
MANTHAN

A General Awareness Weekly

14th December to 20th December, 2020

PREFACE

Dear Students,

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 Week. 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 fulfill aspirations.

Happy Reading

Team CL



Career
Launcher

National



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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.



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-Haldirbari 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.**

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 Sujon 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)-Biorol (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.

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 Nhlanganishe Masuku is serving as Acting Prime Minister since 13 December 2020. The lilangeni is the currency of Eswatini.



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.

Uday Shankar takes over as FICCI President

- **Media executive Uday Shankar has taken over as Fici 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. It will be launched in the international market sometime in 2021.

Japanese Powerhouse SBI becomes world's first financial conglomerate to open cryptocurrency dealing desk by acquiring pioneering liquidity provider B2C2

- **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.**

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.

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.

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), Indian, 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.**

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.**

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.

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).**

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.**

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.



Inventions/Discoveries

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.

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 Defence 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.

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.

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.

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 India's 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.

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.

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.

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.



Sports Personalities in News

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.

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.

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.

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.**

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.**

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 marital 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 grassroot 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.

MISCELLANEOUS

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.

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.**

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.

PERSONS IN NEWS

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 Prasara 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 Prasara 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.

AWARDS

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).

IMPORTANT DAYS

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.

References:

The Hindu
The Economics Times
Indian Express
Press Information Bureau of India
The Times of India
Business Standard
News on AIR
Hindustan Times

QUESTIONS

1. 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
2. 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
3. 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
4. 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
5. 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
6. 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
7. 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) Valteri Bottas (b) Max Verstappen (c) Alex Carto (d) Michael Johnson
8. 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
9. 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
10. 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
11. 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
12. 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
13. 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

14. 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
15. Recently, NITI Aayog released a _____ Vision 2035 - Public Health Surveillance in India.
(a) Red paper (b) White paper (c) Pink paper (d) Green paper
16. 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,
17. 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
18. 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
19. 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
20. 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
21. 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
22. 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
23. 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
24. 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
25. 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
26. Japanese cryptocurrency exchange TaoTao has been bought by _____ Group.
(a) SBI (b) HDFC (c) ICICI (d) PNB
27. 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”
28. 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

29. Recently, Ninth edition of the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS-IX) was held in _____.
 (a) Mandi (b) Dehradun (c) Tawang (d) Rangpo
30. “Losar”, a New Year festival is celebrated in:
 (a) Sikkim (b) Ladakh (c) Tamil Nadu (d) Andaman & Nicobar Islands
31. 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
32. 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
33. 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
34. 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
35. Ola is to set up world’s largest electric scooter factory in Indian state of:
 (a) Gujarat (b) Maharashtra (c) Kerala (d) Tamil Nadu
36. What is the rank of India in the United Nations’ Human Development Index this year?
 (a) 123 (b) 126 (c) 131 (d) 136
37. 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.
38. Which of the following countries is set to host 2030 Asian Games?
 (a) India (b) Myanmar (c) Thailand (d) Qatar
39. 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
40. 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
41. 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
42. 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

43. 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
44. 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
45. 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
46. India's first Waqf liaison centre will be set up in _____ by prominent philanthropist, Fareed Tunekar, in association with a city-based NGO.
 (a) Nagpur (b) Pune (c) New Delhi (d) Lucknow
47. In the personal freedom index of 162 countries, India ranks at:
 (a) 64th (b) 79th (c) 103rd (d) 111th
48. 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
49. The Central government is promoting _____ as a competitive sport within the country.
 (a) Yoga (b) Kitti-Pul (c) Ludo (d) Kho Kho
50. International Migrants Day is observed on:
 (a) 15th December (b) 16th December (c) 18th December (d) 21st December
51. World's biggest hybrid renewable energy park is to come up in:
 (a) Rajasthan (b) Gujarat (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Haryana
52. 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
53. 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
54. Who is the first world leader to die after contracting Covid-19?
 (a) Arnold Francis (b) Matthews Ingo (c) Ambrose Dlamini (d) Rusell Nery
55. 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
56. 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
57. Recently, Skill India established first centre of excellence for skill development in Power Sector at:
 (a) Gurugram (b) Noida (c) Hyderabad (d) Jaipur

58. 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
59. 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
60. 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
61. 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
62. 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
63. 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
64. 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
65. 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
66. 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
67. 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
68. 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
69. 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
70. UN Arabic Language Day is observed annually on _____.
(a) December 12 (b) December 14 (c) December 16 (d) December 18

ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. 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.
2. c The Uttar Pradesh government has recently embarked upon a scheme to take the unique culture of its ethnic Tharu tribe across the world.
3. 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.
4. b The UNESCO has decided to launch an international prize in the field of 'creative economy' in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
5. c The minimum amount that can be remitted through RTGS is 2 lakh rupees and there is no maximum limit.
6. b Uttarakhand is planning to set up the state's first crocodile safari in Surai forest range in Kumaon.
7. 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.
8. 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.
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12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. b NITI Aayog released a white paper Vision 2035 - Public Health Surveillance in India.
16. 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.
17. 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.

- 18. 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.
- 19. c** Divine has become the first rapper from India to be featured on a billboard in Times Square.
- 20. b** The United Nations proclaimed 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day).
- 21. 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.
- 22. 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.
- 23. 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.
- 24. 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.
- 25. 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.
- 26. a** Japanese cryptocurrency exchange TaoTao has been bought by financial services conglomerate Strategic Business Innovator Group SBI.
- 27. 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.
- 28. 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.
- 29. 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.
- 30. b** People in Ladakh region are celebrating Ladakhi New Year, Losar
- 31. 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.
- 32. 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.
- 33. 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.
- 34. b** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed senior UN official Siddharth Chatterjee of India as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in China.
- 35. 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.
- 36. c** India dropped two ranks in the United Nations’ Human Development Index this year, standing at 131 out of 189 countries.

- 37. 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.
- 38. 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.
- 39. b** ICC announces 2022 World T20 qualification system, Hungary and Romania to play for first time.
- 40. c** American media personality and reality TV star Kylie Jenner has been crowned the highest-paid celebrity of 2020 by Forbes.
- 41. 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.
- 42. 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.
- 43. b** The program named as Kisan Kalyan Mission will cover all assembly constituencies of the state.
- 44. c** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina launched the fifth rail link connecting both nations during a virtual bilateral summit.
- 45. c** The Indian Space Research Organisation, ISRO, has successfully launched the country's new communication satellite CMS-01 in the intended orbit in space.
- 46. 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.
- 47. d** A global ranking of personal, civil and economic freedom released placed India at 111 out of 162 countries.
- 48. c** Former Test player Brijesh Patel is set to continue as the chairman of the IPL Governing Council (GC).
- 49. 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.
- 50. 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.
- 51. b** World's biggest, hybrid renewable energy park in Gujarat.
- 52. 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.
- 53. 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.
- 54. c** Eswatini Prime Minister Ambrose Dlamini died after contracting Covid-19, the first world leader to succumb to the disease.
- 55. 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.

- 56. a** Promising wrestler Anshu Malik won India's first medal – a silver – at the ongoing Individual World Cup in Belgrade, Serbia.
- 57. 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.
- 58. 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.
- 59. 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.
- 60. 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.
- 61. b** In Uttar Pradesh the government has launched special campaign to curb property & land-related disputes in rural areas.
- 62. 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.
- 63. 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".
- 64. 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.
- 65. 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.
- 66. 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).
- 67. 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.
- 68. b** The 51st International Film Festival of India, IFFI to be held in Goa in January next year.
- 69. c** The games include Gatka, Kalaripayattu, Thang-Ta and Mallakhamba.
- 70. d** UN Arabic Language Day is observed annually on December 18.