
MANTHAN

A General Awareness Weekly

4th January to 10th January, 2021

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



India gets its first women's team in disaster combat

- In yet another example of shattering of the proverbial glass ceiling, **the first batch of over 100 women disaster combatants and rescuers** has been inducted into the country's federal calamity force NDRF.
- An all-woman team of freshly trained **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel** was recently **deployed for contingency duties on the banks of the Ganga River in Uttar Pradesh's Garh Mukteshwar town.**
- Every NDRF battalion has been seconded by a **Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) like the CRPF or the ITBP** and the parent force is responsible for feeding its manpower, who are sent on a time-bound deputation to the force.
- The NDRF has 12 operational battalions at present located in various States. It is a specialised unit that was **raised in 2006 for specific tasks of relief and rescue during natural and man-made disasters or life threatening situations.**

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

Supreme Court clears Central Vista Project in National Capital

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

- The Central Vista project includes construction of a new Parliament building, with the existing building converted into a museum. Five big office buildings each would come up on both sides of Rajpath, while the National Museum and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts buildings would be pulled down to make way for the new buildings.

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

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurates migrant worker cell in Surat

- Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has inaugurated a migrant worker cell of Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) at Udhna based iLab in Surat. This will help in connecting 'Shramshakti' to relevant industries and boost their livelihood and also ensure their dignity.
- Migrant workers' Cell has been created by Surat Municipal Corporation for the first time in the Country under the 'National Urban Livelihood Mission Scheme'.
- The aim to create this cell is to prepare a database of migrant workers in Surat city with mapping. The city has a presence of over 15 lakh migrant workers. Their data is required during natural calamities and other situations like pandemic.

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

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

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

Indian Railways (IR) is the fourth-largest railway network in the world by size. There are a total of 18 Railway zones. South Coast Railway Zone is the newest and 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 to be a co-chair of regional forum to conserve wildlife habitats

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

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

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

- In Madhya Pradesh, 'Launch Pad Scheme' is being started for boys and girls coming out of child care institutions and having completed 18 years of age.
- The objective of this scheme of the Women and Child Development Department is to provide such a platform to these youth, through which they will be able to become self-reliant by continuing their education and training.
- Under the launch pad scheme, 52 districts of the state have been divided into 5 clusters. Five divisional headquarters are being started in Indore, Sagar, Gwalior, Jabalpur and Bhopal. This innovation of Madhya Pradesh Government has also been approved by the Central Government and will be implemented in the current financial year.
- Under this scheme, the District Administration will provide space to these youths for opening of coffee shops, stationery, photocopying, computer typing and DTP work. An amount of Rs 6 lakh will be provided by the Women and Child Development Department for the installation of each launch pad. These launch pads will be operated through non-governmental organizations.

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

Toycathon 2021 launched to promote manufacturing of indigenous toys

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

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

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

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between Indian and Japan on a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to 'Specified Skilled Worker'.

- The Memorandum of Cooperation would **set an institutional mechanism for partnership and cooperation between India and Japan on sending and accepting skilled Indian workers**, who have qualified the required skill and Japanese language test, to work in fourteen specified sectors in Japan.
- These Indian workers would be **granted a new status of residence of Specified Skilled Worker by the Government of Japan**. The Memorandum of Cooperation would enhance people-to-people contacts, foster mobility of workers and skilled professionals.

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

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

- Several union ministers including **Narendra Singh Tomar, Nitin Gadkari, Smriti Irani, Piyush Goyal and Dharmendra Pradhan along with top business leaders such as Mukesh Ambani and Anand Mahindra will participate in a five-day online Davos Agenda summit of the World Economic Forum this month.**
- While the WEF will host its physical annual meeting in May in Singapore, as against the regular venue of Swiss ski resort town of Davos, the Geneva-based organisation is hosting an online event, named **'Davos Agendaaround'** the same time it generally hosts its yearly congregation of the rich and powerful of the world.
- While the WEF annual meeting for 2021 will be held on May 13-16 in Singapore, the high-profile summit will return to Davos in 2022.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

India to chair three-key subsidiary bodies of UNSC

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

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

16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas to be organized

- The 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was organized**. This one day virtual convention was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- During the inaugural session, **President of the Republic of Suriname and Chief Guest, Chandrikapersad Santokhi addressed the participants**. The Valedictory Address was delivered by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- The theme of this 16th Pravai Bharatiya Divas is "Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat"**.
- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is celebrated once in every two years** which provides a unique platform to engage and connect with the overseas Indians.
- January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion because it was on this day in 1915, Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa**. After his arrival, Mahatma Gandhi led India's freedom struggle and India got independence.
- The first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was organized in the year 2003 to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India**. This convention provides a forum to discuss issues and concerns of the Indian diaspora and honour those individuals who have made exceptional contributions to various fields. **Fifteen winners of the Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz** also announced during the convention.

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

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

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

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

Air India’s Zoya Aggarwal to command world’s longest route

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

NIXI offers free Domain in local Indian languages

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

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



25th Amendment is designed to address constitutional, not character, flaws in USA

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

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

Australia changes word in anthem to honour indigenous people

- Australia has changed one word in its national anthem to reflect what the Prime Minister called "the spirit of unity" and the country's indigenous population.
- Prime Minister Scott Morrison on New Year's Eve announced that the second line of the anthem, Advance Australia Fair, has been changed from "For we are young and free" to "For we are one and free." The change took effect January 1. Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt, who is also the first Indigenous Australian elected to the federal Parliament's lower house, has given his support to the change. He said that the one-word change was small in nature but significant in purpose.

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

Five new countries join polarized U.N. Security Council

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

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

- **“Giant underwater ‘jellyfish’ roundabout becomes latest Faroe Islands tourist attraction,”** a headline in The Guardian read. “Already a hit on social-media, an infrastructure project linking the two largest islands is set to become a big draw for foreign visitors,” the article’s subhead said.
- **The bottom surface of North Atlantic Ocean has a series of sub-aquatic tunnels, linking the uneven islands that feature the Faroe Islands archipelago.**
- According to the latest reports, **the newly built undersea Eysturoy tunnel has got noted for its striking new underwater traffic circle which is well-lit**, turquoise-blue colour and other-worldly design make this tunnel look unique.
- **The Faroe Islands, a series of 18 islets in the North Atlantic located** halfway between Iceland and Norway, constitute an autonomous region of Denmark.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Reserve Bank unveils digital payment index

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

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

RuPay partners with RBL Bank to launch ‘RuPay PoS’

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

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

Soma Mondal to take over the reins of SAIL as its first woman chairperson

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

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

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

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

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

Bank of Baroda launches WhatsApp banking services

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shivalik Bank gets license as Small Finance Bank

- **Shivalik Small Finance Bank (SSFB)** has become the **first Urban Cooperative Bank (UCB) in India to transition to a Small Finance Bank under the voluntary transition scheme**. In a statement, the bank announced the receipt of a license from Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- The bank had received an in-principle **approval from RBI for transitioning to a Small Finance Bank in January 2020** and was given an 18 month timeline to commence business as a Small Finance Bank.

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

The global economic outlook in five charts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NHPC inks pact with IREDA

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

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

Reserve Bank forms academic advisory council for supervisory college

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

SBI, Indian Oil Contactless RuPay Debit card launched

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

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

Tesla CEO Elon Musk now world's wealthiest person

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

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



Inventions/Discoveries

China Deploying “En Masse” Underwater Drones in Indian Ocean

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

Indian Ocean is the third-largest of the world’s oceanic divisions, covering 70,560,000 km² (27,240,000 sq mi) or 19.8% of the water on Earth’s surface. It is bounded by Asia to the north, Africa to the west and Australia to the east.

First hilltop Buddhist monastery found in Bihar’s Lakhisarai

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

India launches 40th Scientific Expedition to Antarctica

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

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

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

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

Kerala declares Bird flu as State disaster

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

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

African elephants surveyed using AI

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

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

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

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

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

Siruvani hills identified as butterfly super-hotspot

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



Sports Personalities in News

Cristiano Ronaldo Becomes First Person to Reach 250 Million Followers on Instagram

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

Babar Azam named 'Most Valuable Cricketer' in PCB Awards

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MISCELLANEOUS

PM Narendra Modi to deliver inaugural address at National Metrology Conclave

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered the inaugural address at the National Metrology Conclave** through video conferencing. He also dedicated National Atomic Timescale and Bhartiya Nirdeshak Dravya to the nation and lay the foundation stone of the National Environmental Standards Laboratory.
- **The National Atomic Timescale generates Indian Standard Time** with an accuracy of 2.8 nanosecond. Bhartiya Nirdeshak Dravya is supporting testing and calibration of laboratories for quality assurance, at par with international standards.
- **The National Environmental Standards Laboratory** will aid self-reliance in the certification of ambient air and industrial emission monitoring equipment.
- **National Metrology Conclave 2021 is being organised by Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Physical Laboratory, CSIR-NPL New Delhi** which is entering into its 75th year of inception.
- **The theme of the conclave is Metrology for the Inclusive Growth of the Nation.**

Manipur Forest Department launches Website with German assistance

- **Forest Minister Awangbow Newmai launched the website www.cosfom.mn.gov.in** for the Community-based Sustainable Forest Management for Water Resource Conservation in Manipur (COSFOM) at Sanjenthong in Imphal.
- **COSFOM is a project of the Government of India supported by the Federal Government of Germany through KfW, a German development bank in Frankfurt** with the Manipur Forest Department as the executing agency. It is **managed by the Community Forestry and Water Conservation Society-Manipur.**

Dharmendra Pradhan launches missed call facility for LPG consumers in Bhubaneswar

- **Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan launched the missed call facility for LPG consumers in Bhubaneswar.**
- **Indian Oil LPG customers can now give a missed call to 8454955555 for refill booking** for all India and for new connection for Bhubaneswar city. The Minister also rolled out the second phase of the **world class octane 100 premium grade petrol, under the brand XP 100.**
- The Petroleum Minister said that while about 13 crore people were **given LPG connection between 1955 and 2014, now it is about to reach 30 crore**, representing a quantum jump there by empowering Indian women.

PM Narendra Modi dedicated to nation New Rewari - New Madar Section of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the 306 Kilometer New Rewari - New Madar Section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor.**
- He also **flagged off the world's first Double Stack Long Haul 1.5 Kilometer long Container Train** hauled by electric traction from New Ateli -New Kishangarh during the event.
- **The New Rewari - New Madar section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor is situated in Haryana and Rajasthan.** It consists of nine newly built dedicated freight corridor stations which includes three junction stations in New Rewari, New Ateli and New Phulera.
- The opening of this stretch will **benefit various industries in Rewari - Manesar, Narnaul, Phulera and Kishangarh areas of Rajasthan and Haryana** and will also enable better usage of the container depot of CONCOR at Kathuwas.

“Udyog Manthan” being organized from Jan 4 to March 2

- **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade is organized Udyog Manthan** - a marathon of focused sector-specific webinars for promoting Quality and Productivity in Indian Industry. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal chaired the session.

Irdai to introduce standard home insurance policy Bharat Griha Raksha

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) has decided to introduce a standard home insurance policy that will cover the risk of fire and allied perils for certain risks.
- The Irdai had issued guidelines announcing that the Standard Fire and Special Perils (SFSP) Policy provided for in the erstwhile All India Fire Tariff (AIFT) 2001 will be replaced by the following standard products that shall be mandatorily offered by all general insurers carrying on fire and allied perils insurance business from 1 April.

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

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

HM Amit Shah releases inaugural issue of National Police K-9 Journal

- Home Minister Amit Shah released the inaugural issue of the National Police K-9 Journal in New Delhi. It is the first such publication in the country on the subject of Police Service K9s, Police Dogs.

India sets up high-level group for South Asia energy security

- The government has set up a high-level group headed by former Union power secretary Ram Vinay Shahi and tasked it with helping build a South Asia-focused energy security architecture.
- Cross-border energy trade is a key part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's neighbourhood-first policy, with plans to build energy links to check China's growing influence. India's energy diplomacy ranges from cross-border electricity trade to supplying petroleum products and setting up liquefied natural gas terminals.

Ravi Shastri's First-Ever Book to Share Insights of His Life in Cricket

- Indian cricket team coach Ravi Shastri is all set to come up with his first-ever book in which the former player will share the never-before-revealed anecdotes and insights of his life in cricket. HarperCollins India announced the acquisition of Shastri's first book on his life in cricket, to be published in summer 2021.

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal launches Freight Business Development Portal

- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal launched a Freight Business Development Portal as one stop solution for all the needs of freight customers. The Minister said that Indian Railways is an invisible thread which connects the length and breath of India.

Cherry Blossom Mao Festival held in Manipur

- In Manipur, the Cherry Blossom Mao Festival was held at Senapati district marking the beginning of pink season in the district. Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh graced the function virtually due to the pandemic.
- The Mao area of Senapati district in Manipur is known for Cherry Blossom, a plant which is popularly known as Sakura in Japan. The Manipur government started organizing the festival every year from 2017 onward. However this year, the authority decided to scale down the festival due to COVID-19 pandemic.

PERSONS IN NEWS

7-year old world's youngest author becomes the first Indian kid to ink a four-book deal

- 7-year-old **Abhijita Gupta**, the world's youngest author, has become the first Indian child to sign a deal with the **Invincible** for her four upcoming books and she has already received a part of the royalty payment for the first 10,000 copies of her book.
- Abhijita also unveiled the cover of her second book- 'We Will Surely Sustain.' **The 7-year-old Abhijita Gupta has been recognized as the world's youngest author by the International Book of Records.**
- **The Asia Book of Records has conferred on her title of the 'Grandmaster in Writing.'** According to the India Book of Records, she is the youngest author to write poetry and prose.

Justice S Muralidhar takes oath as Chief Justice of Odisha High Court

- **Justice S Muralidhar took oath as the Chief Justice of the Odisha High Court.** Governor of Odisha Prof. Ganeshi Lal administered the oath of office at Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar in a simple ceremony. Earlier, President of India, Ram Nath Kovind had appointed Justice Muralidhar as the Chief Justice of Odisha.

Indian-American becomes US Army's first CIO

- **Indian-American Dr Raj Iyer has taken over as the first Chief Information Officer of the US Army**, after the Pentagon created the position in July 2020.
- One of the highest ranking Indian-American civilians in the US Department of Defense, **Iyer, who holds a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering, serves as the principal advisor** to the Secretary of the Army and directs representation of the secretary in matters relating to information management/information technology (IT).

Argentine filmmaker Pablo Cesar to head 51st IFFI's International Jury

- The International Jury for 51st edition of International Film Festival of India has been announced with eminent filmmakers from across the world. **The 51 IFFI is headed by Argentina filmmaker Pablo Cesar.**

Joe Biden names two Indian Americans in National Security Council of White House

- **In the United States, the President-elect Joe Biden has appointed two Indian-Americans to the National Security Council of the White House. Biden has named Indian-American Sumona Guha as senior director for South Asia and Tarun Chhabra as senior director for Technology and National Security.**
- **Sumona Guha is currently serving as senior vice president at Albright Stonebridge Group.** She was co-chair of the South Asia foreign policy working group during the Biden-Harris campaign. During the Obama-Biden administration, she was special advisor for national security affairs to the then Vice President Biden.
- **Tarun Chhabra, who has been appointed senior director for Technology and National Security,** is a senior fellow at the Centre for Security and Emerging Technology at Georgetown University.
- **Chhabra had also served on the National Security Council staff as director for Strategic Planning and director for Human Rights and National Security Issues** during the Obama-Biden Administration. Chhabra is an alumnus of Stanford University, Oxford University and Harvard Law School.
- **Biden has also named Shanthi Kalathil as Coordinator for Democracy and Human Rights in his National Security Council.** She is currently senior director of the International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy. US Capitol Siege
- Trump — who lost the popular and Electoral College vote — continues to dispute the election results, without evidence, and has encouraged his supporters to attend the rallies. He took the stage about noon to roaring crowds, falsely claiming he had won the election. Later at the **U.S. Capitol, throngs of people pushed past police who were trying to block them from entering the building as lawmakers inside debated counting Electoral College votes confirming Biden's victory.**

AWARDS

Suriname President, Curacao PM, NZ minister among 30 Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awardees

- **Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi, Curacao Prime Minister Eugene Rhuggenaath and New Zealand minister Priyanca Radhakrishnan were among 30 NRIs, and Indian-origin people and organisations who were conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award.**
- **President Ram Nath Kovind, who delivered the valedictory address on the third and final day of the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations, presented the awards at a virtual event.**
- **The award is the highest honour conferred by the President of India as part of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Conventions on a Non-Resident Indian (NRI), Person of Indian Origin (PIO), and organisation or institution established and run by NRIs or PIOs.**
- **Mr Rhuggenaath, Mr Santokhi and Ms Radhakrishnan were awarded for their public service. Mukhesh Aghi, president and CEO of US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, was also among the awardees.**
- **In an acceptance speech on behalf of all awardees, Mr Aghi said this award represents the very best of India from all over the world linking our ‘janambhumi’ (homeland) with our ‘karambhumi’ (the country where one works).**

Pravasi Bharatiya Samman (Overseas Indian Honour/Award) is an award constituted by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India in conjunction with the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Non-Resident Indian Day), to honour exceptional and meritorious contribution in their chosen field/profession. The award is given by the President of India. Since 2016, the Government of India has doubled the number of awardees each year to 30 after a decision to grant the award once every two years.

Denmark's Oscar nominee 'Another Round' to be opening movie at 51st IFFI in Goa

- **The 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI) will open with the Indian premiere of the movie 'Another Round' by Thomas Vinterberg.**
- **The movie starring Cannes Best Actor Award winner Mads Mikkelsen is among a star-studded line up of movies being showcased at IFFI. The movie is also Denmark's official entry to the Oscars.**
- **The festival will also witness the World Premier of 'Mehrunisa'. The film by Sandeep Kumar will premier mid-fest. The festival will close on 24th January with the India Premier of the historical drama 'Wife of a Spy' by Kiyoshi Kurosawa.**

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. The 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI) will open with the Indian premiere of the movie _____ by Thomas Vinterberg.
(a) Another Round (b) The Parasite (c) Malory (d) The Summer
2. Which of the following countries has successfully cultured the new coronavirus strain, which originated in the U.K.?
(a) China (b) USA (c) India (d) Sri Lanka
3. Recently, Home Minister Amit Shah released the inaugural issue of the National Police _____ Journal in New Delhi.
(a) K-9 (b) I-7 (c) U-9 (d) E-3
4. Which of the following has recently constructed a composite Digital Payments Index (DPI) to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country?
(a) NABARD (b) SIDBI
(c) Reserve Bank of India (d) Ministry of Finance
5. National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has announced that RuPay has partnered with _____ to launch an innovative payment solution for Indian merchants – RuPay PoS in association with PayNearby.
(a) Yes Bank (b) RBL Bank (c) HDFC Bank (d) ICICI Bank
6. Who among the following takes over the reins of SAIL as its first woman chairperson?
(a) Deeksha Patel (b) Soma Mondal (c) Vineeta Bhaskar (d) Sanghamitra Mahajan
7. Who has been appointed as the new Chairman & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Railway Board (Ministry of Railways) recently?
(a) Anil Kumar Mathur (b) Abhay Chandra (c) Deepak Mahajan (d) Suneet Sharma
8. Recently, who became the first person to hit the 250 million mark on Instagram?
(a) Lionel Messi (b) Cristiano Ronaldo (c) Brad Pitt (d) Michael Jordan
9. Recently who was named the Most Valuable Cricketer of the Year in the PCB awards following his stellar performances during the season?
(a) Yasir Shah (b) Rizvan Ahmed (c) Babar Azam (d) Imam Ul Haq
10. Which of the following countries has recently deployed a fleet of underwater drones called Sea Wing (Haiyi) glider in the Indian Ocean?
(a) Japan (b) South Korea (c) Vietnam (d) China
11. Recently, the first hilltop Buddhist monastery of the Gangetic Valley has been found in _____.
(a) Lakhisarai district of Bihar (b) Buxor district of Bihar
(c) Prayagraj district of Uttar Pradesh (d) Chandauli district of Uttar Pradesh
12. Recently, Justice S Muralidhar took oath as the Chief Justice of the _____.
(a) Odisha High Court (b) Madhya Pradesh High Court
(c) Bihar High Court (d) Kerala High Court
13. World's first and India's only hospital train _____ is currently stationed in Badarpur, Assam.
(a) 'Lifeline Express' (b) 'Lifeprovider Express'
(c) 'Longlife Express' (d) 'Life Express'

14. Which of the following Asian countries will be the co-chair of the IUCN-supported Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP) for three years?
 (a) Bangladesh (b) India (c) China (d) Thailand
15. Who among the following will head 51st IFFI's International Jury?
 (a) Mario Conty (b) Anthonie Hilton (c) Pablo Cesar (d) Nicholas Fir
16. Recently, Migrant workers' Cell has been created by _____ Municipal Corporation for the first time in the Country under the 'National Urban Livelihood Mission Scheme'.
 (a) Surat (b) Pune (c) Bhubaneswar (d) Bhopal
17. Which of the following state run banks recently announced the launch of banking services on messaging platform Whatsapp?
 (a) Punjab National Bank (b) State Bank of India (c) Bank of Baroda (d) Union Bank of India
18. The National Atomic Timescale generates Indian Standard Time with an accuracy of _____.
 (a) 0.8 nanosecond (b) 2.8 nanosecond (c) 3.4 nanosecond (d) 6.6 nanosecond
19. According to the Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual list of top donations, who made the single-largest charitable contribution in 2020?
 (a) Warren Buffett (b) Azim Premji (c) Mark Zuckerberg (d) Jeff Bezos
20. Every year Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a celebratory day observed on _____ by the Republic of India to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India.
 (a) 6th January (b) 9th January
 (c) 12th January (d) 15th January
21. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the world's first Double Stack Long Haul 1.5 Kilometer long Container Train hauled by electric traction from _____ during the event.
 (a) New Ateli -New Kishangarh (b) Rewari- Bhopal
 (c) Habibganj- Patna Sahib (d) Ankaleshwar-Surat
22. Which of the following has become the first Urban Cooperative Bank (UCB) in India to transition to a Small Finance Bank under the voluntary transition scheme?
 (a) Utkarsh Small Finance Bank (b) Shivalik Small Finance Bank
 (c) Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (d) Fincare Small Finance Bank
23. Which of the following states introduced 'Launch Pad Scheme' being started for boys and girls coming out of child care institutions and having completed 18 years of age?
 (a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Uttar Pradesh
 (c) Karnataka (d) Maharashtra
24. India sets up high-level group for South Asia energy security, who is the head of the high-level group?
 (a) Adavaitha Rana (b) Mahendra Singh Nagar
 (c) Ram Vinay Shahi (d) Vibhanshu Patel
25. Recently, the first batch of over _____ women disaster combatants and rescuers has been inducted into the country's federal calamity force NDRF.
 (a) 40 (b) 50 (c) 100 (d) 250
26. Recently, India's top food regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) reduced Trans fat levels in food from 5% to _____.
 (a) 4.5% (b) 4% (c) 3% (d) 2%

27. Which of the following countries is not among the five new countries which formally joined the U.N. Security Council recently?
 (a) Mexico (b) Ireland (c) Thailand (d) Kenya
28. A committee set up under the chairmanship of former union secretary _____ to fix ceiling rates under a duty refund scheme - RoDTEP - for exporters is expected to submit the complete report.
 (a) G K Pillai (b) H K Khan (c) J L Hingloo (d) M S Singh
29. Which of the following declared Bird flu as a State disaster as thousands of domestic birds were found to be infected by H5N8 virus?
 (a) Karnataka (b) Kerala (c) Tamil Nadu (d) Andhra Pradesh
30. Recently, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and Union Minister for Textiles and Women & Child Development Smriti Zubin Irani jointly launched the _____.
 (a) Toycathon 2021 (b) Soyathan 2021
 (c) Mocathan 2020 (d) Cartcathon 2021
31. Which of the following have become the first groups of states to have completed the One Nation, One Ration Card Reforms, Ease of Doing Business Reforms and Urban Local Bodies Reforms?
 (a) Bihar and Jharkhand (b) Odisha and Andhra Pradesh
 (c) Gujarat and Maharashtra (d) Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh
32. IRDAI is set to introduce standard home insurance policy _____.
 (a) Bharat Griha Raksha (b) Indian Home Protection
 (c) Bharat Suraksha (d) Indian Safety
33. Recently, The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between _____ on a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to 'Specified Skilled Worker'.
 (a) Indian and Japan (b) Indian and China
 (c) Indian and Thailand (d) Indian and Cambodia
34. Who launched a Freight Business Development Portal as one stop solution for all the needs of freight customers?
 (a) Prime Minister Narendra Modi (b) Railway Minister Piyush Goyal
 (c) Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (d) Home Minister Amit Shah
35. Which of the following has become home to world's first undersea traffic circle recently?
 (a) Egypt (b) Faroe Islands (c) Panama (d) Monaco
36. Recently, Micro-finance institutions have made a pitch for issuance of tax-free social bonds for five years by _____ to exclusively provide debt to the sector operating in semi urban, rural areas or aspirational districts.
 (a) SIDBI/NABARD (b) FCI/NABARD
 (c) RBI/Ministry of Finance (d) SBI/RBI
37. A new approach for surveying African elephants using satellite imagery and artificial intelligence (AI) was developed by an international team of researchers led by _____.
 (a) University of Oxford (b) University of Cambridge
 (c) University of Texas (d) University of Chicago
38. Which of the following countries builds world's largest seed bank to boost food security?
 (a) India (b) China (c) New Zealand (d) Australia
39. Who becomes the first female match official in a men's Test match when she takes up the fourth umpire's role in the third Test between India and Australia?
 (a) Helen Glas (b) Miranda Hockoi (c) Claire Polosak (d) Mirale Thomas

40. Which of the following cricket teams grabbed the number one position in the ICC Test rankings for the first time in history?
(a) England (b) New Zealand (c) West Indies (d) Pakistan
41. Name the world's youngest author who has become the first Indian child to sign a deal with the Invincible for her four upcoming books.
(a) Alolika Bnnerjee (b) Abhijita Gupta (c) Shubhani Rawat (d) Shriyangi Mehta
42. India's first indoor ski park will come up at:
(a) Champawat (b) Kufri (c) Tawang (d) Manali
43. Which of the following banks has announced an alliance with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur and FIRST (Foundation for Innovation & Research in Science & Technology) to jointly establish the IIT Kanpur Innovation Centre at the IIT campus?
(a) State Bank of India (b) Union Bank of India (c) Union Bank of India (d) Punjab National Bank
44. According to ASSOCHAM, India's economy is showing decisive signs of a _____ recovery in 2021 with the return of consumer confidence, robust financial markets, an uptick in manufacturing and exporters braving it out in the global market with never-say-die spirit.
(a) 'V-shaped' (b) 'U-shaped' (c) 'Y-shaped' (d) 'S-shaped'
45. Which of the following countries is related with "25th Amendment" which was ratified in 1967, and created a legal mechanism for designating a head of state when the president is disabled or dead?
(a) Russia (b) Canada (c) USA (d) France
46. The World's largest repatriation exercise _____ have been brought back more than 44.7 lakh people since May 2020.
(a) Vande Bharat Mission (b) Naman Bharat Mission
(c) Namaste Bharat (d) Welcome Back to India
47. Which of the following countries will soon be a part of the United Nations (UN) mandated international disaster rescue operations as the country's federal contingency force, NDRF, is expected to obtain a globally recognised standardization?
(a) Bangladesh (b) India (c) Australia (d) Japan
48. Indian Railways has achieved a landmark to enhance the maximum speed to 130 kilometres per hour for 1,280 km length out of 1,612 Km in Golden Quadrilateral - Golden Diagonal route.
(a) South Central Railway zone (b) North East Frontier Railway zone
(c) Western Railway zone (d) North East Railway zone
49. The World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting for 2021 will be held in:
(a) Taiwan (b) Singapore (c) Thailand (d) Malaysia
50. The famous "Crystal Award" is associated with:
(a) World Bank (b) NASA
(c) World Economic Forum (d) IMF
51. Name Indian cricket team coach who is all set to come up with his first-ever book in which the former player will share the never-before-revealed anecdotes and insights of his life in cricket.
(a) Sunil Gavaskar (b) Anil Kumble (c) Ravi Shastri (d) Mohinder Amarnath
52. Which of the following states launched the website www.cosfom.mn.gov.in for the Community-based Sustainable Forest Management for Water Resource Conservation recently?
(a) Mizoram (b) Nagaland (c) Manipur (d) Tripura

53. Recently, Union Minister for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan dedicated the new coastal research vehicle _____ to the nation at Chennai port.
(a) 'Sagar Anveshika' (b) 'Sagar Anushka' (c) 'Sagar Taruna' (d) 'Sagar Videshika'
54. Recently, India's largest fuel retailer Indian Oil has now teamed up with _____, India's largest lender, to launch the _____ Indian Oil Co-branded RuPay Debit Card.
(a) PNB (b) SBI (c) Union Bank of India (d) Canara Bank
55. The Centre has decided to form a committee under _____ to find a solution to issues associated with preservation of Ladakh's land, culture and language apart from demands from the region to be included under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
(a) Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy
(b) Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai
(c) Minister of Home Amit Shah
(d) Prime Minister Narendra Modi
56. Recently, State-run _____ has signed an agreement with the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) for assistance in setting up renewable energy (RE) projects.
(a) NTPC (b) NHPC (c) BHEL (d) SAIL
57. NCAVES India Forum 2021 is being organised by the _____.
(a) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
(b) Ministry of Economic Affairs
(c) Ministry of Home Affairs
(d) Ministry of Science & Technology
58. Name the Indian-American who has taken over as the first Chief Information Officer of the US Army, after the Pentagon created the position in July 2020?
(a) Vimal Sachan (b) Dr Raj Iyer
(c) Dr Uday Veer Rajgotra (d) Dr Bhushan Malik
59. Who among the following launched Government's Digital Calender and Diary App in New Delhi?
(a) Prakash Javadekar (b) Narendra Modi (c) Rajnath Singh (d) Amit Shah
60. Recently, Eugene Rhuggenaath was conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award. He is the current Prime Minister of:
(a) Fiji (b) Curacao (c) Trinidad & Tobago (d) Suriname
61. Who will command an all-women pilot team of Air India which will fly over the North Pole on the world's longest air route as the carrier's first non-stop service between San Francisco and Bengaluru?
(a) Captain Shivani Manhas (b) Captain Papagari Thanmai
(c) Captain Akansha Sonaware (d) Captain Zoya Aggarwal
62. Who among the following overtook Amazon boss Jeff Bezos to become the world's wealthiest person?
(a) Warren Buffett (b) Elon Musk (c) Mark Zuckerberg (d) Bill Gates
63. During the inaugural session of 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas who was the Chief Guest?
(a) Aniruddh Jagganath (b) Chandrikapersad Santokhi
(c) Rahul Sharma (d) Rishi Sunak
64. Who has been appointed as senior director for Technology and National Security in United States?
(a) Vivek Murthi (b) Tanuj Raizada
(c) Deepak Soani (d) Tarun Chhabra

65. Recently, The National Internet Exchange of India, NIXI has announced that it will offer a free Internationalized Domain Name, IDN in any of the preferred _____ official Indian language along with every IN domain booked by the registrant.
(a) 12 (b) 16 (c) 22 (d) 24
66. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up an academic advisory council with former deputy governor _____ as the chairperson to advise the full-time director of the central bank's College of Supervisors (CoS).
(a) Usha Thorat (b) H.R.Khan (c) N S Vishwanathan (d) Viral V Acharya
67. Which of the following countries will chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee of UNSC in 2022?
(a) Australia (b) India (c) New Zealand (d) Kenya
68. A six-year study conducted by The Nature and Butterfly Society (TNBS) has identified Siruvani hills in _____ as a butterfly super-hotspot.
(a) Coimbatore district (b) Guntur district (c) Thissur District (d) Wayanad district
69. Recently, the Cherry Blossom Mao Festival was held in:
(a) Sikkim (b) Manipur (c) Mizoram (d) Nagaland
70. Name the Indian-American who has been appointed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas to its Houston branch's board of directors.
(a) Aniket Bharadwaj (b) Rishabh Maheshwari
(c) Bhavesh V Patel (d) Anoop Chandra Bajaj



ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. a The 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI) will open with the Indian premiere of the movie 'Another Round' by Thomas Vinterberg.
2. c India has successfully cultured the new coronavirus strain, which originated in the U.K., the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said.
3. a Home Minister Amit Shah released the inaugural issue of the National Police K-9 Journal in New Delhi. It is the first such publication in the country on the subject of Police Service K9s, Police Dogs.
4. c The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constructed a composite Digital Payments Index (DPI) to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.
5. b National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) announced that RuPay has partnered with RBL Bank to launch an innovative payment solution for Indian merchants – RuPay PoS in association with PayNearby.
6. b Soma Mondal takes over the reins of state-run Steel Authority of India (SAIL) as its first woman chairperson, will have multiple tasks at hand.
7. d Suneet Sharma has been appointed as the new Chairman & Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Railway Board (Ministry of Railways) and ex-officio Principal Secretary to Government of India.
8. b Juventus star forward Cristiano Ronaldo reached an impressive milestone outside the football field. Ronaldo becomes the first person to hit the 250 million mark on Instagram.
9. c Pakistan captain Babar Azam was named the Most Valuable Cricketer of the Year in the PCB awards following his stellar performances during the season.
10. d China has deployed a fleet of underwater drones called Sea Wing (Haiyi) glider in the Indian Ocean.
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12. a Justice S Muralidhar took oath as the Chief Justice of the Odisha High Court.
13. a World's first and India's only hospital train 'Lifeline Express' which is currently stationed in Badarpur, Assam.
14. b India will be the co-chair of the IUCN-supported Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP) for three years and it would, in this capacity, assist other Asian countries in managing their protected areas.
15. c Argentine filmmaker Pablo Cesar to head 51st IFFI's International Jury.
16. a Migrant workers' Cell has been created by Surat Municipal Corporation for the first time in the Country under the 'National Urban Livelihood Mission Scheme'
17. c State-run Bank of Baroda announced the launch of banking services on messaging platform Whatsapp.
18. b The National Atomic Timescale generates Indian Standard Time with an accuracy of 2.8 nanosecond.
19. d The world's richest person made the single-largest charitable contribution in 2020, according to The Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual list of top donations, a \$10 billion gift that is intended to help fight climate change.

- 20. b** Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a celebratory day observed on 9 January by the Republic of India to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India.
- 21. a** Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the 306 Kilometer New Rewari - New Madar Section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor. He will also flag off the world's first Double Stack Long Haul 1.5 Kilometer long Container Train hauled by electric traction from New Ateli -New Kishangarh during the event.
- 22. b** Shivalik Small Finance Bank (SSFB) has become the first Urban Cooperative Bank (UCB) in India to transition to a Small Finance Bank under the voluntary transition scheme.
- 23. a** In Madhya Pradesh, 'Launch Pad Scheme' is being started for boys and girls coming out of child care institutions and having completed 18 years of age.
- 24. c** The government has set up a high-level group headed by former Union power secretary and tasked it with helping build a South Asia-focused energy security architecture.
- 25. c** The first batch of over 100 women disaster combatants and rescuers has been inducted into the country's federal calamity force NDRF.
- 26. c** The long-pending demand of experts to reduce the level of trans fats in food items has been met, with India's top food regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) reducing it to 3%. The current permissible limit is 5%.
- 27. c** Five new countries — India, Mexico, Norway, Ireland and Kenya — formally joined the U.N. Security Council at a time of growing polarization in the body charged with keeping world peace and security.
- 28. a** A committee set up under the chairmanship of former union secretary G K Pillai to fix ceiling rates under a duty refund scheme - RoDTEP - for exporters is expected to submit the complete report in the next few weeks.
- 29. b** Kerala declares Bird flu as a State disaster as thousands of domestic birds were found to be infected by H5N8 virus.
- 30. a** Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and Union Minister for Textiles and Women & Child Development Smriti Zubin Irani jointly launched the Toycathon 2021.
- 31. d** Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have become the first group of states to complete three out of the four citizen-centric reforms stipulated by the Ministry of Finance.
- 32. a** Irdai to introduce standard home insurance policy Bharat Griha Raksha.
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- 34. b** Railway Minister Piyush Goyal launched a Freight Business Development Portal as one stop solution for all the needs of freight customers.
- 35. b** The bottom surface of North Atlantic Ocean has a series of sub-aquatic tunnels, linking the uneven islands that feature the Faroe Islands archipelago.
- 36. a** Micro-finance institutions have made a pitch for issuance of tax-free social bonds for five years by SIDBI/NABARD to exclusively provide debt to the sector operating in semi urban, rural areas or aspirational districts.

- 37. a** A new approach for surveying African elephants using satellite imagery and artificial intelligence (AI) could help in solving some of the present challenges in the conservation of the species. The survey method was developed by an international team of researchers led by University of Oxford.
- 38. b** China will complete a new national crop germplasm bank this year to boost the country's capacity to develop new crop varieties and enhance food security.
- 39. c** Australia's Claire Polosak becomes the first female match official in a men's Test match when she takes up the fourth umpire's role in the third Test between India and Australia starting.
- 40. b** New Zealand grabbed the number one position in the ICC Test rankings for the first time in history after decimating Pakistan by an innings and 176 runs in the second Test in Christchurch.
- 41. b** 7-year-old Abhijita Gupta, the world's youngest author, has become the first Indian child to sign a deal with the Invincible for her four upcoming books and she has already received a part of the royalty payment for the first 10,000 copies of her book.
- 42. b** India's first indoor ski park will come up at Kufri in Shimla with the objective of making Himachal Pradesh a favourite tourist destination in the country, besides providing tourists world class amenities in the state.
- 43. d** Punjab National Bank (PNB), the country's second largest public sector bank, has announced an alliance with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur and FIRST (Foundation for Innovation & Research in Science & Technology), to jointly establish the Punjab National Bank - IIT Kanpur Innovation Centre at the IIT campus.
- 44. a** India's economy is showing decisive signs of a 'V-shaped' recovery in 2021 with the return of consumer confidence, robust financial markets, an uptick in manufacturing and exporters braving it out in the global market with never-say-die spirit.
- 45. c** In US the amendment was ratified in 1967, created a legal mechanism for designating a head of state when the president is disabled or dead.
- 46. a** The World's largest repatriation exercise Vande Bharat Mission have been brought back more than 44.7 lakh people since May 2020.
- 47. b**
- 48. a** Indian Railways has started the New Year by achieving a landmark to enhance the maximum speed to 130 kilometres per hour for 1,280 km length out of 1,612 Km in Golden Quadrilateral - Golden Diagonal route. The route covers the entire GQ-GD route over the South Central Railway zone, except the Vijayawada - Duvvada section.
- 49. b** While the WEF annual meeting for 2021 will be held on May 13-16 in Singapore, the high-profile summit will return to Davos in 2022.
- 50. c** Deepika Padukone was the latest Indian awarded with the Crystal Award at the World Economic Forum 2020.
- 51. c** Indian cricket team coach Ravi Shastri is all set to come up with his first-ever book in which the former player will share the never-before-revealed anecdotes and insights of his life in cricket.
- 52. c** Forest Minister Awangbow Newmai launched the website www.cosfom.mn.gov.in for the Community-based Sustainable Forest Management for Water Resource Conservation in Manipur (COSFOM) at Sanjenthong in Imphal.
- 53. a** Union Minister for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan dedicated the new coastal research vehicle 'Sagar Anveshika' to the nation at Chennai port.

- 54. b** India's largest fuel retailer Indian Oil has now teamed up with SBI, India's largest lender, to launch the SBI-Indian Oil Co-branded RuPay Debit Card.
- 55. a** The Centre has decided to form a committee under Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy to find a solution to issues associated with preservation of Ladakh's land, culture and language apart from demands from the region to be included under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
- 56. b** State-run NHPC has signed an agreement with the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) for assistance in setting up renewable energy (RE) projects.
- 57. a** NCAVES India Forum 2021 is being organised by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- 58. b** Indian-American Dr Raj Iyer has taken over as the first Chief Information Officer of the US Army, after the Pentagon created the position in July 2020.
- 59. a** Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar launched Government's Digital Calender and Diary App in New Delhi.
- 60. b** Curacao Prime Minister Eugene Rhuggenaath and New Zealand minister Priyanka Radhakrishnan were among 30 NRIs, and Indian-origin people and organisations who were conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award.
- 61. d** An all-women pilot team of Air India will fly over the North Pole on the world's longest air route as the carrier's first non-stop service between San Francisco and Bengaluru will start.
- 62. b** Elon Musk, the outspoken and envelope-pushing chief executive of Tesla, overtook Amazon boss Jeff Bezos to become the world's wealthiest person.
- 63. b** During the inaugural session, President of the Republic of Suriname and Chief Guest, Chandrikapersad Santokhi will address the participants.
- 64. d** Tarun Chhabra, who has been appointed senior director for Technology and National Security, is a senior fellow at the Centre for Security and Emerging Technology at Georgetown University.
- 65. c** The National Internet Exchange of India, NIXI has announced that it will offer a free Internationalized Domain Name, IDN in any of the preferred 22 official Indian language along with every IN domain booked by the registrant.
- 66. c** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up an academic advisory council with former deputy governor N S Vishwanathan as the chairperson to advise the full-time director of the central bank's College of Supervisors (CoS).
- 67. b** India will chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee of UNSC in 2022.
- 68. a** A six-year study conducted by The Nature and Butterfly Society (TNBS) has identified Siruvani hills in Coimbatore district as a butterfly super-hotspot.
- 69. b** In Manipur, the Cherry Blossom Mao Festival was held at Senapati district marking the beginning of pink season in the district.
- 70. c** Bhavesh V Patel, an Indian-American top executive of a multinational chemical company, has been appointed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas to its Houston branch's board of directors.