO.
(a) Nagpur (b) Pune (c) New Delhi (d) Lucknow
187. In the personal freedom index of 162 countries, India ranks at:
(a) 64th (b) 79th (c) 103rd (d) 111th
188. Who is set to continue as the chairman of the IPL Governing Council (GC)?
(a) Rajiv Shukla (b) Kiran More (c) Brijesh Patel (d) Atul Wasan
189. The Central government is promoting _____ as a competitive sport within the country.
(a) Yoga (b) Kitti-Pul (c) Ludo (d) Kho Kho
190. International Migrants Day is observed on:
(a) 15th December (b) 16th December (c) 18th December (d) 21st December
191. World's biggest hybrid renewable energy park is to come up in:
(a) Rajasthan (b) Gujarat
(c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Haryana
192. Which of the following banks has become the first bank to switch on Swift GPI instant, a new service from the Brussels-based interbank co-operative that enables consumers and businesses to send tracked payments in seconds across borders?
(a) Barclays Bank (b) IndusInd Bank (c) Lloyds Bank (d) Standard Chartered Bank

193. A recent assessment of sharks, rays and chimaeras by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Shark Specialist Group in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has revealed that of the 170 species found across the oceans of the country _____ are facing high risk of extinction.
(a) 19 (b) 21 (c) 24 (d) 28
194. Who is the first world leader to die after contracting Covid-19?
(a) Arnold Francis (b) Matthews Ingo (c) Ambrose Dlamini (d) Rusell Nery
195. For the first time in the history of Indian Railways, a freight train attained a speed of 100 km per hour on the Eastern DFC's _____ section.
(a) Bhaupur – Khurja (b) Shajahanpur-Gonda
(c) Meerut Cantt- Gorakhpur (d) Ghaziabad- Kalka
196. Who won India's first medal a silver at the ongoing Individual World Cup in Belgrade, Serbia?
(a) Anshu Malik (b) Deepa Malik (c) Sheetal Yadav (d) Sheeba Dasmunshi
197. Recently, Skill India established first centre of excellence for skill development in Power Sector at:
(a) Gurugram (b) Noida (c) Hyderabad (d) Jaipur
198. Reliance Industries and its partner BP plc of the _____ announced the commencement of natural gas production from Asia's deepest project, putting the second wave of discoveries in the KG-D6 block onstream.
(a) France (b) U.K. (c) Germany (d) China
199. Name the first integrated city in India to receive third-party Zero Waste to Landfill (ZWL) certification?
(a) Bengaluru (b) Hyderabad (c) Chennai (d) Lucknow
200. Indian Railways has come up with a Draft National Rail Plan, under this plan modal share of Railways will increase from 27 per cent currently to _____ per cent in freight by 2030 as part of a national commitment to reduce Carbon emission
(a) 35 (b) 45 (c) 55 (d) 65
201. Which of the following states has launched special campaign in the name of 'Varasat' to curb property & land-related disputes in rural areas?
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Uttar Pradesh (c) Haryana (d) Rajasthan
202. The Ministry of Science and Technology and _____ in association with Vijnana Bharati conceptualized the India International Science Festival.
(a) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (b) Ministry of Earth Sciences
(c) Ministry of Home Affairs (d) Ministry of Corporate Affairs
203. India International Science Festival (IISF) 2020 is organized on 22 December on virtual platforms. The central theme of this year's festival is _____.
(a) Science and Technology - Building Partnerships, Impacting Society
(b) Science for New India
(c) Science for Self-reliant India and Global Welfare
(d) RISEN India – Research, Innovation, and Science Empowering the Nation
204. How many states have been granted permission to mobilize additional financial resources to the tune of 16,728 crore rupees through open market borrowings in Ease of Doing Business?
(a) 2 (b) 5 (c) 8 (d) 12

205. US President-elect Joe Biden has named Indian-American _____ to be the Assistant Press Secretary announced the additional members of the White House Communications and Press Staff.
(a) Gaurav Gandhi (b) Mayank Jha (c) Vedant Patel (d) Shwetabh Khetan
206. Recently, Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Steel, dedicated West Bengal's first oil and gas reserve, the Bengal Basin, to the nation. The petroleum reserve is in:
(a) Ashoknagar (b) Dalmiyanagar (c) Kalyani Nagar (d) Dhuria
207. Recently, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the advanced Hypersonic Wind Tunnel (HWT) test facility making India the third country after the US and _____ to have such a facility.
(a) China (b) Russia (c) Japan (d) United Kingdom
208. The 51st International Film Festival of India, IFFI is to be held in _____ in January next year.
(a) Maharashtra (b) Goa (c) Gujarat (d) Haryana
209. The Sports Ministry has approved the inclusion of four indigenous Games to be a part of Khelo India Youth Games 2021, scheduled to take place in Haryana. Which game is not among the four?
(a) Mallakhamba (b) Gatka (c) Kho-Kho (d) Kalaripayattu
210. UN Arabic Language Day is observed annually on _____.
(a) December 12 (b) December 14 (c) December 16 (d) December 18
211. Name the Indian entrepreneur who is among the seven winners of the prestigious "Young Champions of the Earth" 2020 prize given by the UN environment agency to global change-makers using innovative ideas and ambitious action to help solve some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.
(a) Vidyut Mohan (b) Anand Mehta (c) Chandra Shaker (d) Kiran Kumar
212. The 35th edition of IND-INDO CORPAT naval exercise is conducted between which of the following two countries?
(a) India-Italy (b) India-Iraq (c) India-Iran (d) India-Indonesia
213. Union Ministry of Home Affairs, MHA has declared National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), NSCN(K) along with all its factions, wings and front organisations as an unlawful association under sections of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act _____.
(a) 1957 (b) 1967 (c) 1977 (d) 1987
214. President Bidhya Devi Bhandari dissolved parliament at the request of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's cabinet. Bidhya Devi Bhandari is the current President of _____.
(a) Bangladesh (b) Myanmar (c) Maldives (d) Nepal
215. Who was honoured the 'Global Visionary of Sustainable Business and Peace' award during the launch of the Federation of Indo-Israel Chamber of Commerce's international chapter in Dubai on December 21, 2020?
(a) Azim Hashim Premji (b) Mukesh Ambani
(c) Ratan Tata (d) Gautam Shantilal Adani
216. Which of the following has approved a first-of-its-kind intentional genomic alteration (IGA) in a line of domestic pigs referred to as GalSafe pigs?
(a) The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (b) World Health Organization
(c) ICMR (d) ICRISAT

217. Which of the following countries will not be able to use its name, flag and anthem at the next two Olympics or at any world championships for the next two years after a ruling by the Court of Arbitration for Sport?
(a) India (b) China (c) Russia (d) Spain
218. Who was named as the men's player of the year at the Best FIFA Football Awards 2020?
(a) Robert Lewandowski (b) Lionel Messi
(c) Cristiano Ronaldo (d) Harry Edward Kane
219. Goa Liberation Day is observed every year on:
(a) December 17 (b) December 18 (c) December 19 (d) December 20
220. International Migrants Day is observed every year on:
(a) December 17 (b) December 18 (c) December 19 (d) December 20
221. Who has been recently appointed as Member of Oscar Academy's Science & Technology Council?
(a) Mahesh Jagtap (b) Ujwal Nirgudkar (c) Mukesh Gupta (d) Anniruddh Jagat
222. Which of the following states launched India and South Asia's first blockchain-enabled Peer to Peer (P2P) Trading of Rooftop Solar Power?
(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Rajasthan (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Karnataka
223. The _____ and UN Women have collaborated to establish India's first Gender Data Hub.
(a) Karnataka government (b) Kerala government
(c) Goa government (d) Tamil Nadu government
224. Recently, US President-elect Joe Biden named Indian American _____ as one of the three new members of the National Economic Council that coordinates domestic and international economic policymaking process for the administration.
(a) Akshat Kulshrestha (b) Deepak Kumawat (c) Amit Sharma (d) Bharat Ramamurti
225. Recently, The Government has decided to constitute a High Level Committee to commemorate the 125th Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The High Level Committee will be headed by _____.
(a) Prime Minister Narendra Modi (b) Defence Minister Rajnath Singh
(c) Home Minister Amit Shah (d) Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar
226. Recently, Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar released the Status of Leopard in India 2018 report. More than _____ per cent increase has been recorded in the leopard population over the previous estimate which was conducted in 2014.
(a) 20% (b) 35% (c) 45% (d) 60%
227. Robert Lewandowski was named as the _____ Best Men's Player for 2020.
(a) ICC (b) IOC (c) FIFA (d) BCCI
228. Recently, The World Bank has corrected two recent reports ranking countries on ease of doing business, based on an internal audit following officials' allegations of "undue pressure" by management to alter ratings. India's position now stands as _____.
(a) Two positions up (b) Two Positions down (c) Unaffected (d) Seven Positions down
229. The E20 blend of _____ with petrol is expected to curb vehicular emission and also help reduce oil imports.
(a) Methanol (b) Ethanol (c) Lead (d) Chromium

230. Who won the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year prize 2020?
(a) Michael Schumacher (b) Valtteri Bottas (c) Steven Smith (d) Lewis Hamilton
231. Which of the following railway zones has bagged three prestigious National Energy Conservation Awards (NECA) in 'Transport' and 'Building – Govt offices' categories for the year 2020, by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power?
(a) North Eastern Railway (b) Western Railway
(c) Southern Railway (d) North East Frontier Railway
232. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched 'SEHAT' - Health Insurance Scheme for the entire Union Territory of _____ to cover the remaining One crore population which was not covered under Ayushman Bharat Scheme.
(a) Jammu and Kashmir (b) Ladakh (c) Lakshadweep (d) Puducherry
233. Which of the following countries presented the prestigious Legion of Merit award to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership in elevating strategic partnership of the two countries and emergence of India as a global power?
(a) Russia (b) USA (c) France (d) Canada
234. Who among the following inaugurated Two Tribes India showrooms (Kolkata in person and Gwalior virtually) in a grand opening ceremony in Kolkata?
(a) Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda (b) President Ramnath Kovind
(c) Prime Minister Narendra Modi (d) Home Minister Amit Shah
235. Which of the following banks has recently has launched contactless 'RuPay Select' debit card in association with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)?
(a) Punjab National Bank (b) Union Bank of India
(c) Central Bank of India (d) State Bank of India
236. Recently, The Centre and the World Bank signed a _____ project to build safe and green national highway corridors in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.
(a) USD 100 million (b) USD 200 million (c) USD 500 million (d) USD 1000 million
237. Name Delhi's iconic Nursery which is among the winners in the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation this year?
(a) Sunder Nursery (b) Lotus Nursery (c) Lite Nursery (d) Iconic Nursery
238. Name the footballer who has won the prestigious Golden Foot 2020 award.
(a) Lionel Messi (b) Kylian Mbappe (c) Luca Modric (d) Cristiano Ronaldo
239. Who has recently become the inaugural recipient of FIFA Foundation Award?
(a) Marcus Rashford (b) Oliver Kahn (c) Saff Blatter (d) Mike Tune
240. International Day of Epidemic Preparedness is to be observed on:
(a) 23rd December (b) 25th December (c) 27th December (d) 31st December
241. Which of the following state governments e-governance project Antyodaya Saral won the Digital India Awards 2020 under the category Excellence in Digital Governance State/UT?
(a) Rajasthan (b) Haryana (c) Gujarat (d) Himachal Pradesh

242. Recently, The Union Cabinet approved _____ Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in direct-to-home (DTH) service, extension of the license period from 10 years to 20 and a reduced licence fee.
(a) 49% (b) 51% (c) 75% (d) 100%
243. Recently, The Railways is developing India's first ever cable-stayed bridge, called _____.
(a) Anji Khad (b) Chhatrapati Shivaji (c) Kanji Lad (d) Chenab on Lane
244. Who is present chief of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)?
(a) Chetan Singh (b) Amrpitpal Nagar (c) Amish Dev Jaitley (d) Rishi Kumar Shukla
245. Recently, Israel's parliament _____ was dissolved after the two main parties in its unity government failed to meet a deadline in a row over state budgets?
(a) The Knesset (b) The Congress (c) The Diet (d) Legislative Council and Senate
246. Which of the following banks has introduced an online platform called 'Infinite India' for foreign companies looking to set up or expand business in India?
(a) Axis Bank (b) HDFC Bank (c) ICICI Bank (d) RBL Bank
247. Recently, CEO of NITI Aayog Amitabh Kant virtually launched India's first digital asset management platform _____.
(a) DigiMan (b) DigiBoxx (c) DigiMatch (d) DigiBon
248. CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (CSIR-NISCAIR), Ministry of Earth Sciences and Vijnana Bharati jointly organised the inaugural session of the International Science Literature Festival, _____.
(a) Vigyanika (b) Vigyan (c) Sincere (d) Restin
249. Name the target missile which made the successful trial of the Medium Range Surface to Air MR-SAM missile from Chandipur off the Odisha coast.
(a) Amrit (b) Dhruv (c) Bansi (d) Pinaka
250. Recently, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju virtually inaugurated _____ Khelo India State Centres of Excellence across India in the presence of State Sports Ministers.
(a) 4 (b) 6 (c) 8 (d) 12
251. Which of the following state's Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS) is planning to undertake the first of its kind study of urban flood patterns in the state capital?
(a) Jharkhand (b) Uttarakhand (c) Uttar Pradesh (d) Himachal Pradesh
252. In a significant development to conservation of biodiversity, India has added Tso Kar wetland complex to the Ramsar Site. Tso Kar wetland complex is in:
(a) Himachal Pradesh (b) Uttarakhand (c) Ladakh (d) Arunachal Pradesh
253. Which of the following companies has become the first manufacturer to commercially launch a field-ready electric tractor for the domestic market in India?
(a) Swaraj (b) Mahindra (c) Sonalika (d) John Deere
254. According to Status of Leopard in India, 2018' report, which of the following states has the highest number of leopards in the country?
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Karnataka (c) Tamil Nadu (d) Uttarakhand

255. The first country which officially inducted a submarine handed over by India is
(a) Mauritius (b) Maldives (c) Myanmar (d) Sri Lanka
256. The Defence Secretary launched the DGNCC Digital Forum in New Delhi, which will provide a platform to _____ cadets all over the country.
(a) National Cadet Corps (b) Girl Guide & Boy's Scout
(c) CRPF (d) CISF
257. According to the Human Development Index (HDI) 2020 for Bangladesh released, Bangladesh now stands at _____ position out of 189 countries.
(a) 107th (b) 118th (c) 133rd (d) 141st
258. According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), A deadly brain-consuming amoeba — Naegleria fowleri — is crawling its way northward from the southern states of the _____.
(a) Japan (b) China (c) USA (d) Canada
259. The BCCI's governing body ratified the entry of two new franchises in the IPL to make it a _____ team affair from 2022 during its Annual General Meeting (AGM).
(a) 8 (b) 10 (c) 12 (d) 14
260. National Consumer Rights Day is observed every year in India on.
(a) 20 December (b) 22 December (c) 24 December (d) 26 December
261. Which of the following states approved for making Bodo (in Devanagari script) an associate official language of the state?
(a) Nagaland (b) Manipur (c) Assam (d) Bihar
262. Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched _____ a new web portal and mobile app on Good Governance Day.
(a) E-Shanti (b) E-Sampatti (c) E-Sampada (d) E-Sampooran
263. Which of the following countries adopts green growth plan to go carbon free by 2050?
(a) Indonesia (b) Japan (c) Malaysia (d) Russia
264. Indian Navy ship _____ which arrived in Vietnam to deliver relief material under Mission Sagar-III, will hold a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Vietnamese Navy in the South China Sea (SCS).
(a) INS Khaitan (b) INS Kirtan (c) INS Kiltan (d) INS Kiran
265. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to introduce the _____ for cheque.
(a) 'Positive payment system' (b) 'Positive payment syndicate'
(c) 'Paypal pay system' (d) 'Positive pay analysis'
266. The Centralised _____ under the proposed single window system, aimed at facilitating businesses through a one-stop digital platform, is planned to be launched with relevant Ministries and selected States by April 15, 2021.
(a) 'Investment Clearance Cell' (b) 'Investment Call Cell'
(c) 'Investment Clearance Commitment' (d) 'Industrial Clearance Cell'
267. Which of the following countries has planted the seeds for a 2023 launch of the world's first satellite made out of wood?
(a) China (b) Japan (c) Israel (d) India

268. Which of the following Indian cities has ambitions of claiming the wine capital of India status received an impetus after the Centre accorded it the coveted Geographical Indication tag?
(a) Nashik (b) Jaipur (c) Dehradun (d) Patna
269. Who has been appointed as chairman of selectors by BCCI?
(a) Abey Kuruvilla (b) Ajit Agarkar (c) Chetan Sharma (d) Debasis Mohanty
270. Good governance is observed annually on _____.
(a) December 21 (b) December 22 (c) December 25 (d) December 27
271. India's first Lithium refinery which will process Lithium ore to produce battery-grade material will be set up in _____.
(a) Maharashtra (b) Gujarat (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Karnataka
272. Which of the following states approved the Dharma Swatantrya (Religious Freedom) Bill 2020, under which forced conversion of a woman will be punishable for a term up to 10 years and minimum fine of Rs 50,000?
(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Madhya Pradesh (c) Chhattisgarh (d) Jharkhand
273. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first-ever driverless train operations on Delhi Metro's _____ through video conferencing.
(a) Red Line (b) Magenta Line (c) Blue Line (d) Yellow Line
274. Road Transport & Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari announced that FASTag is being made mandatory for all vehicles in the country from _____.
(a) 31st December 2020 (b) 1st January 2021 (c) 31st January 2021 (d) 1st March 2021
275. Name Hyperscale datacenter provider which was awarded the prestigious Golden Peacock Award for Eco-Innovation.
(a) CtrlP (b) CtrlG (c) CtrlS (d) CtrlM
276. The _____ and the United Kingdom made public the vast agreement that is likely to govern future trade and cooperation between them from 1st of January, 2021.
(a) Russia (b) European Union (c) Canada (d) Germany
277. According to Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) report, India will overtake the UK to become the _____ largest in 2025.
(a) Second (b) Third (c) Fifth (d) Ninth
278. According to a new report on the State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (SoMFi 2020). The number of stocks subject to overfishing has decreased for the first time in decades in the _____ marine ecosystems, though most fish stocks remain overexploited.
(a) Red and Black Sea (b) Mediterranean and Black Sea
(c) Adriatic and Baltic Sea (d) Java and Mediterranean Sea
279. Good Governance Day is celebrated every year on 25th December to mark the birth anniversary of _____.
(a) Indira Gandhi (b) Jawaharlal Nehru (c) Sardar Patel (d) Atal Bihari Vajpayee
280. India's biggest hockey stadium will come up at _____ and the 20,000-capacity facility will host matches of FIH men's World Cup in 2023.
(a) Rourkela (b) Bhubaneswar (c) Bhopal (d) Bikaner

ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. **d** The capital city of Odisha, Bhubaneswar became the first Indian city to get an ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001:2015 Certification for 'Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) services'. Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) was the first civic body to implement FSSM regulations in the State.
2. **c** The United Arab Emirates is set to become the first Arab Gulf country to generate electricity from coal.
3. **a** The Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI), the world's first graduate-level, research-based artificial intelligence (AI) university, has appointed renowned AI academic Professor Dr. Eric Xing as President.
4. **c** GMR led Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport became India's first airport to introduce 'Internet of Things' (IoT) enabled smart baggage trolleys which is in line with Government of India's flagship Digital India Programme.
5. **c** The Centre has announced the third stimulus package of Rs 900 crore for the Mission COVID Suraksha- The Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission.
6. **b** India's first wilderness park with focus on biodiversity conservation, rewilding and a stated objective to be focused on total inclusivity was opened near Hyderabad.
7. **b** Lewis Hamilton won the Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix for Mercedes after French driver Romain Grosjean had a miraculous escape from a fiery first lap crash that ripped his car in two.
8. **c** Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar launched the India Climate Change Knowledge Portal.
9. **d** The Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, at its 20th Session, decided that a memorial Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare would be observed on 30 November each year or, when appropriate, on the first day of the regular session of the Conference.
10. **c** Hardik Pandya did create history as he became the fastest Indian batsman to score 1000 ODI runs.
11. **b** Nagaland is hosting the first virtual celebration of Hornbill Festival 2020.
12. **a** A first of its kind, 'child-friendly' police station has been inaugurated in Maharashtra's Pune.
13. **c** Assam government launched the 'Orunodoi' scheme.
14. **a** The Central Government has launched one lakh crore rupees Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF).
15. **c** Scotland made sanitary products free to all women, becoming the first nation in the world to take such a step against "period poverty."
16. **a** Shri Arjun Munda, Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, launched the virtual edition of Aadi Mahotsav- Madhya Pradesh. The 10-day long festival, commencing on December 1, 2020, is being hosted on the Tribes India website (www.tribesindia.com).
17. **a** US President-elect Joe Biden has named ex-Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen as his nominee for treasury secretary.

- 18. a** Hundreds of homes in Scotland will soon become the first in the world to use 100% green hydrogen to heat their properties and cook their meals as part of a new trial that could help households across the country replace fossil fuel gas.
- 19. b** Pakistan's cultural capital Lahore has once again topped the list of world's most polluted cities "Lahore ranks the most polluted city in the world," according to air pollution data released by the US Air Quality Index
- 20. c** Actor Hina Khan has recently received Dadasaheb Phalke Icon Award 2020 for Iconic Diva 2020.
- 21. b** The Union Minister of State for Communication Sanjay Dhotre launched five star village postal scheme to ensure the universal coverage of flagship postal schemes in Dehradun for rural areas of Uttarakhand.
- 22. b** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India signed a \$132.8 million loan to strengthen and modernize the distribution network and improve the quality of power supplied to households, industries, and businesses in India's northeastern state of Meghalaya.
- 23. a** Canada plans to impose a tax on corporations providing digital services from 2022 that will stay in place until major nations come up with a coordinated approach on taxation.
- 24. a** Azerbaijan completed reclaiming territory ceded by Armenia under a Russia-brokered peace deal that ended six weeks of fierce fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh.
- 25. b** Instagram rolled out the 'Live Rooms' feature that allows up to three additional users to go live in the same session.
- 26. d** International footwear company Bata Brands has elevated Sandeep Kataria to the post of global CEO
- 27. c** Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) launched the nation's first 100 Octane petrol, helping India join a select league of nations globally that have such superior quality fuel.
- 28. c** The book, published by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, was released in English, Hindi and Punjabi languages.
- 29. a** The public sector aerospace manufacturing company, the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited delivered the biggest cryogenic propellant tank C 32 LH 2 to the Indian Space Research Organisation in Bengaluru.
- 30. d** The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December, marks the date of the adoption, by the General Assembly, of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.
- 31. c** The Apex Committee for Implementation of Paris Agreement (AIPA) will be chaired by Environment Secretary.
- 32. b** Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan launched India's first indigenously developed 100 Octane premium petrol through video conferencing.
- 33. d** Bengaluru hosted India's first AI-enabled conversational digital persona.
- 34. a** In world first, U.K. approves Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use.
- 35. a** Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' has set up a task force for preparing a roadmap on imparting technical education in Mother Tongue.

- 36. a** The United Nations says it and Ethiopia's government have signed a deal to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to the embattled Tigray region, at least the parts under federal government control.
- 37. c** Odisha Government approved the unified emergency helpline number 112 to provide all forms of police assistance to people in distress.
- 38. a** Singapore has given U.S. start-up Eat Just the green light to sell its lab-grown chicken meat, in what the firm says is the world's first regulatory approval for so-called clean meat that does not come from slaughtered animals.
- 39. b** India captain Virat Kohli became the fastest cricketer to score 12,000 ODI runs, breaking a record held by legendary compatriot Sachin Tendulkar.
- 40. c** India's first female, comic book superhero tackles COVID-19 in 'Priya's Mask'.
- 41. b** Nongpok Sekmai police station in Manipur's Thoubal district has been selected as the best police station in the country, fresh rankings for 2020 announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- 42. a** Indian-American Gitanjali Rao, a "brilliant" young scientist and inventor, has been named by TIME magazine as the first-ever Kid of the Year' for her "astonishing work using technology to tackle issues ranging from contaminated drinking water to opioid addiction and cyberbullying.
- 43. b** Lloyds Bank in the UK has become the first bank to switch on Swift gpi Instant, a new service from the Brussels-based interbank co-operative that enables consumers and businesses to send tracked payments in seconds across borders.
- 44. c** HCL Technologies chairperson Roshni Nadar Malhotra, with a net worth of Rs. 54,850 crore, tops the Kotak Wealth Hurun list of India's wealthiest women.
- 45. a** The Reserve Bank of India has asked country's largest private bank, HDFC, to stop new digital business launches and avoid adding new Credit Card customers after repeated reports by its customers facing multiple cases of technical glitches.
- 46. b** Namibia has put 170 "high value" wild elephants up for sale due to drought and an increase in elephant numbers, the southern African country's environmental ministry.
- 47. b** The Indo- Gangetic Plain (IGP) is the global hot-spot of atmospheric ammonia (NH₃) due to intense agricultural activities and fertilizer production.
- 48. c** On 19 December 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution, which designated 4 December as the International Day of Banks in recognition of the significant potential of multilateral development banks.
- 49. c** Ranjitsinh Disale, has become the first teacher from India to win the prestigious \$1-million Global Teacher Prize for innovation in teaching.
- 50. d** Former Punjab Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal patron Parkash Singh Badal has returned his Padma Vibhushan award in solidarity with the farmers protesting against the three farm laws. Mr. Badal received Padma Vibhushan Award in 2015.
- 51. a** India's first homes for transgender children in need of care and protection will soon be established in Bengaluru.
- 52. b** The theme will be "Vocal for Local".

- 53. b** The Indian Navy (IN) is undertaking a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with Russian Federation Navy (RuFN) in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- 54. b** Biden adviser Vivek Murthy will return to his role as Surgeon General but with a broader portfolio as the pandemic rages through the country.
- 55. d** Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen and Mastercard CEO Ajay Banga have been named by Fortune among the Businessperson of the Year 2020, a list topped by Tesla CEO Elon Musk.
- 56. b** Uday Shankar, the outgoing chairman of Star & Disney India and president of The Walt Disney Company, Asia Pacific, is the new president elect of FICCI for the year 2020-21.
- 57. c** Mrs Sitharaman released the Smuggling in India Report 2019-20 which analyses organised smuggling trends on Gold and Foreign Currency, Narcotic Drugs, Security, Environment and Commercial Frauds.
- 58. a** Japan was chosen to host a traditional, seven-team Club World Cup in December 2021.
- 59. b** India's economy is firmly on the path of a V-shaped recovery.
- 60. c** World Soil Day (WSD) is held annually on 5 December as a means to focus attention on the importance of healthy soil and to advocate for the sustainable management of soil resources.
- 61. d** Mizoram's first solar power plant has been commissioned at Tlungvel.
- 62. b** China Gezhouba Group and its local partner Laraib Group Pakistan are the shareholders of the 'Azad Pattan Hydropower Project', which is located on Jhelum river in Sadhanoti district of PoK.
- 63. b** An important inquest is underway in London to determine whether air pollution caused or contributed to the death in February 2013 of a nine-year-old child, Ella Adoo Kissi-Debrah, who lived with her mother near a busy road in London.
- 64. b** Amul, a brand of dairy cooperative major Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF), is ranked 8th in the list of top 20 global dairy processors released by the International Farm Comparison Network (IFCN).
- 65. c** Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT B) ranks as the number one university in India, and stands at the 172nd position in the world ranking.
- 66. c** The Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) is part of a comprehensive response to the massive explosion on the Port of Beirut.
- 67. d** A first-of-its-kind study by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, has projected that numbers of the Malayan Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor*) could decline by 90 per cent in India by 2050.
- 68. b** Asteroid 2020 SO flew by Earth at an extremely close distance. The object came within just 13 percent of the distance between the Earth and the Moon, giving astronomers the perfect opportunity to witness the event.
- 69. c** India's agri-research body Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has bagged the prestigious 'International King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award' from the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for raising awareness about importance of soil health among all stakeholders.

- 70. b** Bihar is holding a bird festival for the first time as part of its initiative to save migratory birds that arrive in the state in large numbers every year.
- 71. c** Bangladesh signed its first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Bhutan allowing duty free access to a range of goods between the two countries.
- 72. b** Jehan Daruvala created history when he became the first Indian to win a Formula 2 race during the Sakhir Grand Prix.
- 73. c** Chinese President Xi Jinping declared victory in an eight-year drive to eradicate extreme poverty in the world's most populous nation, a key goal of the ruling Communist Party.
- 74. c** International Civil Aviation Day: 7 December.
- 75. c** Saudi Arabia has been ranked first across the Arab world and 22nd globally in the Global Artificial Intelligence Index, showed Tortoise Intelligence Index report.
- 76. c** Ministries of Commerce and Industry and AYUSH have decided to work together to set up an Export Promotion Council to boost AYUSH exports.
- 77. a** PFIZER India has become the first pharmaceutical firm to seek from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) emergency use authorisation for its Covid-19 vaccine in the country, after its parent company secured such clearance in the UK and Bahrain.
- 78. a** Jeff Bezos' space company Blue Origin will take the first woman to the moon's surface, the billionaire said as NASA nears a decision to pick its first privately built lunar landers capable of sending astronauts to the moon by 2024.
- 79. c** U Vignesh, a postgraduate student and researcher at the biotechnology department in the University of Madras, has made a beer from seaweed, which, he claims, has anti-cancer, anti-genotoxic, and antiinflammatory properties.
- 80. c** Chinese scientists claim to have created the world's first light-based quantum computer which can solve problems far faster than a classical supercomputer, an advance hailed by experts as a "major achievement" that provides a fundamentally different approach to designing such powerful machines
- 81. a** Gwalior and Orchha of Madhya Pradesh have been included in the list of World Heritage City by UNESCO.
- 82. b** World Health Organisation has appointed Indian-origin Anil Soni as the Chief Executive Officer for the WHO Foundation.
- 83. a** United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has declared 'Invest India' as winner of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.
- 84. b** The World Economic Forum announced that it will convene its annual meeting this summer in Singapore instead of the iconic Swiss ski town of Davos "in light of the current situation with regards to COVID-19 cases."
- 85. c** ICICI Bank announced that it has transformed its mobile banking app, iMobile, into an app that offers payments and banking services to customers of any bank. Called iMobile Pay, the app offers a unique combination of facilities of a payment app.
- 86. d** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given the inaugural address at the virtual India Mobile Congress 2020.

- 87. d** Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh has congratulated the Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), Ludhiana for securing the first rank amongst State Veterinary Universities in India for the year 2019.
- 88. a** Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has launched the second edition of Fit India Cyclothon via social media.
- 89. d** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention to be held in virtual format on January 9.
- 90. b** Byelection in Bihar was necessitated following the death of Lok Janshakti Party founder and union minister Ram Vilas Paswan. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad have congratulated Sushil Kumar Modi for becoming member of Rajya Sabha.
- 91. b** India's urban transport landscape is set for a major transformation when the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS Corridor, India's first regional rapid transit system (RRTS), becomes operational in 2023, ushering seamless connectivity in the National Capital Region (NCR).
- 92. c** Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah reappointed Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah as prime minister following parliamentary polls in the Gulf Arab state, which faces its worst economic crisis in decades.
- 93. a** U.S. President-Elect Joe Biden has nominated retired General Lloyd Austin as his Defence Secretary.
- 94. c** Raj Chouhan, an Indian-origin legislator in Canada, has been elected as the Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, becoming first from the community to occupy the post.
- 95. b** Global market capitalisation or the total value of all listed stocks in the world crossed \$100 trillion mark for the first time led by the tech-driven market rally in the US and China.
- 96. a** A team of researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) has developed a pitcher plant-inspired inexpensive method for harvesting water from humid air.
- 97. b** 90-year-old Margaret Keenan becomes the first patient in United Kingdom to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, in Coventry.
- 98. b** Manipur's Ngangom Bala Devi created history by becoming the first Indian woman to score in a professional European football league.
- 99. c** Suyash Mehta is set to become the first-ever Indian-origin official to officiate in the National Basketball Association (NBA) league.
- 100. d** The Assembly also designated 9 December as International Anti-Corruption Day, to raise awareness of corruption and of the role of the Convention in combating and preventing it.
- 101. d** This is the first visit by an Indian Army chief to Saudi Arabia and the UAE and is seen as a sign of how India's ties with the Middle East has improved over the past few years.
- 102. b** In a first-ever virtual summit with a Central Asian country, PM Narendra Modi was held a virtual summit with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on December 11.

- 103. a** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the historic PM-WANI (Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) scheme, which was cleared by Cabinet will revolutionalise the tech world and significantly improve WiFi availability across the length and breadth of India.
- 104. c** The first human milk bank in the northeast was opened in Guwahati, Assam.
- 105. d** Odisha tops the list of states in urban governance followed by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh while Manipur and Nagaland are at the bottom, according to the Urban Governance Index (UGI)-2020 released by the Praja Foundation. Delhi ranks 13th in the list.
- 106. d** Nomura projected India to be the fastest growing Asian economy in 2021, with an estimate of 9.9% gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the coming calendar year.
- 107. d** Government of India announced to start 1000 Khelo India small centres to encourage sports culture in country.
- 108. a** Ministry of AYUSH and AIIMS have decided to initiate work on setting up a Department of Integrative Medicine at AIIMS.
- 109. c** 10 December is an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of human rights in re-building the world we want the need for global solidarity as well as our interconnectedness and shared humanity.
- 110. a** Actors Akshay Kumar and Rana Daggubati announced that they are coming together to create India's first influencer led online market place called- Socialswag.
- 111. b** BSNL in partnership with Skylotech India announced a breakthrough in satellite-based NB-IoT (Narrow Band-Internet of Things).
- 112. c** US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have been chosen as Time magazine's 2020 "Person of the Year," the publication announced.
- 113. b** Morocco has become the latest Arab country to agree to normalise relations with Israel in a deal brokered with US help. Morocco is the fourth Arab country since August to strike a deal aimed at normalising relations with Israel after the UAE, Bahrain and Sudan.
- 114. c** Accordingly, deposit-taking NBFCs and systemically important non-deposit-taking NBFCs must have their net non-performing assets below six percent and a capital adequacy ratio of at least 15 percent for the last three years, including the accounting year for which it proposes to declare dividend.
- 115. d** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Biocon Founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and HCL Enterprise CEO Roshni Nadar Malhotra have been named among the world's 100 most powerful women by Forbes 2020.
- 116. d** Just within a year of operationalising NEFT 24x7, the Reserve Bank has announced that the Real Time Gross Settlement System or the RTGS facility will now be available for round the clock transactions.
- 117. b** A locked-down pandemic-struck world cut its carbon dioxide emissions this year by 7%, the biggest drop ever, new preliminary figures show.
- 118. c** Raja Jon Vurputoor Chari, 43, a graduate of the US Air Force Academy, MIT, and US Naval Test Pilot School, is the only Indian-American in the list.

- 119. c** This year, for International Mountain Day (11 December), FAO focuses in celebrating mountains as the home to half of the world's biodiversity hotspots and addresses the threats they face.
- 120. c** HelpAge India has been presented the UN Population Award for 2020 (institutional category), as per a release issued by the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1981, the United Nations Population Award recognises contributions in the fields of population and reproductive health.
- 121. a** India has dropped to the second position in Bloomberg New Energy Finance's (BNEF) 2020 Climatescope survey ranking from first last year
- 122. c** Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Global Climate Summit on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the landmark Paris Climate Agreement.
- 123. d** Ashraf Patel is one such person who has recently won the Social Entrepreneur of the Year award instituted by the Schwab Foundation and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation.
- 124. b** Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur virtually inaugurated the second edition of Ladakh Literature Festival, 2020, in Leh.
- 125. b** Indian- American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal has been elected as the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), making her one of the most powerful US lawmakers for the 117th Congress.
- 126. c** Cuba will unify its monetary system on New Year's Day, President Miguel Diaz-Canel closing the door on more than 25 years with two national currencies in circulation.
- 127. c** For the first time in India, the country's 'Workplace Equality Index' has been rolled out for employers to check their progress on inclusion of people from LGBT+ communities at the workplaces.
- 128. b** The India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization have joined hands to promote innovations in energy storage in India.
- 129. b** India's first indigenous mRNA vaccine candidate has received approval from Indian Drug regulators to initiate Phase one and two human clinical trials.
- 130. c** The Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians 2020 has been awarded to Carolina Araujo, Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in a virtual ceremony.
- 131. b** Lakshadweep is the first Union Territory to become 100 per cent organic as all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, providing access to safer food choices and making agriculture a more environment-friendly activity. The ministry of agriculture has declared the island as organic.
- 132. b** Maharashtra's Department of Social Justice is all set to launch an ambitious scheme for distribution of assistive devices to lakhs of persons with disabilities through MahaSharad Digital Platform to coincide with NCP chief Sharad Pawar's 80th birthday. It will be available on Play Store by March 2021.
- 133. b** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade mentioned this exemption in Toys (Quality Control) Second Amendment Order, 2020.
- 134. c** The first Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, Iran and Uzbekistan on joint use of Chabahar Port will be held.

- 135. a** China has planted its flag on the Moon, more than 50 years after the US first planted the Stars and Stripes there.
- 136. c** The World Economic Forum will convene the Special Annual Meeting 2021 in Singapore from 13-16 May.
- 137. b** Widening the product net offered to its customers, the Equitas Small Finance Bank has launched a tripartite account to help customers keep their saving, trading and demat investments under one umbrella entity.
- 138. d** The Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme was notified by the Ministry of Finance under which various infrastructure projects will be selected for financial support to provide a boost to the sector.
- 139. b** Sri Lanka has recorded the highest number of elephant deaths in the world due to the human-elephant conflict
- 140. c** Top Indian tennis player Ankita Raina won her third doubles title of the pandemic-hit 2020 season, clinching the Al Habtoor challenge with Ekaterine Gorgodze.
- 141. b** Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the International Bharati Festival, 2020 via video conferencing. The event is being conducted as part of the 138th birth anniversary celebration of Tamil poet and writer Mahakavi Subramanya Bharati.
- 142. c** The Uttar Pradesh government has recently embarked upon a scheme to take the unique culture of its ethnic Tharu tribe across the world.
- 143. b** Taking yet another step towards women empowerment, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy launched 'Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi' scheme to distribute 2,49,151 sheep and goat units to the beneficiaries of YSR Cheyutha and YSR Aasara.
- 144. b** The UNESCO has decided to launch an international prize in the field of 'creative economy' in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- 145. c** The minimum amount that can be remitted through RTGS is 2 lakh rupees and there is no maximum limit.
- 146. b** Uttarakhand is planning to set up the state's first crocodile safari in Surai forest range in Kumaon.
- 147. b** Red Bull driver Max Verstappen won the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in dominant style for his second victory of the season and 10th of his career.
- 148. c** Raj Kamal Jha, has won the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2020 for his book, The City and the Sea. Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, the late Sultan of Oman and The People of Oman, and choreographer Sandip Soparrkar from India received the Tagore Prize for Social Achievement.
- 149. b** NFHS 4, which was conducted in 2015-16, had recorded a drop in child malnutrition levels. These gains seem to have been reversed, the NFHS 5 findings show.
- 150. c** Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen has said that the 'SwadhinataSarak' between Bangladesh and India will be opened on 26 March next year.
- 151. b** A new mechanism for approval and renewal of fire safety certifications for buildings has been put in place in Gujarat by bringing the entire process online through a portal called Fire Safety COP.

- 152. c** The Ram temple construction committee has set up an eight-member panel of India's top engineers and structural experts headed by IIT-Delhi's former Director V S Raju to supervise the foundation laying work for the temple.
- 153. a** Union Jal Sakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in his letter to Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao indicated that the Centre is considering setting up a new tribunal to decide the sharing of Krishna river water between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- 154. d** The new health facilities in the state have been named as the "Amma Mini-Clinics," where Amma is considered a reference to the late AIADMK leader J. Jayalalithaa.
- 155. b** NITI Aayog released a white paper Vision 2035 - Public Health Surveillance in India.
- 156. b** Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research has signed an MoU with cGanga, a think-tank of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) for development of sludge management framework in India.
- 157. c** The Reserve Bank of India has approved the reappointment of Uday Kotak as the managing director and chief executive officer of Kotak Mahindra Bank.
- 158. a** The Maharashtra forest department is set to be the first state in India to have a dedicated action plan for conservation of pangolins – the world's most trafficked animal.
- 159. c** Divine has become the first rapper from India to be featured on a billboard in Times Square.
- 160. b** The United Nations proclaimed 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day).
- 161. b** The United Kingdom has confirmed that Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson will be the chief guest at the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi on 26th of January next year.
- 162. b** 'Himgiri', the first of the three Project 17A ships being built at Kolkata's Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), made her first contact with the waters of Hoogly River.
- 163. a** In Cuba, a country under an authoritarian communist regime for more than six decades, a campaign by artists and activists demanding greater freedom of expression is fast grabbing the limelight.
- 164. c** Maldives is one the most popular tourist destinations but like every other country its tourism industry has taken a hit due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- 165. b** Daimler, the heavy-duty truck and bus maker, is planning to launch India's first electric truck as it continues to bet on the domestic market.
- 166. a** Japanese cryptocurrency exchange TaoTao has been bought by financial services conglomerate Strategic Business Innovator Group SBI.
- 167. a** The Department of Posts and the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) unveiled a new digital payment application "DakPay" as part of its ongoing efforts to provide digital financial inclusion at the last mile across the country.
- 168. d** A strange exoplanet, orbiting a double-star 336 light years away, has caught the interest of astronomers. The oddball behaviour of the planet, HD106906 b, provide clues about our own mysterious Planet Nine — if it exists.

- 169. b** Ninth edition of the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS-IX) held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand was the valedictory session with a presentation of the R. S. Tolia Memorial Award.
- 170. b** People in Ladakh region are celebrating Ladakhi New Year, Losar
- 171. c** Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar has congratulated Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Sekhar Vempati on being elected as Vice President of Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union.
- 172. c** Touted as the next man-made wonder, the world's tallest rail bridge on the Chenab in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory is expected to be completed by next year.
- 173. a** The Government of India and New Development Bank signed a loan agreement for one thousand million dollar to provide support to Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan through MGNREG Scheme.
- 174. b** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed senior UN official Siddharth Chatterjee of India as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in China.
- 175. d** Ola has signed an agreement with the Tamil Nadu government to set up its first electric scooter factory worth Rs 2,400 crore in the state.
- 176. c** India dropped two ranks in the United Nations' Human Development Index this year, standing at 131 out of 189 countries.
- 177. b** Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has been awarded with the prestigious Golden Peacock Environment Management Award for the year 2020 in the Steel Sector by the Institute of Directors.
- 178. d** The 2030 Asian Games were awarded to Doha and the 2034 event went to Riyadh after a deal was struck between the rival nations.
- 179. b** ICC announces 2022 World T20 qualification system, Hungary and Romania to play for first time.
- 180. c** American media personality and reality TV star Kylie Jenner has been crowned the highest-paid celebrity of 2020 by Forbes.
- 181. c** India's first arbitration and mediation centre focusing on disputes related to the shipping sector will come up in the Gujarat International Finance-Tech (GIFT) City in Gandhinagar.
- 182. b** Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur and UK's Cardiff University have bagged a funding to develop waste water treatment solutions.
- 183. b** The program named as Kisan Kalyan Mission will cover all assembly constituencies of the state.
- 184. c** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina launched the fifth rail link connecting both nations during a virtual bilateral summit.
- 185. c** The Indian Space Research Organisation, ISRO, has successfully launched the country's new communication satellite CMS-01 in the intended orbit in space.
- 186. b** The country's first Waqf liaison centre will be set up in Pune by prominent philanthropist, Fareed Tungekar, in association with a city-based NGO.

- 187. d** A global ranking of personal, civil and economic freedom released placed India at 111 out of 162 countries.
- 188. c** Former Test player Brijesh Patel is set to continue as the chairman of the IPL Governing Council (GC).
- 189. a** The Central government is promoting yoga as a competitive sport within the country, with an aim to bring awareness about yoga, its benefits and spiritual background in young community.
- 190. c** Each year on Dec 18, the United Nations, through the UN-related agency International Organization for Migration (UN Migration), uses International Migrants Day to highlight the contributions made by the roughly 272 million migrants, including more than 41 million internally displaced persons, (IDPs) and the challenges they face.
- 191. b** World's biggest, hybrid renewable energy park in Gujarat.
- 192. c** Lloyds Bank in the UK has become the first bank to switch on Swift gpi Instant, a new service from the Brussels-based interbank co-operative that enables consumers and businesses to send tracked payments in seconds across borders.
- 193. a** A recent assessment of sharks, rays and chimaeras by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Shark Specialist Group in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has revealed that of the 170 species found across the oceans of the country, 19 (about 11%) are facing high risk of extinction.
- 194. c** Eswatini Prime Minister Ambrose Dlamini died after contracting Covid-19, the first world leader to succumb to the disease.
- 195. a** For the first time in the history of Indian Railways, a freight train attained a speed of 100 km per hour on the Eastern DFC's Bhaupur – Khurja section.
- 196. a** Promising wrestler Anshu Malik won India's first medal – a silver – at the ongoing Individual World Cup in Belgrade, Serbia.
- 197. a** In a significant development and in line with the commitment to skill development and vocational training, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India, the Ministry of National Education and Youth, Government of the French Republic and Schneider Electric, announced the inauguration of first Center of Excellence (CoE) for skill development in power sector in the campus of National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) located at Gwal Pahari, Gurugram (Haryana) to create a robust cadre of certified trainers and assessors across the country.
- 198. b** Reliance Industries and its partner BP plc of the U.K. announced the commencement of natural gas production from Asia's deepest project, putting the second wave of discoveries in the KG-D6 block onstream.
- 199. c** Mahindra World City, Chennai, a first-of-its-kind integrated city built on environment-friendly principles, has achieved yet another milestone by becoming the first integrated city in India to receive third-party Zero Waste to Landfill (ZWL) certification.
- 200. b** It will also increase the modal share of Railways from 27 per cent currently to 45 per cent in freight by 2030 as part of a national commitment to reduce Carbon emission and to continue to sustain it and net Zero Carbon emission by 2030.
- 201. b** In Uttar Pradesh the government has launched special campaign to curb property & land-related disputes in rural areas.
- 202. b** 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.

- 203. c** India International Science Festival (IISF) 2020 is organized on 22 December on virtual platforms. This will be the largest science festival to be held on virtual platform. The central theme of this year's festival is "Science for Self-reliant India and Global Welfare".
- 204. b** Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana have been granted permission to mobilize additional financial resources to the tune of 16,728 crore rupees through open market borrowings.
- 205. c** US President-elect Joe Biden has named Indian-American Vedant Patel to be the Assistant Press Secretary as he announced the additional members of the White House Communications and Press Staff.
- 206. a** Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Steel, dedicated West Bengal's first oil and gas reserve, the Bengal Basin, to the nation. He said production from the petroleum reserve in Ashoknagar, about 47 km from Kolkata, has started with the extracted oil being sent to Haldia refinery of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).
- 207. b** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the advanced Hypersonic Wind Tunnel (HWT) test facility making India the third country after the US and Russia to have such a facility.
- 208. b** The 51st International Film Festival of India, IFFI to be held in Goa in January next year.
- 209. c** The games include Gatka, Kalaripayattu, Thang-Ta and Mallakhamba.
- 210. d** UN Arabic Language Day is observed annually on December 18.
- 211. a** A 29-year-old Indian entrepreneur, Vidyut Mohan is among the seven winners of the prestigious "Young Champions of the Earth" 2020 prize given by the UN environment agency to global change-makers using innovative ideas and ambitious action to help solve some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.
- 212. d** The 35th edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) between the Indian Navy and the Indonesian Navy is being conducted from 17 to 18 December 2020. Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kulish, an indigenously built missile corvette along with P8I Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) undertook coordinated patrol with Indonesian Naval Ship KRI Cut Nyak Dien, a Kapitan Pattimura (Parchim I) class corvette and a MPA of the Indonesian Navy.
- 213. b** Union Ministry of Home Affairs, MHA has declared National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), NSCN(K) along with all its factions, wings and front organisations as an unlawful association under sections of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.
- 214. d** Nepal President Bidhya Devi Bhandari dissolved parliament at the request of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's cabinet.
- 215. c** Veteran industrialist Ratan Tata was honoured by the Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce for promoting innovation that supports sustainability and peace in the region, including with the Palestinians. The chairman emeritus of the Tata group was honoured with 'Global Visionary of Sustainable Business and Peace' award during the launch of the Federation of Indo-Israel Chamber of Commerce's international chapter in Dubai on December 21.
- 216. a** The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a first-of-its-kind intentional genomic alteration (IGA) in a line of domestic pigs referred to as GalSafe pigs.
- 217. c** Russia will not be able to use its name, flag and anthem at the next two Olympics or at any world championships for the next two years after a ruling by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

- 218. a** Robert Lewandowski and Lucy Bronze were respectively named the men's and women's player of the year at the Best FIFA Football Awards 2020. Bayern Munich striker Lewandowski saw off competition from Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo to be crowned the best men's player.
- 219. c** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant extended greetings on the Goa Liberation Day 2020. December 19 is observed as Goa Liberation Day to commemorate the role of India's armed forces in liberating Goa from Portuguese rule.
- 220. b** Every year, December 18, is celebrated as International Migrants Day. The day was appointed by the General Assembly of United Nations on December 4, 2000, taking into account the large and increasing number of migrants in the world.
- 221. b** Ujwal Nirgudkar appointed as Member of Oscar Academy's Science & Technology Council. Ujwal Nirgudkar, Oscar Academy Member and Chairman of SMPTE-India Section who is promoting standards for Digital Cinema in India is now appointed by Oscar Academy to serve on the 2020-21 Science and Technology Council.
- 222. a** Uttar Pradesh launched India and South Asia's first blockchain-enabled Peer to Peer (P2P) Trading of Rooftop Solar Power.
- 223. b** The Kerala government and UN Women have collaborated to establish India's first Gender Data Hub.
- 224. d** US President-elect Joe Biden named Indian American Bharat Ramamurti as one of the three new members of the National Economic Council that coordinates domestic and international economic policymaking process for the administration.
- 225. c** The High Level Committee will be headed by Home Minister Amit Shah.
- 226. d** More than 60 per cent increase has been recorded in the leopard population over the previous estimate which was conducted in 2014.
- 227. c** Robert Lewandowski won his biggest personal prize showing that a forward not named Messi or Ronaldo can be voted the world's best soccer (FIFA) player.
- 228. c** Ease of doing business: China's rank drops as World Bank corrects 'irregularities', India unaffected.
- 229. b** The E20 blend of ethanol with petrol is expected to curb vehicular emission and also help reduce oil imports.
- 230. d** Seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton capped another successful year by claiming the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year prize.
- 231. b** Western Railway bagged three prestigious National Energy Conservation Awards (NECA) in 'Transport' and 'Building – Govt offices' categories for the year 2020, by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power.
- 232. a** Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched 'SEHAT' - Health Insurance Scheme for the entire Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to cover the remaining One crore population which was not covered under Ayushman Bharat Scheme.
- 233. b** US President Donald Trump presented the prestigious Legion of Merit award to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership in elevating strategic partnership of the two countries and emergence of India as a global power.
- 234. a** Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda inaugurated Two Tribes India showrooms (Kolkata in person and Gwalior virtually) in a grand opening ceremony in Kolkata.

- 235. c** State-owned Central Bank of India has launched contactless 'RuPay Select' debit card in association with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- 236. c** The Centre and the World Bank signed a USD 500 million project to build safe and green national highway corridors in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.
- 237. a** Delhi's iconic Sunder Nursery, a 90-acre garden which was transformed into a horticultural paradise after a decade-long conservation work, is among the winners in the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation this year.
- 238. d** Cristiano Ronaldo has won the prestigious Golden Foot 2020 award on in Monaco for his outstanding performance over the previous season.
- 239. a** Marcus Rashford has become the inaugural recipient of FIFA Foundation Award.
- 240. c** The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed Dec. 27 the "International Day of Epidemic Preparedness."
- 241. b** Haryana government's e-governance project Antyodaya Saral won the Digital India Awards 2020 under the category Excellence in Digital Governance State/UT. The award is scheduled to be conferred on December 30 by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- 242. d** The Union Cabinet approved 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in direct-to-home (DTH) service, extension of the license period from 10 years to 20 and a reduced licence fee.
- 243. a** The Railways is developing India's first ever cable-stayed bridge, called Anji Khad. It is being built at a height of 331 metres above the riverbed, and will connect Katra and Resai in the Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir.
- 244. d** The exercise of updating the manual in accordance with the current requirements took almost 18 months, under CBI chief Rishi Kumar Shukla. It was last revised in 2005.
- 245. a** Israel's parliament, the Knesset, was dissolved after the two main parties in its unity government failed to meet a deadline in a row over state budgets.
- 246. c** ICICI Bank has introduced an online platform called 'Infinite India' for foreign companies looking to set up or expand business in India.
- 247. b** CEO of NITI Aayog Amitabh Kant virtually launched India's first digital asset management platform DigiBoxx.
- 248. a** CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (CSIR-NISCAIR), Ministry of Earth Sciences and Vijnana Bharati jointly organised the inaugural session of the International Science Literature Festival, Vigyanika.
- 249. c** 'Bansi'-a target missile was launched from the launch pad no.1 of the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur.
- 250. c** Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju virtually inaugurated 8 Khelo India State Centres of Excellence across India in the presence of State Sports Ministers.
- 251. b** The Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS) is planning to undertake the first of its kind study of urban flood patterns in the state capital.

- 252. c** The Tso Kar or Tsho kar, known for its size and depth, is a fluctuating salt lake situated in the Rupshu Plateau and valley in the southern part of Ladakh in India.
- 253. c** International Tractors Ltd-owned Sonalika Tractors has become the first manufacturer to commercially launch a field-ready electric tractor for the domestic market with an introductory price of Rs. 5.99 lakh (ex-showroom).
- 254. a** Karnataka — home to a high density of tigers — harbours the second highest number of leopards in the country after Madhya Pradesh, according to a new report.
- 255. c** Myanmar officially inducted a submarine handed over by India in the month of October.
- 256. a** The Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar launched the DGNCC Digital Forum in New Delhi. This Digital Forum hosted on the DGNCC website, will provide a platform to National Cadet Corps cadets all over the country to share their experiences of various NCC activities.
- 257. c** Bangladesh has improved its Human Development Index (HDI) ranking by 2 notches in the recently released report by the UNDP. According to the HDI 2020 for Bangladesh released, Bangladesh now stands at 133rd position out of 189 countries.
- 258. c** According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the geographic range of these cases has been advancing northward. Now, more cases are being reported in midwestern states in the US.
- 259. b** The BCCI's governing body ratified the entry of two new franchises in the IPL to make it a 10-team affair from 2022 during its Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- 260. c** National Consumer Rights Day is observed on 24 December every year in India.
- 261. c** The Assam cabinet approved the Assam Official Language Amendment Bill for making Bodo (in Devanagari script) an associate official language of the state.
- 262. c** Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched E-Sampada, a new web portal and mobile app on Good Governance Day.
- 263. b** Japan adopts green growth plan to go carbon free by 2050
- 264. c** Indian Navy ship INS Kiltan, which arrived in Vietnam to deliver relief material under Mission Sagar-III, will hold a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Vietnamese Navy in the South China Sea (SCS).
- 265. c** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to introduce the 'positive pay system' for cheque.
- 266. a** The Centralised 'Investment Clearance Cell', under the proposed single window system, aimed at facilitating businesses through a one-stop digital platform, is planned to be launched with relevant Ministries and Departments and select States by April 15, 2021.
- 267. b** Japanese logging company Sumitomo Forestry and Kyoto University are planting the seeds for a 2023 launch of the world's first satellite made out of wood.
- 268. a** The city has been branded Nashik Valley Wine to give wine production a push.

- 269. c** Former India pace troika of Chetan Sharma, Abey Kuruvilla and Debasis Mohanty have been appointed as national selectors. Chetan will replace Sunil Joshi as the chairman of the panel on the basis of having earned more Test caps.
- 270. c** Good governance is observed annually on December 25.
- 271. b** India's first Lithium refinery which will process Lithium ore to produce battery-grade material will be set up in Gujarat.
- 272. b** 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.
- 273. b** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate India's first-ever driverless train operations on Delhi Metro's Magenta Line through video conferencing.
- 274. b*** Road Transport & Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari announced that FASTag is being made mandatory for all vehicles in the country from 1st of January, 2021.
- 275. c** Hyperscale datacenter provider CtrlS, was awarded the prestigious Golden Peacock Award for Eco-Innovation.
- 276. b** The European Union and the United Kingdom made public the vast agreement that is likely to govern future trade and cooperation between them from Jan. 1.
- 277. c** India will again overtake the UK to become the fifth largest in 2025.
- 278. b** The number of stocks subject to overfishing has decreased for the first time in decades in the Mediterranean and Black Sea marine ecosystems, though most fish stocks remain overexploited.
- 279. d** December 25th, this year marks the 96th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee. This day is also celebrated as Good Governance Day.
- 280. a** India's biggest hockey stadium will come up at Rourkela and the 20,000-capacity facility will host matches of FIH men's World Cup in 2023.

