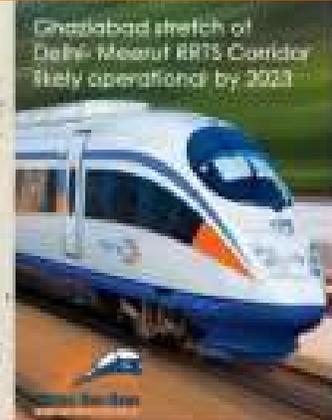


EXCEL QUEST

VOLUME - 12, December 2020



Prime Minister Modi speaks to US President-elect Joe Biden, restates commitment to Indo-US partnership



DELHI-GHAZIABAD-MEERUT REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM PROJECT



GST collection hits 8-month high in October 2020



FAST RADIO BURST

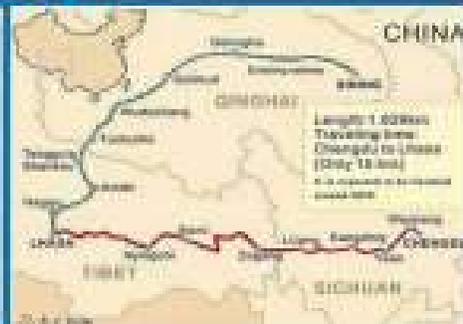


ANTI-SATELLITE (A-SAT) MISSILE

FIVE YEARS OF ONE RANK ONE PENSION

- 1 Implemented on 7th Feb, 2016; Benefit effective from 1st July, 2014
- 2 OROP implies uniform pension to the Armed Forces Personnel retiring in the same rank with the same length of service
- 3 OROP implies bringing the pay structure for rank of 1 grade up of current and past retirees
- 4 Approximately 9.42 lakh AEs were disbursed to 26,60,200 Armed Forces Personnel/Former Personnel
- 5 OROP beneficiaries also get the benefit of Arjun pension under the Central Pay Commission

ONE RANK ONE PENSION



SICHUAN-TIBET RAILWAY

A Monthly Magazine from

EXCEL CIVILS ACADEMY

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Director's message

Dear Aspirants,

On September 27th 2020, the Government with the aim of transforming agriculture in the country and raising farmers income, has passed three important agricultural laws in the Parliament. These are namely, The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020. While the government has claimed that the laws are in the interest of the farmers, the latter have claimed that the laws are "anti-farmer".

The main objection to the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act is that it is pro-corporate. It allows farmers to sell outside of the APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee). But it abolishes the "MANDI" system that operates under the APMC system, meaning farmers would now have to sell to corporates, meaning there will be no purchase of Crops at MSP. Besides these, farmers fear losing their land and becoming "slaves" to the Corporates as far as The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 is concerned.

Thousands of protesting farmers from Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have been gathered at five different borders since November 26 including Delhi's Chilla and Singhu border for nearly two weeks, demanding a repeal of three agricultural laws passed by the Centre in September. The protesting farmers have a set of five main demands including implementation of MSP. On 8th December 2020, the protesting farmers observed a nationwide bandh and protests spilled over to other parts of the country with protests swelling in Gujarat and Maharashtra and on 14th December, they observed a day long hunger strike in support of their demands.

The farmers' protests have led to a huge debate on social media with many condemning the violence meted out to peacefully protesting farmers by security forces. Many images of security forces beating elderly farmers with lathis, or spraying farmers with water cannons and tear gas went viral, causing widespread outrage. Several political leaders and public personalities have come out in support of the farmers.

The Government on their part are advocating the fact that these laws are actually for the benefit of the farmers and have offered to amend these laws considerably during negotiations with 40 odd farmer union leaders, the latter have rejected the same and demanded complete repealing of the laws and restore status quo ante.

The laws are aimed at providing new avenues to the farmers with a freedom to sell their produce outside the APMC (agriculture produce marketing committee) market and the government has assured that there will be no tax on such trade, which gives higher price to the farmers. Secondly, the farmers can sell their produce within the State or anywhere else in the Country thereby enabling them to get a higher price

for their produce from merchants outside their State. Thirdly, there is no need for any kind of license for traders to purchase agricultural produce in the trade area outside the APMC mandi. In addition to this, anyone holding PAN card or any other document notified by the Central Government can join this which provides more selling options to the farmers. Fourthly, in case of any dispute related to sale and purchase of these agricultural produce, the matter will be settled within 30 days by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate. The Act also assures heavy penalty for violating rules and regulations prescribed in it.

However, the agitating farmers allege that the mandis operated under the APMC law will be abolished due to this Act and once these mandis are shut down, the farmers will be forced to sell the crop to Corporate Companies at a lesser price. They further apprehend that once the Mandi system is abolished, no one will buy farmers produce at MSP which is the case before enactment of the farm laws and that this will only benefit the Corporate entities. They also believe that they will be at a disadvantage when going up against Corporate entities, with their rights under threat as they are likely to be exposed to the risk of fraud due to the entry of people without license or registration.

The government has offered various concessions to the protesting farmers which include striking down a key provision, 'Section 6' of The FARMERS' PRODUCE TRADE AND COMMERCE (PROMOTION AND FACILITATION) BILL, 2020, option to approach regular courts in the event of disputes arising from transactions and registration of traders in non-APMC markets by State Governments. The government, under the pressure of farmers, isn't averse to effectively rendering redundant a progressive legislation which dismantles the monopoly of APMCs and opens up new marketing avenues for crops. Unfortunately, the farmer Unions have not only just rejected the government's proposals of extending to a not-legally-binding "written assurance" on continuance of the present minimum support price-based procurement system, but are demanding a total roll back of all the three laws. This, despite the other two Acts having no provisions that can be termed anti-farmer. Farmers, if anything, benefit from traders being able to buy and stock without limit, just as a legal framework for contract contraction (which is anyway voluntary) is only in their interest and hence should eschew the hard stance of "repeal or nothing" and see the larger objective behind farm reforms.

Best wishes.



K. Rajendra Kumar IPS (Retd.)

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1. NATIONAL

1.1 ELECTRICITY ACCESS IN INDIA AND BENCH MARKING DISTRIBUTION UTILITIES REPORT

- NITI Aayog, Ministry of Power, Rockefeller Foundation and Smart Power India today launched the 'Electricity Access in India and Benchmarking Distribution Utilities' report.
- According to the report, 92 per cent of customers reported the overall availability of electricity infrastructure within 50 metres of their premises.

Background

- 87 per cent of the surveyed customers have access to grid-based electricity.
- The remaining 13 per cent either use non-grid sources or do not use any electricity at all.

Highlights

- The hours of supply have improved significantly across the customer categories to nearly 17 hours per day.
- The report is based on a primary survey conducted across ten states, representing about 65 per cent of the total rural population of India and with a sample size of more than 25 thousand, including households, commercial enterprises and institutions.
- Speaking on the occasion, NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar said, the report highlights the benefits of government-led schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana.
- He emphasized that the key recommendations provided in the report in the areas of policy and regulation, process improvement and infrastructure will be utilized for improving the power distribution sector.
- The report underlines some best practices adopted by the better-performing electricity distribution utilities in India and provides key recommendations to enhance sustainable electricity access.

1.2 MANDATORY PACKAGING IN JUTE MATERIALS

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved that 100% of the foodgrains and 20% of the sugar shall be mandatorily packed in diversified jute bags.

Background

- The decision to pack sugar in diversified jute bags will give an impetus to the diversification of the jute industry.
- Further, the decision also mandates that initially 10% of the indents of jute bags for packing foodgrains would be placed through reverse auction on the Gem portal.

Highlights

- This will gradually usher in a regime of price discovery.
- The Government has expanded the scope of mandatory packaging norms under the Jute Packaging Material (JPM) Act, 1987.
- In case of any shortage or disruption in supply of jute packaging material or in other contingency/exigency, the Ministry of Textiles may, in consultation with the user Ministries concerned, relax these provisions further, up to a maximum of 30% of the production of foodgrains over and above the provisions.
- Considering that nearly 3.7 lakh workers and several lakh farm families are dependent for their livelihood on the jute sectors, the government has been making concerted efforts for the development of jute sector; increasing the quality and productivity of raw jute, diversification of jute sector and also boosting and sustaining demand for jute products.

1.3 ETHANOL BLENDED PETROL PROGRAMME

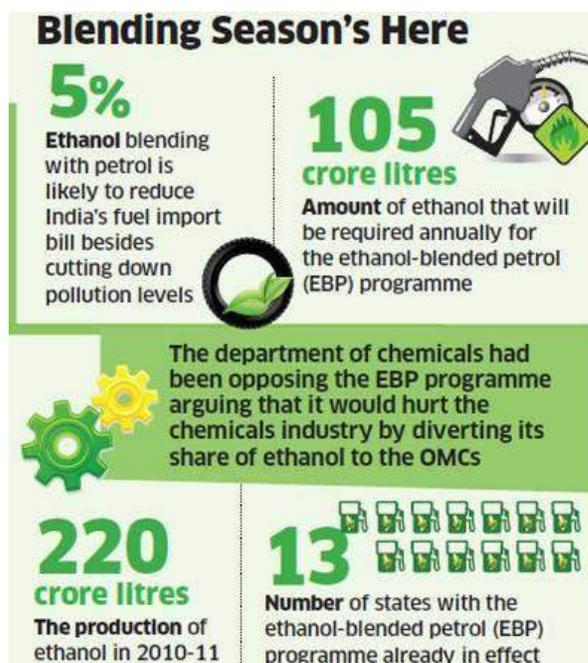
The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, CCEA approved Mechanism for procurement of ethanol by Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies under Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme.

Background

- Earlier, there used to be one rate for ethanol but now there will be different prices.
- The new Price fixed for Ethanol produced from sugar will be Rs. 62.65 per litre, ethanol manufactured from B heavy molasses will be Rs. 57.61 per litre and ethanol manufactured from C heavy molasses will be Rs. 45.69 per litre.

Highlights

- Additionally GST and transportation charges will also be payable.
- Oil Marketing Companies have been advised to fix realistic transportation charges so that long distance transportation of ethanol is not disincentivised.
- To offer fair opportunity to the localized industry within the State, Oil Marketing Companies shall decide the criteria for priority of ethanol from various sources taking in account various factors like cost of transportation, availability, etc.
- Government has been implementing Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme wherein OMCs sell petrol blended with ethanol up to 10 per cent.



- This programme has been extended to whole of India except Union Territories of Andaman Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands with effect from 1st April, 2019 to promote the use of alternative and environment friendly fuels.

1.4 MUSLIN FABRIC MASKS BY KVIC

Deck up the festive fervor this Diwali with Khadi's new face masks in an appealing combination of snow white and sparkling red. Keeping in view the Diwali festival, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has launched a Limited Edition of two-layered "Happy Diwali" printed face masks made of pure Muslin fabric, a high quality and ultra-fine cotton fabric handmade by traditional Khadi artisans of West Bengal.

Background

- KVIC will also launch Christmas and New Year special masks in the coming days.
- The Muslin face masks have been developed following the overwhelming public response to two layers Khadi Cotton and three layers Silk masks.
- So far KVIC has sold over 18 lakh such face masks across the country in less than six months' time.

Highlights

- The Diwali Muslin face masks are priced nominally at Rs 75 a piece and are available for sale through the Khadi outlets in Delhi and online through KVIC's e-portal www.khadiindia.gov.in.
- Like the other variants of Khadi face masks, the Muslin face masks too are skin-friendly, washable, reusable and bio-degradable and economical that suits all pockets.
- This face mask consists of two layers of pure white Muslin fabric.
- The sparkling red piping on the masks adds to the style quotient as it has been designed to gel with the festive attires.
- This fabric has been chosen for manufacturing as it helps retain moisture content inside, while providing an easy passage for the air to pass through.
- What makes these masks more special is the hand-spun and hand-woven cotton fabric that is extremely soft on skin and is comfortable for long-duration use.

1.5 LPG CYLINDER DELIVERY NEW RULES

- If you are someone who gets your Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) gas cylinder delivered at home, please take note of this new rule.
- Customers will be required to furnish a one-time-password (OTP) to get their LPG Cylinders.

Background

- Oil companies will implement the Delivery Authentication Code (DAC) for the customers opting for home delivery of LPG Cylinders.

- DAC is already underway in Jaipur, Rajasthan.
- It will be implemented in 100 Smart Cities first.

Highlights

- Customers who want home delivery of their LPG cylinders will get a code on their registered mobile number.
- Successful delivery of LPG Cylinders will only take place when the customers provide the OTP Code to the delivery person.
- For the convenience of the customers, Indian Oil has started one common number for Indane LPG refill booking.
- LPG refills common booking number for the entire nation is 7718955555 and it is a 24x7 service for the customers.
- "The current system of telecom circle-specific phone numbers for booking Indane LPG refills will be discontinued after 31.10.2020 midnight and the common booking number for LPG refills i.e. 7718955555, will be in force," the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas had said in its release.

1.6 MERI SAHELI INITIATIVE

Indian Railways has launched “Meri Saheli” initiative for focused action on security of women across all zones with an objective to provide safety and security to lady passengers travelling by trains for their entire journey from starting station to destination station.

Background

- An initiative of Railway Protection Force (RPF), the strategy of the initiative entails interaction with lady passengers especially those traveling alone by a team of young lady RPF personnel at the originating station.
- These lady passengers are briefed about all precautions to be taken during the journey and told to dial 182 in case they face or see any problem in the coach, the Ministry of Railways said in a statement.

Highlights

- The RPF team collects only the seat numbers of the ladies and conveys them to stoppages en-route.
- The platform duty RPF personnel at the stopping stations en-route keep unobtrusive watch over the concerned coaches and berths and if need arises, interact with the lady passengers.
- RPF/RPSF escort onboard also covers all the coaches/identified berths during its duty period, the ministry said.
- RPF teams at the destination collect the feedback from the identified lady passengers.
- The feedback is then analysed and corrective action, if any, is taken.
- If some distress call comes from a train covered under “Meri Saheli” initiative, the disposal of the call is monitored at the level of senior officers, it said.

- The “Meri Saheli” initiative was started as a pilot project in South Eastern Railway in September 2020 and after getting encouraging response from lady passengers, it was extended to all zones from 17 October 2020, the ministry added.

1.7 COASTAL SHIPPING BILL, 2020

In accordance with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s vision for augmenting people’s participation and transparency in the governance, Ministry of Shipping has issued the draft of Coastal Shipping Bill, 2020 for suggestions from the stakeholders and general public.

Background

- As the shipping sector grows and evolves in the country, a need was felt to have a separate legislation on coastal shipping, which considers it an integral part of the transport chain and recognizes the policy priorities of the sector to meet the demands of the Indian shipping industry.
- While drafting this Bill, the global best practices have also been considered.

Highlights

- The Ministry of Shipping has drafted a Coastal Shipping Bill, 2020 in lieu of part XIV of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958. Some of the highlights of the Bill are as under:
- The Ministry of Shipping has drafted a Coastal Shipping Bill, 2020 in lieu of part XIV of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958. Some of the highlights of the Bill are as under:
- It is proposed to do away with the requirement of trading licence for Indian flag vessels for coastal trade.
- The Bill seeks to create a competitive environment and reduce transportation costs, while encouraging Indian vessels to increase their share in coastal shipping.
- The Bill also proposes integration of coastal maritime transport with inland waterways.
- There is a provision for a National Coastal and Inland Shipping Strategic Plan.

1.8 GOVERNMENT REVISES PLI SCHEMES FOR PROMOTING DOMESTIC MANUFACTURING OF BULK DRUGS, MEDICAL DEVICES

- The Union Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and fertilizers has revised the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes for promoting domestic manufacturing of bulk drugs and medical devices keeping in view the suggestions and comments received from the industry.
- Accordingly, the ‘minimum threshold’ investment requirement has been replaced by ‘committed investment’ taking into account availability of technology choices which varies from product to product.

Background

- Post issuance of the detailed guidelines, the department received several suggestions and inputs from the pharmaceutical and medical device industry seeking certain amendments in the scheme to enable effective participation of the industry in the two schemes.
- The suggestions were examined by the respective Technical Committees formed under the schemes.

Highlights

The main changes which have been effected in the revised guidelines for Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for promotion of domestic manufacturing of critical Key Starting Materials, Drug Intermediates and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients in India are as follows:

- Replacement of the criteria of ‘minimum threshold’ investment with ‘committed’ investment by the selected applicant.
- The change has been made to encourage efficient use of productive capital as the amount of investment required to achieve a particular level of production depends upon choice of technology and it also varies from product to product.
- The provision for verification of the actual investment made by the selected applicant for the purpose of giving incentives under the scheme continues.
- Deletion of the provision which restricts the sales of eligible products to domestic sales only, for the purpose of eligibility of receiving incentives, bringing the scheme in line with other PLI schemes and encouraging market diversification.
- Change in the minimum annual production capacity for 10 products viz Tetracycline, Neomycin, Para Amino Phenol (PAP), Meropenem, Artesunate, Losartan, Telmisartan, Acyclovir, Ciprofloxacin and Aspirin.
- Minimum annual production capacity is a part of eligibility criteria under the scheme.
- The last date for receiving applications under the scheme is now extended by a week to 30.11.2020 (inclusive).

1.9 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ANNUAL MBBS ADMISSIONS REGULATIONS (2020)

- In a significant step towards affordable medical education, the National Medical Commission (NMC) has notified the Minimum Requirements for Annual MBBS Admissions Regulations (2020).
- The notification replaces the “Minimum Standard Requirements for Medical Colleges, 1999 of the erstwhile Medical Council of India (MCI).

Background

- According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the new Regulation will be applicable to all new medical colleges proposed to be established, and to the established medical colleges proposing to increase their annual MBBS intake from the academic year 2021-22.
- During the transitory period, the established medical colleges will be governed by the relevant regulations existing prior to the current notification.

Highlights

- The new standards allow optimization and flexibility in utilizing available resources, and harnessing modern educational technology tools to facilitate moving towards quality education, even when resources are relatively scarce.
- The new Regulation has the quantum of land required for setting up a medical college and its affiliated teaching hospitals.
- Under the new Regulation, a well-equipped “Skills Laboratory” for training students is essential now.

Heralding A New Era of Medical Education (1/3)

National Medical Commission notifies “Minimum Requirements for Annual MBBS Admissions Regulations (2020)”



- It also defines a Medical Education Unit for training medical teachers in educational pedagogy.
- The new regulation also mandates the availability of a fully functional 300 bed multi-speciality hospital for at least two years at the time of application for establishing a new medical college.

1.10 SEA PLANE

Overwhelmed by the response to the Ahmedabad-Statue of Unity seaplane service, SpiceJet plans to start a similar service connecting Surat in south Gujarat with the Statue of Unity.

- The service is operated by SpiceJet's fully-owned subsidiary, Spice Shuttle.

Background

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a sea plane service between the Statue of Unity near Kevadiya in Gujarat's Narmada district and Sabarmati River front in Ahmedabad.
- He inaugurated the service by boarding the twin-engine plane from pond-3 close to Sardar Sarovar Dam near Kevadiya.

Highlights

- Other routes and destinations which are under consideration for the seaplane service are Port Blair to Havelock, Delhi to Haridwar, Delhi to Rishikesh and Naini lake, Udaipur, Dal lake, Leh and backwaters in Kerala.
- The Prime Minister boarded the 18-seater plane from a pond near Sardar Sarovar Dam and landed at Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad after covering the distance in about 40 minutes.
- It takes around 4 hours by road to reach Kevadiya from Ahmedabad by road.
- The all-inclusive one-way fares will begin from Rs.1,500 and go up to Rs.5,000 under the UDAN scheme.

1.11 BIOMASS GASIFICATION BASED HYDROGEN GENERATION TECHNOLOGY

In a boost for the clean energy sector, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), in collaboration with Indian Oil Corporation Limited, has developed a process to produce hydrogen fuel from biomass that doesn't involve combustion.

Background

The IISc and the Research and Development Centre of Indian Oil Corporation Limited had signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop and demonstrate biomass gasification-based hydrogen generation technology for producing fuel cell-grade hydrogen at an affordable price.

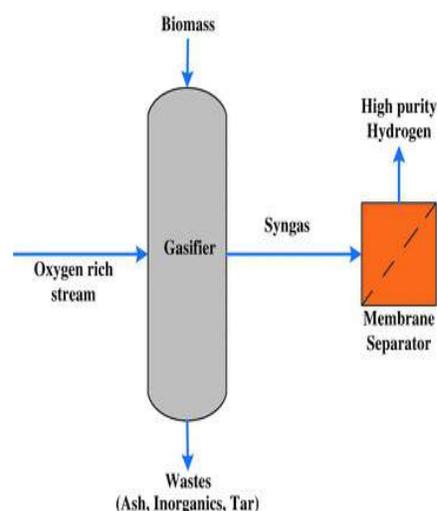
Highlights

- Biomass gasification is a controlled process that involves heat, steam, and oxygen to convert biomass to hydrogen and other products without combustion.
- The technology developed by IISc first produces hydrogen-rich syngas (synthetic gas) from biomass and then separates hydrogen from the syngas.
- According to the IISc, this is another step to bring hydrogen fuel into India's mainstream energy matrix while utilising the agrarian strengths of the country.

1.12 NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE OF INDIA

- National Film Archive of India, Pune, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting is organising the 15th edition of Film Appreciation Course in Marathi along with Federation of Film Society of India (FFSI).
- The course is being held online for the first time from November 1 to November 7, owing to the current situation of COVID Pandemic.

About National Film Archive of India



- The National Film Archive of India (NFA) was established as a media unit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in February 1964 .
- It is a member of the International Federation of Film Archives.
- Its three principal objectives are: to trace, acquire and preserve for posterity the heritage of Indian cinema; to classify, document data and undertake research relating to films; to act as a centre for the dissemination of film culture.
- The NFAI's archive keeps a stock of films, video cassettes, DVDs, books, posters, stills, press clippings, slides, audio CDs, and disc records of Indian cinema dating back to the 1910s.

1.13 ZIRAKPUR SAI CENTRE

- Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Kiren Rijiju virtually inaugurated Sports Authority of India's (SAI) new Regional Centre in Zirakpur, Punjab which will now act as one of the main SAI centres for the northern belt of India.
- During the event, Shri Rijiju congratulated the coaches and athletes who would be training at the new centre and said that once the COVID -19 situation is better he will personally visit the centre.

Objective

“The northern belt of India covers a huge region, right from Jammu and Kashmir and Leh to Himachal Pradesh and we are doing a lot of development in this region with the aim of building world-class sporting facilities in India. This is being done especially keeping our young athletes in mind, who are the future of this country and will have a big role to play in making India a sporting nation.”ShriRijiju added.

Highlights

- Zirakpur is a satellite town, in Mohali District, Punjab, neighbouring Chandigarh in India. It is part of the tehsil DeraBassi.
- It is set on the foothills of Shivalik hills.
- It is the gateway to Chandigarh from Delhi.

1.14 CHRONIC TRAUMATIC ENCEPHALOPATHY

It was reported that England World Cup winner Bobby Charlton, regarded as England's greatest, had developed dementia leading to questions that can striking headers in football lead to dementia?

About Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy

- It is a disease that causes severe damage to the brain because of repeated head injuries and is linked to memory loss, depression and dementia.
- Former boxers are most commonly diagnosed with it.
- However, there have been instances of CTE in many other contact sports like pro wrestling, mixed martial arts, ice hockey, rugby, baseball, Australian rules football and football.

- Dementia is a general term for loss of memory, language, problem-solving and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life.
- Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia.

1.15 iGOT e-learning PLATFORM

The Ministry of Health has said that uniquely designed Integrated Government Online training 'iGOT' platform provides self-contained training material for COVID-19 warriors comprising 56 modules, videos and 133 training documents.



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Background

Early this year, the Department of Personnel and Training has announced the launch of a learning platform (<https://igot.gov.in>) to combat COVID 19 for all front-line workers to equip them with the training and updates in coping with Pandemic.

Highlights

- The target group is Doctors, Nurses, Central & State Govt. Officers, Civil Defence Officials, various Police Organisations, National Cadet Corps (NCC), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme (NSS), Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), Bharat Scouts & Guides (BSG) and other volunteers.
- The platform delivers curated, role-specific content, to each learner at his place of work or home.
- To begin with nine courses on iGOT have been launched on topics like Basics of COVID, ICU Care and Ventilation Management, Clinical Management, Infection Prevention through PPE, Quarantine and Isolation, Laboratory Sample Collection and Testing etc.

1.16 COVID-19 SHRI SHAKTI CHALLENGE

- Six women led startups have won COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge organized by MyGov in collaboration with UN Women.
- MyGov in collaboration with UN Women, launched the COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge in April 2020.

About the challenge

- Its objective was to encourage and involve women-led startups to come up with innovative solutions that can help in the fight against COVID19 or solve problems that impact a large number of women.

- This challenge was hosted on the Innovate platform of MyGov that called for applications from women-led startups as well as startups who have solutions that address issues faced by a larger number of women.

1.17 MALLAKHAMB

In the 70th episode of Mann ki Baat last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned the USA where an ancient Indian form of sports — Mallakhamb — is drawing in a steady stream of players, thanks to the efforts of a couple named Chinmay Patankar and Pradnya Patankar.

About Mallakhamb

- Mallakhamb is one of the few games that is played against gravity.
- It functions on a synergy of mind and body, employing every muscle in a way that enables a person to develop speed, stamina and better health.
- The name derives from the pole used by wrestlers for practising their skills though, today, Mallakhamb has developed an identity that is separate from wrestling or kushti.
- The word “malla” means a wrestler or an athlete in Sanskrit and can also indicate a verb, such as strong or good.
- “Khamb” or “kham”, in spoken Marathi, means a pole.
- Therefore, “Mallakhamb” has come to be known as wrestling against a pole.
- Nevertheless, there are two other Mallakhamb styles such as ‘rope mallakhamb’ and ‘hanging mallakhamb’.

Highlights

- The origin of this ancient Indian sport can be traced to earlier part of the 12th century. A mention of wrestlers exercising on wooden poles is found in the Manasholas, written by Chalukya, in 1153 AD.
- It was revived late in the 19th century by Balambhatta Dada Deodhar, physical instructor to Bajirao Peshwa II.

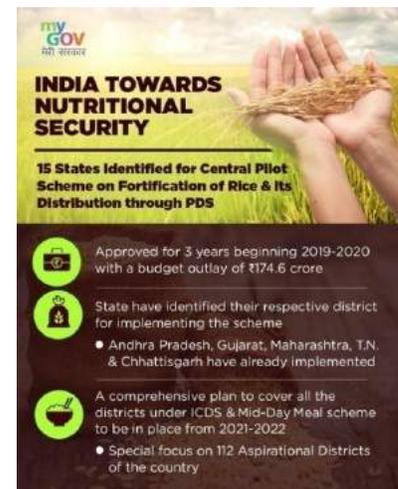
1.18 PILOT SCHEME ON FORTIFICATION OF RICE & ITS DISTRIBUTION THROUGH PDS

To initiate the process of taking the country towards nutritional security, the Department of Food & Public Distribution (DFPD) has been running a “Centrally Sponsored Pilot Scheme on Fortification of Rice & its distribution through Public Distribution System”.

Highlights

- The Pilot Scheme has been approved for a period of three years beginning 2019-2020 with a total budget outlay of Rs.174.6 Crore.
- Fifteen State Governments have identified their respective districts (1 district per state) for implementing the Pilot Scheme.

- Already 5 states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh have started the distribution of fortified rice in their respective identified districts.
- The FCI has been asked to come up with a comprehensive plan for procurement and distribution of fortified rice in all the Districts of the country under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) & Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme from 2021-2022.
- Special focus would be placed on supplying fortified rice to the 112 specially identified Aspirational Districts of the country.



1.19 CHAR-CHAPORI

Months ahead of the Assembly elections, a proposed “Miya museum” reflecting the “culture and heritage of the people living in char-chaporis” has stirred up a controversy in Assam.

About Miyas

- The ‘Miya’ community comprises descendants of Muslim migrants from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to Assam.
- They came to be referred to as ‘Miyas’, often in a derogatory manner.
- The community migrated in several waves — starting with the British annexation of Assam in 1826, and continuing into Partition and the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War — and have resulted in changes in demographic composition of the region.
- Years of discontent among the indigenous people led to the six-year-long (1979-85) anti-foreigner Assam Agitation to weed out the “illegal immigrant”, who was perceived as trying to take over jobs, language and culture of the indigenous population.

About Char-chaporis

- Char-chaporis are shifting riverine islands of the Brahmaputra and are primarily inhabited by the Muslims of Bengali-origin (pejoratively referred to as ‘Miyas’).
- A char is a floating island while chaporis are low-lying flood-prone riverbanks.
- The website of the Directorate of Char Areas Development puts the population of chars at 24.90 lakh as per a socio-economic survey in 2002-03.
- While Bengali-origin Muslims primarily occupy these islands, other communities such as Misings, Deoris, Kocharis, Nepalis also live here.

1.20 URBAN MOBILITY INDIA CONFERENCE

- The 13th Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference is being organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- The day-long Conference will be held on-line through Video Conference/Webinar.

About the concept

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India issued the National Urban Transport Policy, 2006 (NUTP).
- As part of the NUTP enunciations, the Ministry has taken the initiative to organize an annual international Conference-cum-Exhibition on Urban Mobility India popularly known as UMI.
- The primary objective of the conference is to disseminate information to the cities, whose officials attend the conference to help them keep up-to-date with latest and best urban transport practices globally.
- The main theme of this year's event is "Emerging Trends in Urban Mobility" with focus on innovative measures taken at national and international level to address the challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic to provide accessible and convenient transport to the people.

1.21 TELE-LAW SERVICE

- Tele-Law has touched a new milestone with 4 Lakh beneficiaries having received legal advice under this through CSCs (Common Service Centres).
- As against total 1.95 lakh advice given till April 2020 since the launch of the programme, 2.05 lakh advice have been enabled during the first seven months of this financial year.

Objective

- Embarking on the "Digital India Vision" of the Government of India, Department of Justice has been harnessing "emerging" and "indigenous" digital platforms to accelerate and make access to justice a reality for all.
- In meeting this objective, Tele-Law programme was launched in 2017 to address cases at pre-litigation stage.

Highlights

- Under this programme, smart technology of video conferencing, telephone /instant calling facilities available at the vast network of Common Service Centres at the Panchayat level are used to connect the indigent, down-trodden, vulnerable, unreached groups and communities with the Panel Lawyers for seeking timely and valuable legal advice.
- Especially designed to facilitate early detection, intervention and prevention of the legal problems, the Tele-Law service is proactively outreached to groups and communities through a cadre of frontline volunteers provided by NALSA and CSC- e Gov.
- These grassroot soldiers have been additionally equipped with a mobile application to pre-register and schedule appointment of the applicants during their field activity.
- Dedicated pool of lawyers has been empanelled to provide continued legal advice and consultation to the beneficiaries.

- Enriching IEC has been uploaded on its public portal that may be accessed on <https://www.tele-law.in/>.
- Separate Dashboard has been developed for capturing real time data and nature of advice rendered.
- In order to ensure district level granularity in the near future, data is also being pushed to the PMO Prayas Portal.

1.22 SC ORDER ON CONFESSIONS IN NARCOTICS CASES

- The Supreme Court has ruled on a long-pending question of law on whether statements recorded under Section 67 of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act can be admissible as confessional statements during criminal trials.
- The majority judgment ruled that statements recorded by officers under the NDPS Act cannot be treated as confessions.

About the significance

- Over 30 years, multiple court judgments have seen contrary opinion on this point of law – whether officers invested powers under the NDPS Act can be considered “police officers” and therefore, whether statements given to them by accused persons can be considered as confessions.
- One argument was that since the officers under Section 53 of the NDPS Act are not defined as “police officers” but are given the powers of an “officer-in-charge of a police station”, confessions given to them should be admissible in evidence.

Highlights

- The officers in the specialised anti-drug probe agency, NCB, can be deputed from various departments of the government including Central Excise, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Customs.
- The contrary opinion states that safeguards available for accused in international and Indian law, including the Constitution also extend to accused under the NDPS Act.
- This includes any statement given by a person to a police officer cannot be considered as a confession and cannot be enough to prove guilt.
- The majority view by Justices Nariman and Justices Sinha held that confessional statements made before an officer under section 53 of the NDPS Act if held as the basis to convict a person would be “a direct infringement” of constitutional guarantees”.
- While it was submitted to the court that confessional statements before police officers were considered admissible in other special acts including the now repealed Terrorism and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), the court said that they were used with several safeguards contained in the Acts themselves.

- The Court also held that when a reference is made to “police officers”, it does not only mean a police officer belonging to a state police force but includes officers who may belong to other departments.

1.23 COMMITTEE TO REVIEW GUIDELINES ON TELEVISION RATING AGENCIES

- The Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has set up a committee to review guidelines on Television Rating agencies in India.
- The committee will be chaired by PrasarBharti CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati.

Background

The I&B Ministry said in an order that the present guidelines on Television Rating agencies in India were notified after detailed deliberations by the Parliamentary Committee and Committee on Television Rating Points constituted by the Ministry and recommendations from Telecom Regulatory Authority.

Highlights

- The committee will be required to revisit the existing Television Rating guidelines to further strengthen the procedures to make them more credible and transparent.
- The parliamentary panel on information technology-led by ShashiTharoor had unanimously agreed last month that the current system of measuring audience estimates through Television Rating Points (TRPs) is flawed and its technology is outdated.

1.24 LIKELIHOOD OF FUTURE PANDEMICS

In a new report released by the IPBES, the authors have warned that future pandemics will emerge more often, they’ll spread more rapidly, do more damage to the world and kill more people than COVID-19, unless significant measures are taken.

Background

- The report notes that COVID-19 is at least the sixth pandemic to have taken place in the last century since the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918.
- Three of the pandemics were caused by influenza viruses, one by HIV followed by SARS and COVID-19.
- While the current pandemic’s origins lie in microbes carried by animals, “like all pandemics, its emergence has been entirely driven by human activities.

Highlights

- There are over 1.7 million currently ‘undiscovered’ viruses that exist in mammals and birds, out of which up to 827,000 could have the ability to infect people.
- More than 70 percent of emerging diseases, such as Ebola, Zika and Nipah, are caused by microbes found in animals that spill over due to contact among wildlife, livestock and people.

- About 30 percent of emerging infectious diseases are attributed to land use change, agricultural expansion and urbanisation.
- The report suggests that pandemic risk can be lowered by reducing the human activities that drive loss of biodiversity, by greater conservation of protected areas and through measures that reduce unsustainable exploitation of high biodiversity regions.

1.25 MAINTENANCE TO ESTRANGED WIFE

- The Supreme Court ruled that Computation of maintenance to estranged wife will include child care.
- The Supreme Court said if an estranged wife gave up her job to take care of children and the elderly in the family, then this will have to be taken into consideration by the family court while quantifying monthly interim maintenance payable to her by the husband.

Background

The court also found that pleas for grant of interim maintenance were pending in courts for years even though the law stipulated a 60-day window, from the date of issuance of notice by the court to a husband on the estranged wife's application, for grant of maintenance.

Highlights

- This is the first time that the highest court has considered the sacrifices made by career women in taking care of children.
- The SC ruled that this would be an added component for enhancing the grant of interim compensation to her, so that she could lead a life almost akin to what she was used to when all was well in the matrimonial home.
- Normally, the courts take into account the husband's income and assets while quantifying interim maintenance to an estranged wife.
- As of now, Neither the Hindu Marriage Act nor the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act specified the date from which interim maintenance was to be granted, leading to exercise of discretion by family courts.

1.26 PRASAR BHARATI TO LAUNCH 51 EDUCATION TV CHANNELS

India's public broadcaster PrasarBharati entered into anMoU with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to launch 51 direct-to-home (DTH) education TV channels.

Background

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between PrasarBharati and Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-Informatics under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology aims to bring quality educational programmes to every household, including those in rural and remote areas, the government said in a statement.

Highlights

- “Under the ambit of this MoU, 51 DTH education TV channels comprising Swaymprabha (22 channels) (M/o Education), e-Vidya for classes 1 to 12 (12 channels) of NCERT, Vande Gujarat (Govt. of Gujarat) (16 channels) and DigiShala under M/o Electronics and IT (1 channel) shall be available as DD co-branded channels to all DD FreeDish viewers. This move aims to bring quality educational programmes to every household, including those in rural and remote areas,” it said.
- The services will be available free of cost for all the viewers 24x7, in line with government’s commitment towards skill development and providing quality education to the last person in the country, it said.
- “This government initiative will go a long way in achieving Government’s goal of providing education to all,” the statement said.

1.27 INTERNATIONAL SATAVADHANAM

- The Vice President Venkaiah Naidu has observed that ‘avadhanam’ as a literary feat has greatly contributed to the Telugu language’s glorious tradition.
- The ‘International ‘Satavadhanam’ program, launched virtually by the Vice President recently, was organized by Dr.Medasani Mohan under the auspices of Sri KrishnadevarayaSatsang in Tirupati.

About Avadhanam

- Avadhānam is a literary performance popular from the very ancient days in India.
- Avadhānam originated as a Sanskrit literary process and is revived by poets in Telugu and Kannada in modern times.
- It involves the partial improvisation of poems using specific themes, metres, forms, or words.
- The Avadhanam event showcases, through entertainment, of superior mastery of cognitive capabilities – of observation, memory, multitasking in multiple modes of intelligence – literature, poetry, music, mathematical calculations, puzzle solving etc.
- Avadhāni refers to the individual who performs the Avadhānam; one of the many individuals asking questions is a Prachaka (questioner).
- The number of Prachakas can be 8 (Astāvadhānam) or 100 (Śatāvadhānam) or even 1000 (sahasrāvadhānam).

1.28 KARTARPUR SAHIB GURUDWARA

The Pakistan government’s decision to transfer the management and administrative control of the GurdwaraDarbar Sahib in Kartarpur from a Sikh body — Pakistan Sikh GurudwaraPrabhandhak Committee (PSGPC) — to a trust under the Evacuee Trust Property Board, a non-Sikh body, has inviting sharp reactions from India, which termed the move “highly condemnable” and against the spirit of the Kartarpur Corridor.

Background

- The Shiromani Akali Dal has termed Pakistan's decision as a move to take full control of the gurdwara, which is also the final resting place of Sikh faith's founder Guru Nanak Dev.
- The PSGPC, however, claims that there is no change in the administration of Gurdwara Darbar Sahib.

About the Gurudwara

- The Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, also known as Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib, is located in Pakistan's Narowal district across river Ravi, about five kilometres from the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India's Punjab.
- Guru Nanak Dev, the first Sikh Guru had arrived in Kartarpur between 1520 and 1522, as per historians, and spent the last 18 years of his life there.
- It was in Kararpur that he laid the foundations of a Sikh religion.
- At his final resting place stands the gurdwara.
- It was one of the most significant historical and spiritual place for Sikhs till 1947.
- Following the partition, no Sikh was left to take care of the gurdwara, which slowly turned into ruins and at one point of time was also used as a shelter by smugglers.
- One such person smuggled the Bir of Guru Granth Sahib left behind in the gurdwara and brought it back to east Punjab in late 60s.

1.29 EPHEMERAL MESSAGING

- 'Ephemeral messaging' has made its way to WhatsApp.
- The Facebook-owned messaging app has officially announced a new feature — 'disappearing messages' — to the platform, which will start rolling out to all users globally by this month.

About disappearing messages

- Disappearing messages, as the name suggests, are messages that will disappear or automatically get deleted from a chat after sometime.
- The idea of 'ephemeral' messages is not new, and WhatsApp is not the first app to offer this.
- Other encrypted messaging apps like Telegram, Signal, Wire already offer such an option.

Highlights

- WhatsApp says this will bring a new level of privacy to the app. In a blogpost, the company said, "When conversations aren't permanent, people can speak more freely and feel more comfortable being their authentic selves, whether that be their wacky side or being more honest about their feelings."
- This is a huge step for WhatsApp as we introduce ephemerality to many people for the first time ever and help them experience a new level of privacy."

1.30 HABEAS CORPUS

- Bombay High Court today heard Habeas Corpus plea of senior journalist Arnab Goswami, who was arrested in a connection with abetment to suicide case by Police.
- Journalist's advocate submitted before the court that the arrest is illegal and argued that opening a case by Police through Suo Moto action is an insult to the magistrate and judiciary.

Highlights

- **Right to Constitutional Remedies:** The Indian Constitution empowers the Supreme Court to issue writs for enforcement of any of the fundamental rights conferred by Part III of Indian Constitution under Article 32. Thus the power to issue writs is primarily a provision made to make available the Right to Constitutional Remedies to every citizen.
- **There are five types of Writs:** Habeas Corpus, Mandamus, Prohibition, Certiorari and Quo warranto.
- **Habeas Corpus:** "Habeas Corpus" is a Latin term which literally means "you may have the body." The writ is issued to produce a person who has been detained, whether in prison or in private custody, before a court and to release him if such detention is found illegal.

1.31 ARBITRATION AND CONCILIATION (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE, 2020

- President Ram Nath Kovind promulgated the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 to further amend Arbitration and Conciliation Act.
- It seeks to ensure that stakeholder parties can seek an unconditional stay on enforcement of arbitral awards in cases where the "arbitration agreement or contract is induced by fraud or corruption."

Objective

- Until recently, an arbitration award was enforceable even if an appeal was filed against it in the court under Section 36 of the law.
- The court, however, could grant a stay on the award on conditions as it deemed fit.

The Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2019



- It seeks to amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996. The Act contains provisions to deal with domestic and international arbitration, and defines the law for conducting conciliation proceedings
- The Bill seeks to establish an independent body called the Arbitration Council of India (ACI) for the promotion of arbitration, mediation, conciliation and other alternative dispute redressal mechanisms.
- The bill seeks to establish arbitral institutions, which parties can approach for the appointment of arbitrators. The Supreme court and High court may now resignate arbitral institutions
- The Bill seeks to remove this time restriction for international commercial arbitrations. It adds that tribunals must endeavour to dispose off international arbitration matters within 12 months.
- The Bill requires that the written claim and the defence to the claim in an arbitration proceeding, should be completed within six months of the appointment of the arbitrators.



Highlights

- It does away with the 8th Schedule of the Act that contained the necessary qualifications for accreditation of arbitrators.
- It added a proviso in Section 36 of the Arbitration Act and will come into effect retrospectively from October 23, 2015.
- As per this amendment, if the Court is satisfied that a prima facie case is made out that the arbitration agreement or contract which is the basis of the award was induced or effected by fraud or corruption, it will stay the award unconditionally pending disposal of the challenge made to the award under Section 34.

1.32 RO-PAX FERRY SERVICE

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the Ro-Pax ferry service between Hazira and Ghogha in Gujarat will improve 'Ease of Living' and boost economic prosperity in the region.
- The Prime Minister was speaking after virtually inaugurating the Ro-Pax terminal at Hazira and flagging off Ro-Pax ferry service between Hazira and Ghogha in Gujarat.

Background

- It marks a big step towards the Prime Minister's vision of harnessing waterways and integrating them with the economic development of the country.
- Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Modi said, the Ro-Pax ferry service will work as a Gateway to South Gujarat and Saurashtra region.
- He said, the facility will boost business and connectivity will become faster.

Highlights

- Hazira-Ghogha Ro-Pax ferry service will work as a Gateway to South Gujarat and Saurashtra region.
- It will reduce the distance between Ghogha and Hazira from 370 Kilometres to 90 Kilometres.
- The reduced cargo travel time will result in huge savings of fuel approximately 9000 litres per day and will lead to reduction in CO2 emission by approximately 24 million tonnes per day.
- With the onset of Ferry services, the port sector, furniture and fertilizer industries in Saurashtra and Kutch region will get a big boost.
- The benefits of enhanced connectivity through this ferry service will also result in increased inflow of tourists in the famous Asiatic lion wildlife sanctuary at Gir.

1.33 CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE TO BE SET UP AT IIT KHARAGPUR

Central Minister of Education announced the Centre of Excellence for Indian Knowledge System to be set up at IIT Kharagpur, and also Inaugurated the international webinar titled "Bharata Tirtha" organized by the Institute.

Objective

- Education through the mother tongue, along with the rejuvenation of Sanskrit, will ease the educational process for India's diverse people and draw from the rich scholarly heritage of India.
- Initiatives such as Study in India, GIAN, GIAN+, and other funded research programs could be the right resources to spread education and knowledge to the global students and researcher's community.

Highlights

- The necessity to acknowledge and incentivize research work was expressed on Indian Scientific Heritage by awarding the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize.
- "Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize is a dream goal for science and technology researchers in India.
- The three-day webinar will witness talks by international stalwarts pioneering in Indic studies, including Arthashastra (Economics), Sanskrit for Natural Language Processing, Vedic and Ancient Indian Mathematics - Numeral System, Bijaganita and Jyamiti, Rasayana (Chemical Sciences), Ayurveda (Biological Sciences), Jyotir-tatha Mahajagatika Vidya (Positional and Astronomical Sciences), Prakriti Vidya (Terrestrial/ Material Sciences/ Ecology and Atmospheric Sciences) and Nandana Tathyatatha Vastu Vidya (Archaeology, Iconography, and Architecture).

1.34 BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)

- In a recent report of the international medical journal The Lancet conducted on the basis of Height and body-mass index trajectories of the school-aged children, India ranked third and fifth from the bottom respectively among countries where 19-year-old boys and girls have a low BMI.
- This study presents the first comparable estimates of height in school-aged children and adolescents for all countries in the world and does so alongside estimates of BMI, which together are pathways from nutrition and environment during childhood and adolescence to lifelong health.

THE TOP 3, THE BOTTOM 3, AND INDIA			
BOYS, AGE 19		GIRLS, AGE 19	
MEAN HEIGHT, 2019		MEAN HEIGHT, 2019	
Netherlands	183.8 cm	Netherlands	170.4 cm
Montenegro	183.3 cm	Montenegro	170.0 cm
Estonia	182.8 cm	Denmark	169.5 cm
India	166.5 cm	India	155.2 cm
Solomon Islands	163.1 cm	Nepal	152.4 cm
Lao PDR	162.8 cm	Bangladesh	152.4 cm
Timor-Leste	160.1 cm	Guatemala	150.9 cm
MEAN BMI, 2019		MEAN BMI, 2019	
Cook Islands	29.6	Tonga	29.0
Nauru	29.5	Cook Islands	28.9
Tuvalu	28.2	Nauru	28.6
India	20.1	India*	20.1
DR Congo	19.9	Romania	19.9
Niger	19.8	Timor-Leste	19.6
Ethiopia	19.2		

* India 3rd from bottom
Source: The Lancet

About Body Mass Index

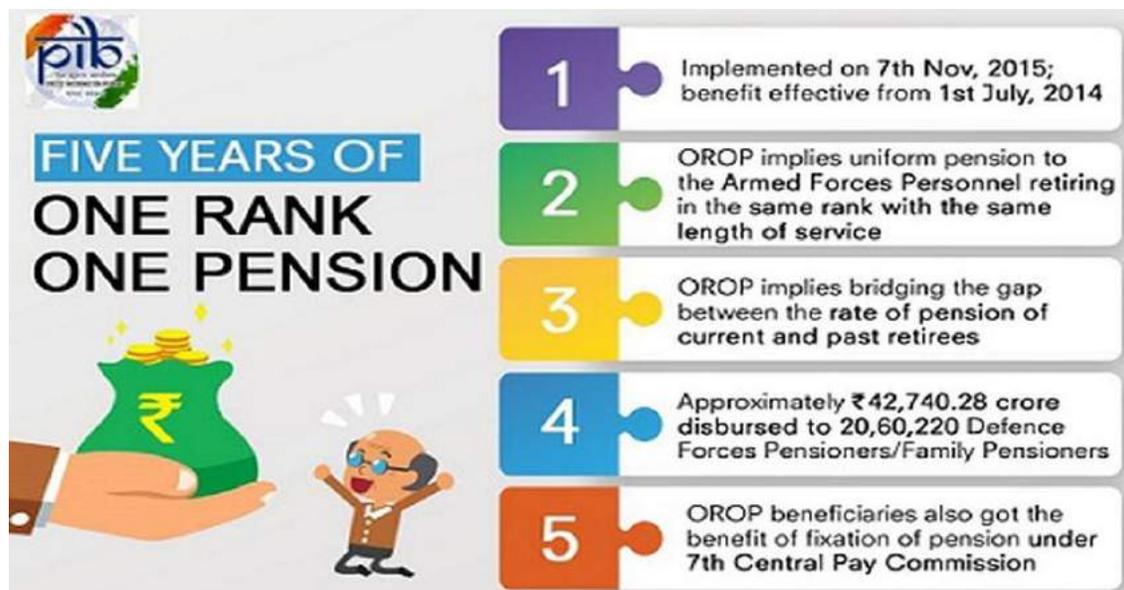
- Body Mass Index (BMI) is a measurement of a person's weight with respect to his or her height.

- It is more of an indicator than a direct measurement of a person's total body fat.
- The WHO defines an adult who has a BMI between 25 and 29.9 as overweight - an adult who has a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese - a BMI below 18.5 is considered underweight, and between 18.5 to 24.9 a healthy weight.

Highlights

- In 2019, The Lancet pooled data from 2181 population-based studies, with measurements of height and weight in 65 million participants in 200 countries and territories.
- The primary outcomes were population mean height and mean BMI from ages 5 to 19 years.
- This global analysis of data spanning 34 years from 200 countries ranked India at 196th place with respect to BMI (Body Mass Index).
- The normal ranges between 20 and 25.
- This study reveals that the 19-year-old boys and girls in India do not just have a poor BMI, but are also one of the shortest 19-year old population in the world.
- The review published in the international medical journal 'The Lancet' states that India's boys ranked 180th with an average height of 5.46 feet while girls ranked 182th with an average height of 5.06 feet.

1.35 ONE RANK ONE PENSION



- On the “momentous” occasion of five years of One Rank One Pension (OROP), Prime Minister Narendra Modi saluted soldiers for courageously protecting the nation.
- Under the OROP scheme, uniform pension is paid to defence personnel who retire in the same rank with the same length of service, irrespective of their date of retirement.

Background

- On November 7, 2015, the government issued an order notifying the OROP scheme and had stated that it would be effective from July 1, 2014.
- The OROP was implemented to bridge the gap between the pensions of current and past ex-servicemen at periodic intervals.

Highlights

- Before OROP, ex-servicemen used to get pensions as per the Pay Commission's recommendations of the time when they had retired.
- The armed forces personnel who retired by June 30, 2014, are covered under the OROP scheme.
- The Centre has disbursed over Rs 42,700 crore to 20.6 lakh retired Defence personnel under the OROP scheme since its inception, the Defence Ministry had said.

1.36 PLI SCHEME

- The government aims to expand the ambit of the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme to include ten more sectors.
- The scheme aims to give companies incentives on incremental sales from products manufactured in domestic units.

Objective

- The objective is to make India more compliant with the WTO (World Trade Organisation) commitments.
- Another objective is to make it non-discriminatory and neutral with respect to domestic sales and exports.

Highlights

- The central government introduced this scheme to boost domestic manufacturing and cut down on import bills.
- Apart from inviting foreign companies to set shop in India, it encourages local companies to set up or expand existing manufacturing units.
- So far, the scheme has been rolled out for mobile and allied equipment, pharmaceutical ingredients and medical devices manufacturing.

EXCLUSIVE INVESTMENT FORUM **INVEST INDIA.GOV.IN**

Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing

- Incentive:** 4% to 6% on incremental sales (over base year) of goods manufactured in India
- Target Segments:** Mobile phones and specified electronic components
- Eligibility:** Subject to thresholds of incremental investment and incremental sales of manufactured goods
- Tenure of the Scheme:** Five years subsequent to the base year as defined (FY19-20)

- These sectors are labour intensive and are likely to create new jobs for the ballooning employable workforce of India.

1.37 FASTags

- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a notification making FASTags mandatory for all four wheel vehicles from 1st January 2021.
- This will apply to old vehicles as well as M and N category of motor vehicles sold before 1st December, 2017.

About FASTag

- FASTag is an electronic toll collection system in India, operated by the National Highway Authority of India.
- It employs Radio Frequency Identification technology for making toll payments directly from the prepaid or savings account linked to it or directly toll owner.

Highlights

- As per Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, the FASTag had been made mandatory for all registration of new four wheeled Vehicles since 1st December 2017 and is being supplied by the Vehicle Manufacturer or their dealers.
- It had further been mandated that the renewal of fitness certificate will be done only after the fitment of FASTag for the Transport Vehicles.
- For National Permit Vehicles the fitment of FASTag has been mandated since 1st of October, 2019.
- The Ministry said that a valid FASTag is also mandatory while getting a new third Party Insurance through an amendment in certificate of Insurance, wherein the details of FASTag ID will be captured. This will be applicable with effect from 1st of April 2021.
- This notification would be a major step for ensuring that the payment of fees be 100 per cent at Toll Plazas through the Electronic Means only and that the vehicles pass seamlessly through the Fee Plazas.

1.38 DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN VARANASI

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate various development projects in Varanasi including Sarnath Light and Sound show.
- Sarnath is a place located 10 kilometres north-east of Varanasi city near the confluence of the Ganges and the Varuna rivers in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Highlights

- The Deer Park in Sarnath is where Gautama Buddha first



taught the Dharma, and where the Buddhist Sangha came into existence through the enlightenment of Kondanna.

- Also referred to as Isipatana, this city is mentioned by the Buddha as one of the four places of pilgrimage to which his devout followers should visit.
- It was also the site of the Buddha's Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, which was his first teaching after attaining enlightenment, in which he taught the four noble truths and the teachings associated with it.

1.39 MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS

The Prime Minister Modi said that the Government of India is changing the name of the Ministry of Shipping and it will be known as the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

Highlights

- In most of the developed economies, the Shipping Ministry is also responsible for Ports and Waterways. In India, the Shipping Ministry has been doing a lot of work related to Ports and Waterways.
- Now, with more clarity in name, there will be more clarity in the work, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.

1.40 TAL BEEMIT VYAKTI KALYAN YOJANA

Ministry of Labour and Employment in a statement said that submitting claims through Affidavit Form is now no longer required under Atal Beemi Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY) of Employees' State Insurance Corporation- ESIC.

Background

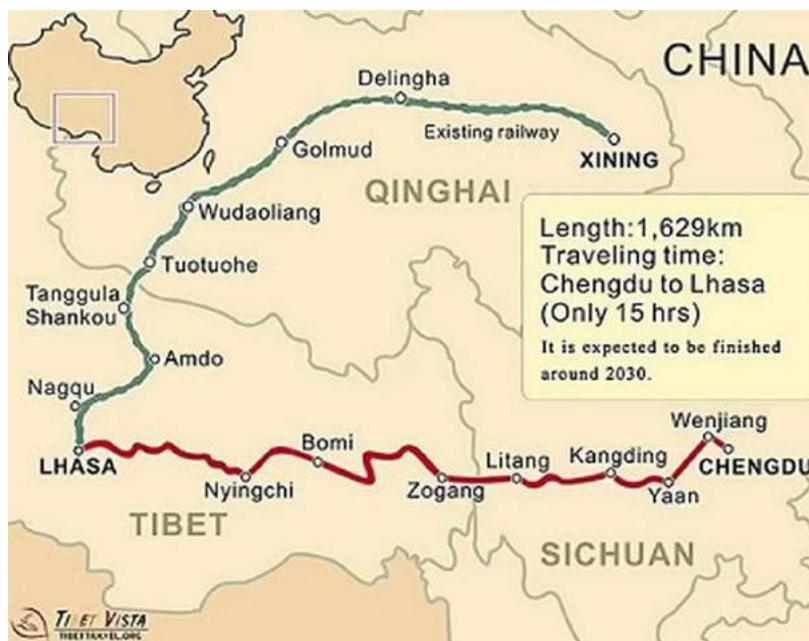
The Ministry said, while analysing the response of the beneficiaries to the Scheme under relaxed conditions, it was found that the condition of submitting the claim in Affidavit Form is causing inconvenience to the claimants.

Highlights

- It said, considering the difficulties faced by the beneficiaries, it has now been decided that the claimant who has submitted the claim under Atal Beemi Vyakti Kalyan Yojana online and uploaded the scanned copies of the required documents need not submit the physical claim.
- The Ministry said, if the documents are not uploaded at the time of online filing of the claim, claimant will submit the printout of the claim duly signed along with the required documents.
- It said, condition for submitting the claim in Affidavit Form has been dispensed with.
- The ESI Corporation in its meeting held in August this year had extended the Atal Beemi Vyakti Kalyan Yojana' from 1st of July, 2020 to 30th June, 2021.

1.41 SICHUAN-TIBET RAILWAY

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday instructed officials to expedite the construction of the new USD 47.8 billion railway project connecting the country's southwest Sichuan province to Linzhi in Tibet close to the Indian border in Arunachal Pradesh, saying it would play a key role in safeguarding stability in the border areas.



Background

- The Sichuan-Tibet Railway will be the second railway line into Tibet after the Qinghai-Tibet Railway project.
- It will go through the southeast of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, one of the world's most geologically active areas, according to the Chinese official media.

Highlights

- The Sichuan-Tibet Railway starts from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province and travels through Ya'an and enters Tibet via Qamdo, shortening the journey from Chengdu to Lhasa from 48 hours to 13 hours.
- Linzhi, also known as Nyingchi, is located close to Arunachal Pradesh border.
- The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control, the de-facto border between the two countries.
- China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of south Tibet which is firmly rejected by India.
- Linzhi also has an airport which is one of the five airports built by China in the Himalayan region.
- The Ya'an-Linzhi section runs 1,011 km with 26 stations. Trains are expected to run at speeds between 120 and 200 kms per hour.
- The total cost of the entire Sichuan-Tibet Railway project is around 319.8 billion yuan (USD 47.8 billion), according to a recent report by the state-run Global Times.

1.42 HUNAR HAAT

- Hunar Haat was restarted after a gap of about seven months due to the Corona pandemic.
- Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi inaugurated it at Delhi Haat in Pitampura.

Background

- The theme of this event is “Vocal for Local” where indigenous exquisite products made from Maati (clay), Metal and Machiya (wooden and jute products) will be the major attraction.
- Mr Naqvi said that rare exquisite products made from clay, different metals and wooden products, products made from cane-bamboo and mesmerising pottery work will be available for display.

Highlights

- The Hunar Haat will continue till 22nd of November.
- The Minister said that every corner of the country has a traditional and ancestral legacy of indigenous products.
- He said, this legacy, which was on the verge of extinction, has got a boon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitched for Swadeshi.
- Mr Naqvi said, the Indian indigenous industry has got tremendous boost after Modi advocated to get “Vocal for Local”.
- This is also strengthening the mission of Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- He said, that more than 100 stalls have been set up at this Hunar Haat.
- Mr Naqvi said that social distancing and other guidelines regarding Corona pandemic will be strictly followed at Hunar Haat.

1.43 INDIA MOBILE CONGRESS 2020

- The Minister of State for Communications, Education and Electronics & Information Technology announced the 4th edition of the India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2020, through a video message.
- The India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2020 is planned to be held virtually in December on account of the pandemic.

About the event

- The IMC event is jointly organized by the DoT (Department of Telecommunication) and the COAI (Cellular Operators Association of India).
- Authorities from more than 50 countries will participate in the event.
- The theme for India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2020 is “Inclusive Innovation – Smart I Secure I Sustainable”.

Highlights

- The IMC event will witness the coming together of some of the top industry stalwarts, regulators and policymakers from across the globe.
- It also includes participation from various ministries, telco CEOs, global CEOs and experts in SG broadcasting, SG enterprise solutions, OTT, and sustainable futurists.
- Considered the largest digital technology forum in Asia, IMC has established itself as a leading platform for bringing together the industry, government, academia, and other ecosystem players to

discuss, deliberate and display the latest industry technology trends around major themes such as SG, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of things (IoT), Data Analytics, Cloud and Edge Computing, Open source tech, data privacy and cyber security, Smart Cities and automation.

1.44 RECOUNTING OF VOTES

Election Commission of India (ECI) has rejected applications of six candidates who shouted recounting of votes for the recently concluded Bihar Assembly Elections.

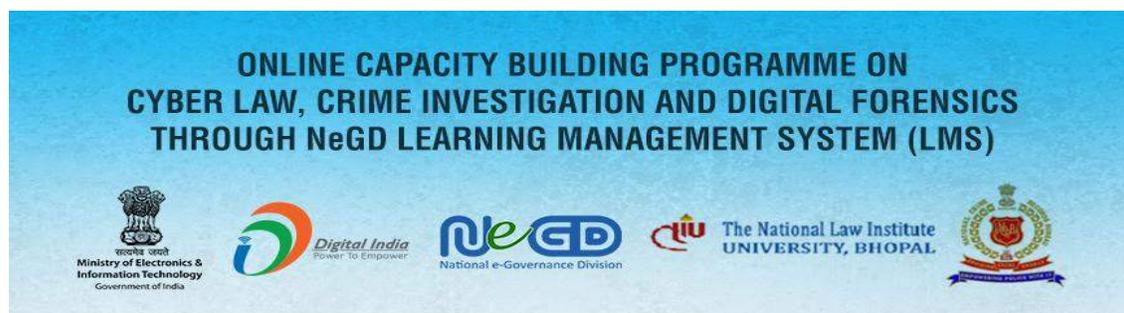
Background

- As per ECI, 11 seats are as such where nail biting finish taken place during counting on November 10 and the margin between victory and defeat was less than 1,000 votes.
- Six out of these 11 candidates are not satisfied with the counting and they have challenged the decisions of returning officers.

Highlights

- The penultimate round of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) counting doesn't start unless the counting of postal ballots is over.
- In case the victory margin is less than the total number of postal ballots received, then a re-verification is done even if no candidate or agent has asked for it.
- The Commission referred to this instruction when asked about the request from the Left parties for a recount in three seats.
- Apart from this provision, Rule 63 of the Conduct of Election Rules explicitly allows a candidate or his agent to demand a recount of postal ballots or EVM votes before the result is formally declared.
- The application for a partial or complete recount has to be made in writing along with strong reasons for the demand.
- The Returning Officer considers the grounds provided and may allow the recount in part or whole.
- However, the recheck of EVM votes and recounting of postal ballots can only be done before the formal declaration of results on Form 21C.
- After that, a candidate's only recourse is an election petition.

1.45 ONLINE PG DIPLOMA PROGRAMME ON 'CYBER LAW, CRIME INVESTIGATION & DIGITAL FORENSICS'



National e-Governance Division (NeGD) in partnership with National Law Institute University, Bhopal, launched an Online PG Diploma programme on ‘Cyber Law, Crime Investigation & Digital Forensics’.

Highlights

- This initiative will offer a nine-month Online PG Diploma Course in Cyber Law, Crime Investigation and Digital Forensics to about 1000 officials through NeGD’s Digital Learning Management System (LMS) in collaboration with NLIU Bhopal under the “Digital India Programme”.
- The goal of this Programme is to enable Police Officers, State Cyber Cells, Law Enforcement Agencies, Prosecutors and Judicial Officers to acquire the requisite skills to deal with Cyber Forensics cases efficiently & effectively as per the Indian Cyber Law.
- A Cyber Forensics Lab is being established in the premises of National Law University (NLU) Delhi for facilitating this course.

1.46 NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AYURVEDA

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the World Health Organisation is establishing the WHO Global Centre on Traditional Medicine in India.
- Prime Minister Modi was speaking after inaugurating the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda, Jamnagar (Gujarat) and National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur (Rajasthan), via video conferencing.

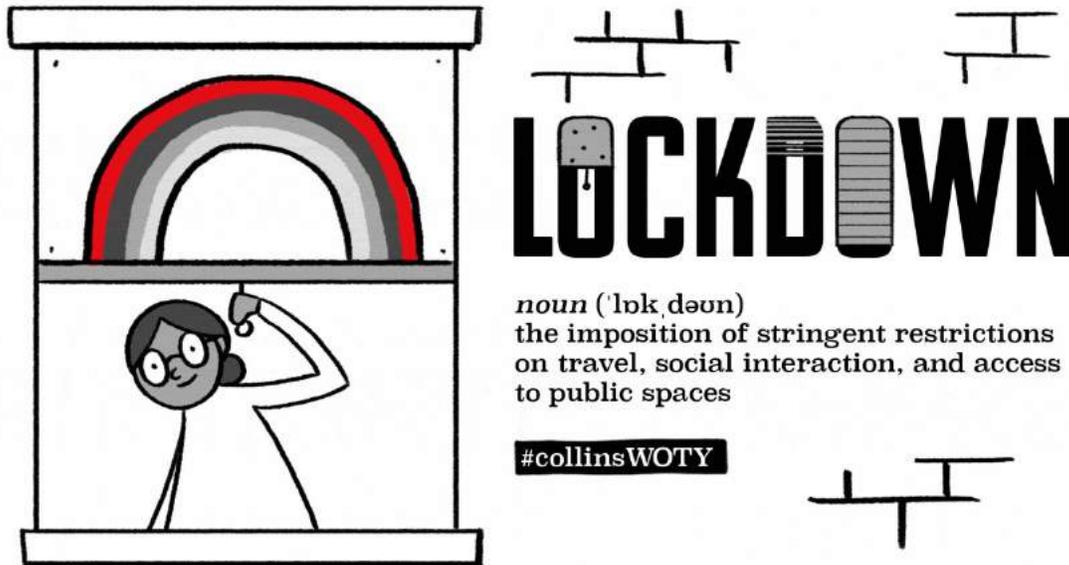
Background

- "World Health Organisation is establishing the WHO Global Centre on Traditional Medicine in India, to strengthen the research on traditional medicines," the Prime Minister said.
- The Prime Minister also said that this time Ayurveda Diwas is special for Gujarat and Rajasthan and also for youth.

Highlights

- The institutes inaugurated today are premier institutions of Ayurveda in the country.
- The Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda, Jamnagar has been conferred the status of an Institution of National Importance (INI) by an Act of the Parliament, and the National Institute of Ayurveda Jaipur that of an Institution Deemed to be University by the University Grants Commission, said an official statement.
- Ayurveda is a legacy of India whose expansion leads to the welfare of humanity.
- Every Indian will be happy that our ancient knowledge is also making other countries prosper.
- Ayurveda is included in Brazil's national policy.

1.47 COLLINS WORD OF THE YEAR



- Collins Dictionary has named ‘lockdown’ the word of the year.
- “‘Lockdown’, the containment measure implemented by governments around the world to mitigate the spread of Covid-19, has been named the Collins Word of the Year 2020,” Collins said in a blog post.

Background

- Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, people have been mandated to stay at home for the most part of this year in a ‘lockdown.’
- This has led to the usage of the word increasing tremendously over the year as compared to last year.

Highlights

- “Our lexicographers chose ‘lockdown’ as Word of the Year because it is a unifying experience for billions of people across the world, who have had, collectively, to play their part in combating the spread of Covid-19. Collins registered over a quarter of a million usages of ‘lockdown’ during 2020, against only 4,000 the previous year,” it said.
- Several other words related to the Covid-19 pandemic, including ‘coronavirus’, have made it to the dictionary’s list of top ten words of the year.
- The word ‘coronavirus’ has seen a 35,000-fold increase in use year-on-year in usage, Collins said. Other words related to the pandemic on the list include ‘social distancing,’ ‘self-isolate’ and ‘furlough’ and ‘key worker(s).’
- Key workers included doctors, nurses, postal staff, and maintenance workers, among others, on the frontline during the pandemic.

In Maharashtra, the Central Railway workshop at Parel in Mumbai has manufactured a fifth Narrow Gauge locomotive which will chug between Kalka to Shimla route, a UNESCO World Heritage Railway.

Background

A narrow-gauge railway is a railway with a track gauge narrower than standard 1,435 mm (4 ft 8 1/2 in). Most narrow-gauge railways are between 600 mm (1 ft 11 5/8 in) and 1,067 mm (3 ft 6 in).

Highlights

- The Kalka–Shimla railway is a 2 ft 6 in (762 mm) narrow-gauge railway in North India which traverses a mostly-mountainous route from Kalka to Shimla. Kalka railway station is located in Haryana.
- The railway was built under the direction of Herbert Septimus Harington between 1898 and 1903 to connect Shimla, the summer capital of India during the British Raj, with the rest of the Indian rail system.
- On 8 July 2008, UNESCO added the Kalka–Shimla railway to the mountain railways of India World Heritage Site.

1.49 OPERATION GREENS SCHEME

- Under Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, Operation Greens Scheme TOP to TOTAL, 50% transportation subsidy is now made available for air transportation for 41 notified fruits and vegetables from North-Eastern and Himalayan States to any place in India.
- Airlines will provide the transport subsidy directly to the supplier/consignor/consignee/ agent by way of charging only 50% of the actual contracted freight charges and will claim the balance 50% from MoFPI as subsidy.

Background

- In the relaxation of other conditions for Operation Greens – TOP to TOTAL Scheme for transportation through Airlines from eligible airports, all consignment of notified fruits and vegetables irrespective of quantity and price would be eligible for 50% freight subsidy.
- The transportation subsidy was earlier extended under Operation Greens Scheme for Kisan Rail Scheme with effect from 12.10.2020.
- Railways charge only 50% of freight charges on the notified fruits and vegetables.

Eligible crops

- **Fruits (21)** - Mango, Banana, Guava, Kiwi, Litchi, Mousambi, Orange, Kinnow, Lime, Lemon, Papaya, Pineapple, Pomegranate, Jackfruit, Apple, Almond, Aonla, Passion fruit, Pear, Sweet Potato, Chikoo;

- **Vegetables (20):** - French beans, Bitter Gourd, Brinjal, Capsicum, Carrot, Cauliflower, Chillies (Green), Okra, Cucumber, Peas, Garlic, Onion, Potato, Tomato, Large Cardamon, Pumpkin, Ginger, Cabbage, Squash and Turmeric (dry)
- All the airports in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim (Bagdogra), and Tripura from North-East, and Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh among the Hilly States.

1.50 CHIEF INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

- Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha was appointed as the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC).
- Before the appointment, he has been serving as an Information Commissioner (IC) in the Central Information Commission since January 1, 2019.

About CIC

- The RTI Act 2005 provides for the constitution of a Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions in each state.
- The CIC has been constituted in 2005 under the Right to Information Act, 2005.
- The jurisdiction of the Commission extends over all Central Public Authorities.
- The Central Information Commission shall consist of the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) such numbers of Central Information Commissioners (ICs), not exceeding ten, as may be deemed necessary.

About eligibility

- The members shall be persons of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media or administration and governance.
- The CIC or IC shall not be an MP or MLA or hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party or carrying on any business or pursuing any profession.
- The Chief Information Commissioner or an Information Commissioner shall before he enters upon his office make and subscribe before the President or some other person appointed by him in that behalf.
- The members of the commission are appointed by a committee consisting of the PM (as Chair), Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha and a Union Cabinet Minister appointed by the PM.
- The CIC or an IC may, at any time, by writing under his hand addressed to the President, resign from his office.

1.51 DRAFT RULES UNDER THE CODE ON SOCIAL SECURITY 2020

CODE ON SOCIAL SECURITY

The Code on Social Security Bill has been drafted for the third time in over three years

Draft 1: Universal social security coverage proposed to cover all workers – organised or unorganised, formal or informal, employed or self-employed, irrespective of any threshold

Draft 2: Social security coverage to all workers to be provided in phases; a PPP model proposed for managing provident fund and insurance accounts of workers

Draft 3: Present threshold-based social security system proposed not to be tinkered; no universal social security cover

The draft rules provide for operationalization of provisions in the Code on Social Security, 2020 relating to Employees' Provident Fund, Employees' State Insurance Corporation, Gratuity, Maternity Benefit, Social Security and Cess in respect of Building and Other Construction Workers, Social Security for Unorganised Workers, Gig Workers and Platform Workers.

Background

It said such objections and suggestions are required to be submitted within a period of 45 days from the date of notification of the draft rules.

Highlights

- The draft rules also provide for Aadhaar based registration including self-registration by unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers on the portal of the Central Government.
- The rules further provide for Aadhaar based registration of Building and Other Construction Workers on the specified portal of the Central Government and the State Government or the State Welfare Board.
- Provision has also been made in the rules regarding gratuity to an employee who is on fixed term employment.
- The rules also provide for single electronic registration of an establishment including cancellation of the registration in case of closure of business activities.
- Provision has also been made regarding manner and conditions for exiting of an establishment from EPFO and ESIC coverage.

- The procedure for self-assessment and payment of Cess in respect of building and other construction workers has been elaborated in the rules.
- The rate of Interest for delayed payment of such cess has been reduced from 2 per cent every month or part of a month to 1 per cent.

1.52 NEW INCENTIVE STRUCTURE

In a first-ever move, the Sports Ministry has introduced a incentivisation structure to extend monetary support to 500 private academies, through the Khelo India Scheme over the next 4 years starting Financial Year 2020-21.

Background

In this model, private academies shall be graded into different categories based on quality achievement of players trained by the academy, level of coaches available at the academy, quality of Field of Play and allied infrastructure, availability of sports science facilities, and staff.

Highlights

- The 14 priority disciplines identified for excellence in 2028 Olympics will be eligible for receiving support in the first phase.
- Under the scheme, Sports Authority of India (SAI) and National Sports Federation (NSFs) will be working together. SAI will also hold discussions with NSFs and implement categorisation and gradation of the academies.
- The number of academies to be funded and the quantum of funding under each discipline will be determined by an objective evaluation of the need for investment and each NSF's capabilities.

1.53 DEHRADUN AIRPORT

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has asked the state government to explore the possibility of acquiring a different patch of land for the expansion, so that the trees could be spared.
- Of the 9,745 trees that are proposed to be cut, 3,405 are khair, 2,444 are sheesham, 1,234 teak, 1,121 kanju, 549 jhingan, and 120 are gulmohar.

Background

- The Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority proposed the expansion of Jolly Grant airport in Dehradun with the aim of upgrading it to meet international standards.
- It is proposed to take over 87 hectares of forest land in Doiwala village in Dehradun district, and another 17.41 hectares of non-forest land for the project.

Highlights

- Invoking the famous Chipko movement which began in Uttarakhand in the 1970s, they tied “raksha sutras” around the trees to express their concern for the environment, and to demand the conservation of green cover.
- Highlighting the significance of the project, a note attached with the proposal sent to the Centre, says that due to the hilly geography, people are dependent on roads for travel and movement.
- A large part of the state shares an international border with China, and the expansion of Jolly Grant airport is strategically very important.
- The state has to face frequent natural disasters, and air operations are very important for rescue and relief.
- Air operations will also help promote tourism to the Char Dham.

1.54 EMERGENCY RETRIEVAL SYSTEM

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) constituent laboratory Structural Engineering Research Centre (SERC) based in Chennai has developed an indigenous technology, Emergency Retrieval System (ERS), for quick retrieval of power transmission in the event of failure of transmission line towers.

- CSIR-SERC has signed an agreement for licensing of the ERS technology with M/s Advai Infratech, Ahmedabad.

Background

- At present, the ERS systems are imported.
- There are very few manufacturers across the world and the cost is relatively high.
- This technological development will enable manufacturing in India for the first time, which will be an import substitute and will cost about 40% of imported systems.
- ERS has huge market requirement in India as well as in SAARC and African countries.
- Hence, this technological development is a big leap forward towards AtmaNirbhar Bharat and Make in India.

Highlights

- ERS is a lightweight modular system that is used as temporary support structure to restore power immediately after the collapse of transmission line towers during natural calamities such as cyclone/earthquake, or manmade disruptions.
- ERS can be assembled quickly at the disaster site for restoration of power in 2-3 days, whereas the permanent restoration may take several weeks.
- This development is very significant as failure of transmission lines severely impact lives of common people and causes huge monetary loss to the power companies.

- As the total losses/damages are directly proportional to the outage duration, time is a crucial factor in reinstating or remediating the damaged/fallen structures.

1.55 INTERNATIONAL CROPS RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE SEMI-ARID TROPICS (ICRISAT)

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) have granted conditional exemption to the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad, Telangana for the deployment of drones for agricultural research activities.

About ICRISAT

- ICRISAT is an international organization which conducts agricultural research for rural development.
- It is headquartered in Patancheru (Hyderabad, Telangana) with several regional centers (Bamako (Mali), Nairobi (Kenya)) and research stations (Niamey (Niger), Kano (Nigeria), Lilongwe (Malawi), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Bulawayo (Zimbabwe)).
- It was founded in 1972 by a consortium of organisations convened by the Ford and the Rockefeller foundations. Its charter was signed by the FAO and the UNDP.
- Since its inception, host country India has granted a special status to ICRISAT as a UN Organization operating in the Indian territory making it eligible for special immunities and tax privileges.
- ICRISAT is managed by a full-time Director General functioning under the overall guidance of an international Governing Board.

1.56 ADDITIONAL JUDGES

President of India recently appointed 28 Additional Judges as Permanent Judges of Allahabad High Court through Article 217(1) of the Indian Constitution.

Article 217 (1)

- Every Judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State, and, in the case of appointment of a Judge other than the chief Justice, the chief Justice of the High court.
- Every Judge of a High Court shall hold office, in the case of an additional or acting Judge, as provided in Article 224, and in any other case, until he attains the age of sixty two years Provided that
- a Judge may, by writing under his hand addressed to the President, resign his office;
- a Judge may be removed from his office by the President in the manner provided in clause (4) of Article 124 for the removal of a Judge of the Supreme Court;

- the office of a Judge shall be vacated by his being appointed by the President to be a Judge of the Supreme Court or by his being transferred by the President to any other High Court within the territory of India.

1.57 EESL & DNRE, GOA JOIN HANDS

Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture of PSUs under the Ministry of Power and Department of New & Renewable Energy (DNRE), Goa, have signed a memorandum of understanding to discuss rolling out of India's first Convergence Project in the State.

Background

- Under the MoU, EESL and DNRE will carry-out the feasibility studies and subsequent implementation of decentralized solar energy projects.
- EESL shall implement the solar energy projects, establishment of 100 MW of decentralized ground mounted Solar Power projects on government lands to be used for agricultural pumping, replace approximately 6,300 agricultural pumps with BEE star rated energy efficient pumps and distribute approximately 16 Lakh LED bulbs for rural domestic households.

Highlights

- The MOU signed between EESL and Government of Goa today in some sense marks beginning of fresh green revolution.
- When we started the PM- KUSUM, this is what was in our mind to restart fresh green revolution in agriculture sector.
- This model is expected to be adopted by other states as this will reduce losses in terms of expenditure on water for farm sector runs into tens of thousands crore rupees in several States.
- That pre-empts state spending on health, education, and other important sectors.
- Together with new Roof Top Solar Scheme this will prove to be win win for farmers and States and help them turn into green States.
- The project will accrue savings of INR 2,574 crores to the State over the period of 25 years, while improving the health of DISCOMs and providing cleaner power.
- This project will provide clean day time electricity to farmers as well as energy efficient pump sets which would reduce the power consumption as well as T&D losses associated with transmitting power to agriculture and rural feeder networks.

1.58 CHHATH PUJA

- Several parts of India are all set to celebrate Chhath Puja or Chhath Parva.
- It is a four-day festival mostly celebrated by people from Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar.
- This festival starts with Kartik Shukla Chaturthi and ends with Kartik Shukla Saptami.

Background

- This year, the main celebration will take place on the third day, November 20, where when devotees will offer "argha" to the Sun God at sunset and offer prasad.
- On the fourth and last day, devotees pray before sun rise and end their fast by eating special prasad and delicacies.

Highlights

- Chhath Puja is celebrated on the sixth day of the Kartik month of the Hindu calendar, which also happens to be the fourth day after Diwali.
- The puja for Chhath this year will be performed on Friday, November 20.
- As per the Hindu tradition, devotees worship the Sun God to express gratitude and seek their blessings.
- Along with the Sun God, people also make offerings to Chhath Maiya, commonly known as Usha, the wife of the Sun God.
- According to Vedic astrology, Chhathi Maiya or Chhathi Mata protects the offspring and provides longevity to them.
- Many people observe the ritualistic Chhath fast -they consume only one whole vegetarian meal in the day.
- In the last few years, Chhath Puja has got a special significance as a folk festival.
- This is the reason why the festival is celebrated with great pomp and show.

1.59 PM-FME SCHEME

- Union Minister for Food Processing Industries, Narendra Singh Tomar has virtually inaugurated the capacity building component of the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises scheme (PM-FME Scheme).
- PM-FME Scheme has been launched with an outlay of Rs 10,000 crore for a period of five years from 2020-21 to 2024-25.
- He also launched the GIS One District One Product (ODOP) digital map of India.

GIS ODOP digital map of India

- It provides details of ODOP products of all the states and facilitates the stakeholders to make concerted efforts for its value chain development.
- The digital map also has indicators for tribal, Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and aspirational districts.

About the scheme

- The component envisages imparting training to food processing entrepreneurs, various groups, viz., self-help groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Co-operatives, workers, and other stakeholders associated with the implementation of the PM-FME scheme.

- Training would be given to the master trainers through online mode, classroom lecture and demonstration, and self-paced online learning material.
- The master trainers will then train the district-level trainers, who will eventually train the beneficiaries.

1.60 LNG FUELLING STATIONS

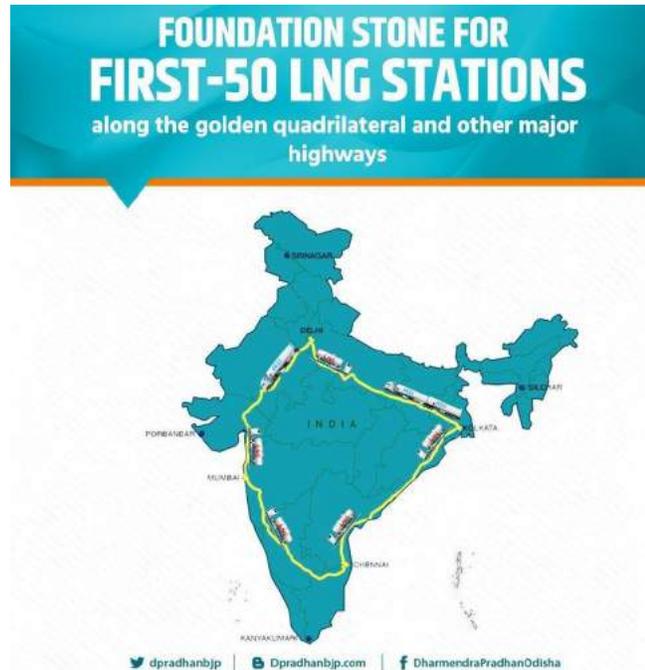
- Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel, Dharmendra Pradhan, laid the foundation stone for the first 50 LNG fuelling stations across the golden quadrilateral and major National Highways.
- All LNG stations were connected through video conference during the event with the minister.

Background

- According to an official release, this is part of a slew of initiatives of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in realizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of transforming India into a Gas based economy.
- These 50 LNG stations will be set up and commissioned in partnership by the country's Oil and Gas majors such as IOCL, BPCL, HPCL, GAIL, PLL, Gujarat Gas and their Joint Venture Companies and subsidiaries.

Highlights

- Out of these 50 LNG stations, IOCL will set up 20 LNG stations, while BPCL and HPCL will set up 11 each LNG station.
- Rest LNG fuel stations are being put up by Gujarat Gas and Joint Venture companies of GAIL and OMCs.
- These 50 LNG stations are being put up at the nation's Golden quadrilateral and major National highways where LNG is to be made available for heavy vehicles and buses.
- Natural gas is already in consumption by vehicles as CNG, but when used as LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas), its benefits increase manifold.
- Long-haul trucks and buses favour LNG because of its higher energy density than CNG and the ability to travel up to 600 Km to 800 Km in a single fill.



- LNG as a fuel is revolutionary for the transport segment and switching to LNG will not only reduce the cost of operations but also make a drastic reduction in carbon emission and enhance energy security because of substitution of crude oil with LNG.
- It has envisaged the commission of about 1000 LNG stations along all major highways and industrial centers in the coming three years with an investment potential of about 10,000 crores.
- It has also been envisaged to convert about 10 per cent of long-haul heavy-duty vehicles from alternated fuel to LNG.

1.61 DELHI-GHAZIABAD-MEERUT REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM PROJECT



The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, National Capital Region Transport Corporation Limited (NCRTC) and the New Development Bank (NDB) signed a loan agreement for lending 500 million dollars for the ‘Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System Project’.

Highlights

- The Rapid Transit System will provide a fast, reliable, safe, and comfortable public transport system in the National Capital Region.
- Due to the lack of efficient public transport options, the number of private vehicles in NCR has increased.
- It can take about 3 to 4 hours to travel between Delhi and Meerut in Uttar Pradesh by road during peak hours.
- Rapid growth in vehicular traffic has made NCR one of the most polluted regions in the world.

1.62 SAFAIMITRA SURAKSHA CHALLENGE

- Recently, the Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs has launched the SafaiMitraSuraksha Challenge.

- It aims to ensure that no life of any sewer or septic tank cleaner is ever lost again owing to the issue of 'hazardous cleaning.

Background

- It is in line with Prime Minister's vision who has always placed the safety and dignity of sanitation workers at the core of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U).
- The challenge has been launched in 243 cities to mechanize all sewer and septic tank cleaning operations by 30th April 2021.

About the challenge

- The challenge will focus extensively on creating citizen awareness on this critical issue along with infrastructure creation for mechanized cleaning and capacity building of workforce.
- The Government of India is committed to ensure that no person needs to enter a sewer or septic tank, unless absolutely unavoidable in the interest of greater public hygiene.
- The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act (2013) and various judgements of the Supreme Court expressly prohibit hazardous cleaning i.e. manual entry into a septic tank or sewer without protective gear and observing operating procedures.
- India still continues to witness over hundred deaths per year due to manual scavenging.

1.63 VATAYAN LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

- Union Education Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' was conferred with the Vatayan Lifetime Achievement Award at a virtual ceremony.
- Dr. Amish Tripathi, renowned writer, Director of the Nehru Center, London was the special guest on the occasion.

Background

- This award is the another in the list of many other national and international awards and honours conferred to the Minister for writing, poetry and other literary works.
- ShriPokhriyal has earlier received several awards in the field of literature and administration including SahityaBharati Award by the then Prime Minister ShriAtalBihari Vajpayee, SahityaGauravSamman by Former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Bharat GauravSamman, Good Governance Award by Dubai Government, outstanding Achievement Award by Global Organization of Person of Indian Origin by Mauritius, awarded in Ukraine in the area of environmental protection, among others.
- Shri Nishank is also honoured with "Himal Gaurav Samman" by Nepal.

Highlights

- The German version 'nureinWunsch' of ShriNishank's story collection 'Just a Desire', is published in Afro Asian Institute, Hamburg.

- His 'Sparsh Ganga' initiative was included in Mauritius school curriculum.
- He is actively associated with various Social activities such as unique drive of 'Swaran Ganga.
- Shri Pokhriyal has also organised Cultural Programmes worldwide as a Minister of Culture in Uttar Pradesh.
- Vatayan International Awards given by the Vatayan-UK organization in London, honours poets, writers and artists for their exemplary work in their respective fields.
- Earlier many eminent personalities like Prasoon Joshi, Javed Akhtar have been awarded the Vatayan Awards for their literary contribution.
- The programme was broadcast live on the Facebook of Vaishvik Hindi Parivar, eminent Hindi scholars, artists and media personnel from around the world, were present.

1.64 AWAAS DIWAS

- Rural Development Minister Narendra Singh Tomar virtually interacted with Rural Development Ministers and officials of the States on the occasion of "Awaas Diwas" celebration.
- During the interaction, Mr Tomar mentioned that Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana -Gramin is not only credited with the task of providing houses to beneficiaries, but it also serves in protecting the dignity of the households.

Background

AwaasDiwas is not just a day to celebrate a scheme, but a day to connect with crores of rural households, who have been greatly benefited by this scheme.

Highlights

- The Rural Housing Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G) was launched by the Prime Minister NarendraModi on 20th of November 2016 at Agra, Uttar Pradesh.
- To commemorate the launch of PMAY-G, which aims to provide "Housing for All" by 2022, it was decided to celebrate 20th November every year as AwaasDiwas.
- The program envisages the completion of 2.95 crore houses with all basic amenities by the year 2022.
- In the first phase of the scheme from 2016-17 to 2018-19, a target for construction of one crorepucca houses were set.
- In the second phase of the scheme starting from 2019-20 to 2021-22, the target of construction of the remaining 1.95 crore houses has been set.
- So far 1.75 Crore PMAY-G houses have been sanctioned and 1.20 crore houses have been completed against the allocated cumulative target of 2.26 crore houses.

1.65 INDIA INTERNATIONAL CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

India International Cherry Blossom Festival, the calendar event of Meghalaya which attracts record number of tourists annually in Shillong, has been cancelled this year in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

- The capital, Shillong hosts the only Cherry Blossoms festival in India.
- These beautiful flowers can be spotted across Meghalaya during this time of the year.

About the festival

- It is expected that the flowers will continue to bloom till the end of November.
- But people of Meghalaya celebrate festivals through virtual mode.
- The beautiful hill station Shillong in Meghalaya has turned pink with blooming cherry blossoms.
- Every year, the Cherry Blossom Festival in Shillong hosts a plethora of events like fitness art, fashion show, rock concerts and much more.
- This time, the pomp and fervour of the festival will be missed.
- Due to the COVID -19 pandemic, the Cherry Blossom Festival held annually in Shillong has been cancelled this year.
- But, the wispy pink-and-white blooms that adorn the town's trees around this time of the year have kept their promise, bringing cheer to the people.
- Local tourist is happy to see blooming cherry flowers and they are sharing the latest pictures and videos about cherry blossom on a social media platform for friends and relatives.
- Everyone hopes if everything will be normal that they will celebrate the cherry blossom festival next year.

1.66 GUPKAR ALLIANCE

Ever since the Congress party initiated talks with the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) for the November-December District Development Council (DDC) elections, the BJP has been on a tirade against the leaders of what it calls the "Gupkar Gang".

Highlights

- People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) was formerly known as Gupkar Declaration.
- It is a political alliance between the multiple mainstream regional political parties of Jammu and Kashmir aimed at safeguarding and restoring special status along with Article 35A of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Declaration signed on 4 August 2019 stated that modification or abrogation of Article 35A or Article 370 would be aggression against the people of J&K.
- The venue was the Gupkar Residence in Srinagar and thus it became known as the Gupkar Declaration.

- Gupkar Declaration II, signed on 22 August 2020 by the six political parties asserted that the signatories were bound by August 4, 2019 Gupkar declaration and parties would strive for restoration of Article 370 and Article 35a.

1.67 NEUTRALISING ANTIBODIES

- A new study in Pune has revealed that nearly 85% of the people who had been found infected with novel coronavirus in a serosurvey, conducted earlier, had developed neutralising antibodies.
- In other words, these people had developed immunity against the disease.

Background

- It is sometimes thought that everyone who is infected with a disease-causing virus, and recovers, becomes immune to the disease, because they build antibodies against it. But that is not the case.
- While the creation of antibodies is necessary for the recovery process, it does not guarantee immunity against a future attack from the same virus.
- Immunity comes from what are known as “neutralising” or “protective” antibodies.

About neutralising antibodies

- Neutralising antibodies, like other antibodies that are created to fight the disease, are nothing but proteins.
- These are a small subset of the disease-specific antibodies that are generated once an infection has occurred.
- The neutralising antibodies become special because they have the ability to thwart the entry of the same virus inside human bodies in the future.
- The other antibodies help in fighting off the virus once the infection has already happened.
- Serosurveys, like the ones that have been conducted in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and other cities, only look for the presence of antibodies in people.
- Their purpose is to find out whether a person has been infected with the virus or not, and through random testing of people, estimate the extent of spread of the disease, or prevalence, in a population group.
- Detection of disease-specific antibodies confirms that the person had been infected with the virus in the past.
- But a further test needs to be carried out to detect the presence of neutralising antibodies.
- This is what has happened in the case of Pune. So far, this is the only study that has looked for neutralising antibodies.

1.68 FOOD PROCESSING PROJECTS

- The Central government has approved 28 Food Processing Projects worth over 320 crore rupees, said the Ministry of Food Processing Industries.

- The projects are spread over 10 states and are likely to generate employment for nearly 10,000 people.

Background

- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries has supported the projects with a grant of over 107 Crore Rupees.
- They were approved under the Scheme for Creation and Expansion of Food Processing and Preservation Capacities- CEFPPC in the Inter-Ministerial Approval Committee (IMAC) meeting.

Highlights

- Union Minister of Food Processing Industries Narendra Singh Tomar chaired the IMAC meeting through video conference to review the projects under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY) for necessary Grants-in-aid. Junior minister RameswarTeli was also present in the meeting.
- These 28 projects will create a processing capacity of 1,237 Metric Tonnes every day across the states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Assam, and Manipur.

1.69 SHALYA AND SHALAKYA

- Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM), the statutory body that regulates the Indian Medical systems of Ayurveda, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Unani Medicine has issued a notification to streamline some of the provisions of the regulations concerning Post Graduate Ayurveda Education.
- The notification has added clarity and definition.

Background

- The notification relates to the Shalya and Shalakyas streams of Post Graduate Education in Ayurveda.
- It specifies a total of 58 surgical procedures that PG scholars of these streams need to be practically trained in so as to enable them to independently perform the said activities after completion of their PG Degree.
- Shalya and Shalakyas are independent Departments in Ayurveda colleges, performing such surgical procedures.

Highlights

- The Ministry categorically said, it has not received any comments or objections about the use of modern terminology in the said notification, and is hence not aware of any such controversy.
- It is, however, clarified that all scientific advances including standardized terminologies are inheritances of the entire mankind.

- No individual or group has monopoly over these terminologies.
- The modern terminologies in the field of medicine are not modern from a temporal perspective, but are derived substantially from ancient languages like Greek, Latin and even Sanskrit, and later languages like Arabic.
- The purpose of all modern scientific terminology is to facilitate effective communication and correspondence among the different stake-holders.
- The stake-holders of the instant notification include not just the Ayurveda practitioners but also professionals of other stake-holding disciplines like the medico-legal, health IT, insurance as well as the members of the public.
- The question of mixing Ayurveda with Conventional (Modern) Medicine does not arise here as CCIM is deeply committed to maintaining the authenticity of Indian systems of medicine.

1.70 ATAL FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

- Union Education Minister, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' today inaugurated 46 online AICTE Training and Learning (ATAL) Academy Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) to train teachers of higher education institutions associated with All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) in thrust and emerging areas in technology.
- The FDPs will be conducted in 22 Indian states.

Background

- On the occasion, the Shri Pokhriyal said that it is a matter of pride for the ATAL Academy to be included in the Book of World Records.
- He informed that the London-based organization has recognized the FDPs as a world record, under which 1,000 online FDPs in over 100 emerging areas will benefit one lakh faculty members across premier institutions like IITs, NITs, and IIITs.
- This year the online FDP program will cost Rs 10 crores, he added.

Highlights

- The Minister mentioned that the ATAL Academy is conducting FDPs in online mode, including the process of registration till certificate disbursement mechanism.
- In the year 2020-21, new thrust areas in the field of Engineering, Management, Life Skills, Design & Media have been incorporated.
- The online FDPs will be conducted according to the new National Education Policy (2020).
- Out of 1000, 499 FDPs have already been completed with more than 70,000 faculty members already trained. In 2019-20, 185 five-day face-to-face FDPs in nine thrust areas -- Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Block-chain, Robotics, Quantum Computing, Data Sciences, Cyber

Security, 3D Printing & Design, and Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality -- benefited around 10,000 participants.

- The main objective of ATAL Academy is to provide quality technical education in the country and to promote research and entrepreneurship through training in various emerging fields.
- IITs, IIITs, NITs CU and research labs are organizing these ATAL FDPs.

1.71 NATIONAL PORTAL FOR TRANSGENDER PERSONS

- The ministry of social justice and empowerment on Wednesday launched a portal that will allow transgender persons to apply online for certification of their self-perceived gender identity.
- Launched by Union minister Thawar Chand Gehlot, the portal will allow transgender persons to upload an affidavit declaring their gender identity, which will then become the basis for their identity certificates to be issued by the district magistrate.

Background

- One is expected to get an identity card within 30 days of the district authorities reviewing the application.
- Following the passage of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019, the law allows for self-perceived identification by an applicant for an identity certificate.

Highlights

- Transgender persons who have already recorded a change in gender identity, prior to the enactment of the law, will not need to apply for a certificate of identity under the rules notified on September 25.
- The portal will also enable them to register their grievances and help build a database of the community.
- The ministry will also open shelter homes for trans people in each state.
- The first such home was inaugurated in Gujarat today and will offer shelter and skill training to those in need.

1.72 PROHIBITION OF UNLAWFUL RELIGIOUS CONVERSION ORDINANCE, 2020

The Uttar Pradesh government approved a draft ordinance to curb forcible or “dishonest” religious conversions including those for the sake of marriage, which could land violators in jail for up to 10 years.

About the background

- Under the proposed law, a marriage will be declared “null and void” if the conversion of a woman is solely for that purpose.

- Those wishing to change their religion after marriage need to apply to the district magistrate, according to the draft ordinance which would become law after its promulgation by the state Governor.

Highlights

- The Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020, recommends 1-5 years imprisonment if an accused fails to prove that the conversion of the woman was not for marriage or by use of force, allurement etc.
- The jail sentence for the offence would be 3-10 years if the woman is from the SC/ST community or is seen as part of mass conversion.
- The notice period to the district magistrate for the religious conversion has been doubled to two months from a month in an earlier draft.

1.73 ELECTRONIC VACCINE INTELLIGENCE NETWORK

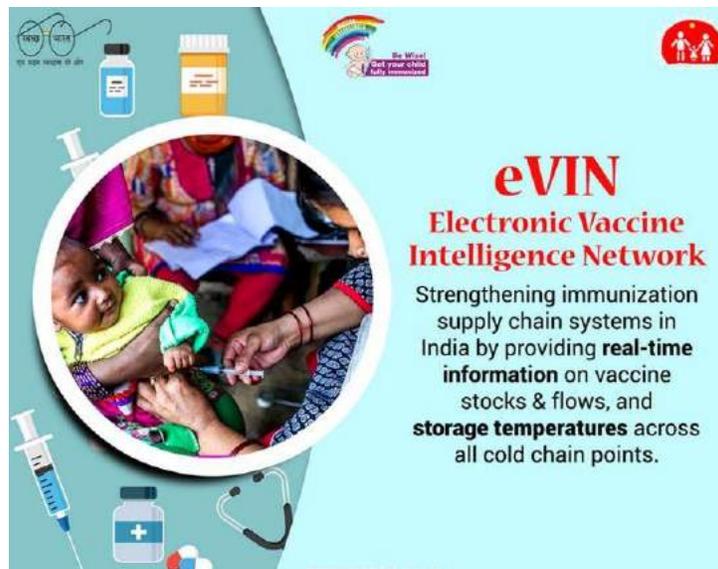
The government is using eVIN – Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network in association with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to identify primary beneficiaries and vaccine distribution networks.

About eVIN

- E-VIN is an indigenously developed technology that digitizes vaccine stocks and monitors the temperature of the cold chain through a smartphone application.
- It was first launched across 12 states in 2015 to support better vaccine logistics management at cold chain points.
- It supports the central government's Universal Immunization Programme by providing real-time information on vaccine stocks and flows, and storage temperatures across all cold chain points across states and UTs.

Highlights

- eVIN combines state-of-the-art technology, a strong IT infrastructure and trained human resource to enable real-time monitoring of stock and storage temperature of the vaccines kept in multiple locations across the country.



- At present, 23,507 cold chain points across 585 districts of 22 States and 2 UTs routinely use the eVIN technology for efficient vaccine logistics management.

1.74 LOK VIRASAT

- Films Division (FD) is organizing LokVirasat, a festival of films on folk art and painting starting from November 27, 2020.
- An exclusive bouquet of documentary films on folk art and paintings - LokVirasat - is being showcased, between November 27–29, 2020 on the FD website and YouTube channel.

Highlights

- The films being streamed include:
- The Kingdom of God , on the great Indian heritage of art and culture with focus on various folk art traditions,
- Bhavai - Fading Memories, a film on Bhavai - a folk art of Gujarat,
- Naman – Khele, a film on the ancient folk art performed in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra,
- SahiJata, The Fusion Cult, a film on the unique fusion of music and dance in the form of folk art on the back-drop of the ancient Orissa town of Puri and
- Therukoothu : Dancing For Life , a film depicting the age old Tamil folk art.

1.75 PERIOD PRODUCTS (FREE PROVISION) (SCOTLAND) BILL

- The Scottish parliament passed a landmark legislation that has made period products such as sanitary pads and tampons free of cost to those people who need them.
- The bill is titled, “Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill”.

About Background

- Scotland is the first country to take such a step.
- The bill was passed with the aim of tackling “period poverty”, which is when some people who need period products struggle to afford them.
- The objective is to end the silence and stigma that surrounds menstruation.

About period poverty

- Certain circumstances make access to sanitary products difficult for women and trans people.
- These include homelessness, coercive, controlling and violent relationships and health conditions such as endometriosis.

1.76 MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS RESTORES RECOGNITION OF ARCHERY ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports has restored the government recognition to Archery Association of India as a National Sports Federation for promotion and regulation of Archery Sport in the country.

Highlights

- The Government recognition of AAI was withdrawn eight years back on account of failure to conduct its elections in accordance with the National Sports Development Code of India, 2011 (Sports Code).
- Government recognition of AAI will be valid for one year.
- This comes after AAI's independent elections and revocation of suspension by the World Archery and Indian Olympic Association.

1.77 DRAFT MERCHANT SHIPPING BILL, 2020

- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has come up with a draft of the Merchant Shipping Bill, 2020 for public consultation.
- It has been a priority of the government of India to replace all archaic colonial laws with modern and contemporary International laws with the active participation of people to enhance transparency in the governance.

Background

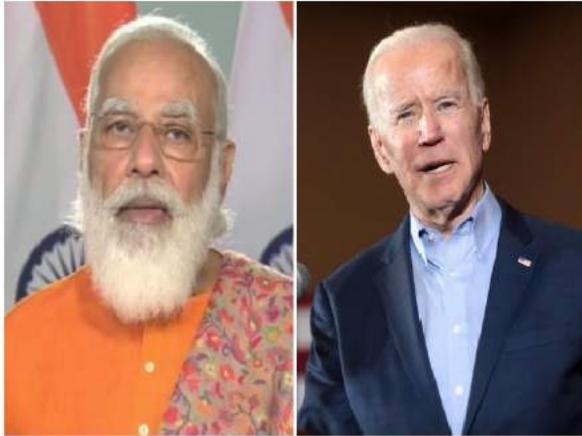
- For the same, the Ministry has also issued two draft Bills for public consultation, namely 'Aids to Navigation Bill 2020' and 'Coastal Shipping Bill 2020'.
- Moreover, Major Port Authorities Bill 2020 is also under consideration.
- All these Bills are going to generate sweeping waves in the maritime scenario moving India towards a fully developed maritime economy.

Highlights

- Repeal and replace: The Bill aims to repeal and replace the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 and the Coasting Vessels Act, 1838.
- Incorporate the best practices: It has the primary aim of promoting the growth of the Indian shipping industry by incorporating the best practices adopted by other advanced countries like the U.S., Japan, U.K., Singapore and Australia.
- Compliant with international laws: The Bill incorporates all up-to-date IMO Conventions or protocols, to which India is a party.
- Ensure safety and security: The Bill incorporates adequate provisions to ensure the safety and security of vessels, safety of life at sea, prevent marine pollution, provide for maritime liabilities and compensations.

2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1 Prime Minister Modi speaks to US President-elect Joe Biden, restates commitment to Indo-US partnership



- Prime Minister Modi on November 17, 2020, spoke with US President-elect Joe Biden and congratulated him on winning the US Presidential elections. The leaders discussed climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the cooperation in the Indo-pacific region.
- During the telephonic conversation, both the leaders also reiterated their firm commitment towards the Indo-US strategic bilateral partnership. This was PM Modi's first interaction with Democrat Joe Biden after he defeated incumbent President Donald Trump in the recent Presidential elections in the United States.
- PM Modi shared the news about the telephonic conversation through Twitter and informed that shared priorities, strategic partnership, and cooperation were part of the conversation between the two leaders.

PM Modi congratulated VP-elect Kamala Harris:

Prime Minister Modi also congratulated Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on her win and noted that her success is a matter of great pride and inspiration for the members of the Indian-American community, who are also a tremendous source of strength for Indo-US relations.

Discussion between PM Modi and US President-elect Joe Biden:

- During the conversation, the two leaders agreed to work closely for advancing India-US Comprehensive Strategic Partnership that is built on common interests and shared values.
- PM Modi and Biden also discussed their priorities that include, promoting access to affordable vaccines, containing the COVID-19 pandemic, cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, and tackling climate change.
- The latest interaction between the leaders came on a day the External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar showed confidence that the relations between the US and India will expand further

under Joe Biden's administration. The Minister also noted that US President-elect was part of the time period when bilateral relations between the two powerful democratic nations underwent a radical transformation.

2.2 Japan, Australia sign landmark defence deal to counter China's influence in South China Sea



Japan and Australia signed a landmark defence deal on November 17, 2020 in an attempt to counter China's growing influence in the South China and Indo Pacific region. The pact was signed during a high-level meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and his visiting Australian counterpart, Scott Morrison.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga tweeted saying that he was pleased that the Japan-Australia Facilitation Agreement, which they had been negotiating to take the security and defense cooperation of both countries to a new level, has reached a general agreement. He further promised to work closely with the Australian Prime Minister to realize a **"free and open Indo-Pacific."**

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The Australian Prime Minister also informed through a statement that both the nations have reached an in-principle agreement on a landmark defence deal, which will further deepen the strategic and security relationship between the two countries.

Key Highlights

- The Japan- Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) comes weeks after foreign ministers of the Quad alliance met in Tokyo. Besides Australia and Japan, the QUAD group includes the United States and India as well.
- The defence agreement has taken six years to negotiate and would need to be ratified by lawmakers of both countries.
- The agreement has opened up a new chapter of advanced defence cooperation between Japan and Australia.

- Japan has struck only one such agreement in the past with another country and that was with the United States 60 years ago.

Significance

The Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) will form a strong base to help both the nations to respond to an increasingly challenging security environment in the region amid uncertain strategic circumstances. The statement issued after the signing of the agreement also expressed serious concern about the situation in the South China Sea without mentioning Beijing and reiterated the strong opposition of Japan and Australia to any coercive or unilateral attempts to change the status quo and thereby increase tensions in the region.

2.3 PM Modi attends 12th BRICS Summit virtually, called out countries supporting terrorism to be held accountable



Prime Minister Modi attended the 12th edition of the BRICS Summit hosted by Russia virtually on November 17, 2020. The summit was held in the backdrop of the United Nation's 75th anniversary and amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

PM Modi attended the summit in a virtual mode at the invitation of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. According to External Affairs Ministry, India will be taking over the BRICS Chairmanship, which will also be the third BRICS presidency for the country, after 2012 and 2016 and it will host the 13th BRICS Summit in 2021. The leaders who participated in the summit also discussed the cooperation prospects as well as the International agenda.

Countries supporting terrorists must be accountable: PM Modi at BRICS Summit

Prime Minister Modi while speaking at the 12th BRICS Summit via video conference stated that terrorism is the biggest problem that the world is facing today. He added that globally we need to ensure that the countries that support the terrorists must be held accountable and that this problem is tackled in an organized manner.

During his address, he highlighted that in 2021, BRICS will be completing 15 years. PM added that 'sherpas' can make a report evaluating various decisions taken by the summit in the past years.

Reform process under Atmanirbhar Bharat Campaign:

Prime Minister Modi while addressing the 12th BRICS Summit also underlined the comprehensive reform process that has taken place under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Campaign. He added that the campaign has been based on a belief that a self-reliant India in a post-COVID-19 world can be a force multiplier to the global economy.

While noting the achievements of Atmanirbhar Bharat, Prime Minister informed that an example of self-reliance can be seen during COVID-19 when India was able to deliver essential medicines to more than 150 countries globally because of the capability of the Indian Pharma Industry. He assured that India's vaccine production and delivery capacity will work in the interest of humanity like this.

Discussions held during 12th BRICS Summit:

- During the summit, the leaders discussed intra-BRICS cooperation as well as key issues in the global context.
- The Summit will also include the discussion on the reform of the multilateral system, cooperation in counter-terrorism, measures of mitigating the impact of an ongoing pandemic, health, trade, energy, and people to people exchanges.
- According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the leaders of Brazil, Russia, South Africa, India, and China will be discussing the current state of cooperation within the body as well as its prospects.
- They will be exchanging opinions on the pressing issues on the international and regional agenda.
- The leaders will also recap the results of the BRICS Presidency under Russia in 2020 and will be coordinating positions in the light of the G20 Summit which is scheduled for November 21-22, 2020.

India and China during the 12th BRICS Summit:

The 12th BRICS Summit which was held on November 17 attracted special attention as Prime Minister Modi faced the President of China Xi Jinping amid the ongoing border standoff between the two nations. The leaders faced each other for the second time after the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit.

However, bilateral- talks were held between the two nations on the pressing issues. So far, the leaders from India and China had always attended the BRICS meeting in the last few years.

2.4 Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party wins Myanmar General Elections 2020

Myanmar leader **Aung San Suu Kyi's** ruling party- **National League for Democracy (NLD)** has won a clear majority in the Myanmar General Elections 2020. The party was officially declared the winner by the Union Election Commission (UEC) of Myanmar on November 15, 2020.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) secured a total of 396 seats, which is higher than its 2015 tally of 390 seats. The party won 258 seats in Myanmar's lower house Pyithu Hluttaw and 138 seats in the upper house- Amyotha Hluttaw. The party had required only 322 seats to win a majority in the general elections.

On the other hand, the main opposition party - the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) managed to win only 33 seats, 26 in the lower house and 7 in the upper house of the Parliament. The party's seat count fell further this year, as in the 2015 elections, it had won 41 seats. This is the second consecutive win for Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi's party National League for Democracy since 2015. When Suu Kyi's party had crossed the majority mark by securing 322 seats, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had tweeted congratulating Aung San Suu Kyi for her victory in the elections. PM Modi had highlighted how the successful conduct of polls in Myanmar was another step in the nation's ongoing democratic transition.

Key Details

- The first session of the newly elected Myanmar parliament is supposed to be held within 90 days of the formal declaration of result.
- During the session, the members of both houses of the parliament along with military nominated members will elect the President of the country.
- **Under** Myanmar's constitution, 25 percent seats in the parliament are reserved for military candidates, who are nominated by the army.
- This time, the ruling NLD party has appealed to 48 ethnic parties to come together with it to form a unity government. This offer was not made when the party had last won the election in 2015.

Aung San Suu Kyi's first term & Myanmar Politics

- Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi's first term as the first State Counsellor of Myanmar was turbulent, marked by the brutal crackdown of the ethnic Rohingyas in Rakhine state in 2017, for which she received global criticism.
- The crackdown led hundreds and thousands of Rohingyas to flee the region and seek refuge in other nations like Bangladesh, which is currently providing shelter to a majority of the Rohingya refugees. The crackdown is now a subject of a genocide investigation.
- This was seen as a huge failure on Suu Kyi's part to make significant headway on the country's myriad ethnic conflicts. Myanmar had been subject to isolation and decay for almost 50 years due to its strict military rule.

- In fact, Suu Kyi herself spent years under house arrest before the power of the military generals began to loosen up and the first general elections were held in 2011, which were boycotted by Suu Kyi's party.
- Her party contested and won a landslide victory in the 2015 Myanmar Elections, winning almost 86 percent of the seats.
- However, Suu Kyi was prohibited from becoming the President because her late husband and children are foreign citizens. She then assumed the newly created role of State Counsellor, which is similar to the post of Prime Minister.
- Despite winning a landslide victory, her government was required to govern with military involvement, especially in areas of security and defence.

Significance

The **Myanmar Election 2020 results** show that Aung San Suu Kyi's government retained its popularity at home even as the Rohingya crisis damaged its international reputation. However, Rohingya were excluded from the poll and the voting was cancelled in some conflict areas, which affected almost 1.5 million people.

2.5 Bangladesh, United States jointly launch naval exercise 'CARAT Bangladesh 2020'



The Navies of the United States and Bangladesh have jointly launched on November 4, 2020, the 'Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Bangladesh 2020' in order to broaden relationships and expand maritime awareness between the two nations.

As per the press release by the US Embassy in Dhaka, the exercise will demonstrate the United States continuing commitment to working with the Bangladesh military in order to address the shared maritime security concerns. It will also strengthen partnerships to ensure an open and free Indo-pacific region.

Launch of CARAT Bangladesh 2020:

While speaking during the inaugural program held virtually, Rear Admiral Fred Kacher, Commander of Expeditionary Strike Group stated that the US navy will continue to learn from and operate with Bangladesh Navy.

He added that the US Navy stands together with Bangladesh in its commitment to open and free maritime commons.

While presiding over the opening ceremony, Commander, Navy Fleet Rear Admiral of Bangladesh, M. Mahbub-Ul Islam underlined that CARAT has become a unique forum to work with the Navy of the United States. He added that partnership and mutual cooperation is essential for making the maritime domain safe.

About CARAT Bangladesh 2020:

- The CARAT exercise involves a variety of professional exchanges as well as people to people interactions.
- The event will take place virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- The sea phase of the CARAT naval exercise will take place in the Bay of Bengal with ships from both Bangladesh and the United States.
- The events of CARAT 2020 have been designed to enhance interoperability between the navies of Bangladesh and the US.
- Both the nations will also be working through the coordinated deployment of surface ships in order to include tactical maneuvers among other activities.

2.6 India asks Pakistan to vacate from Gilgit Baltistan

- India asks Pakistan to immediately vacate from the Indian territory of Gilgit Baltistan.
- Pakistan government announced that it has decided to grant the “provisional-provincial status” to Gilgit-Baltistan, a part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, illegally occupied by Pakistan in 1947.
- The Government of India firmly rejects the attempt by Pakistan to bring material changes to a part of Indian Territory, under its illegal and forcible occupation.

- Instead of seeking to alter the status of these Indian territories, Indian government calls upon Pakistan to immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation.
- Indian government reiterated that the UTs of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including “Gilgit-Baltistan”, are an integral part of India by virtue of the legal, complete and irrevocable accession of Jammu and Kashmir to the Union of India in 1947.
- India voiced that the Pakistan government has “no locus stand on territories illegally and forcibly occupied” by it.
- Pakistan's move comes after India ended the special status granted to J&K under Article 370 and bifurcated it into two Union Territories.
- Over the last year, Pakistan has knocked on many doors including the United Nations and several international groupings, but its complaints have not been heard. Barring China, most nations have agreed that it is an internal matter of India.
- Saudi Arabia, had removed Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan from the Pakistan map on its new banknote after India asked it to take urgent corrective steps.

2.7 International Day to end impunity for Crimes against Journalists

- The United Nations marks the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists on November 2.
- This year, the day is celebrated under the theme: Protect Journalists, Protect the Truth.
- The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2 November as the ‘International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists’ in General Assembly.
- The Resolution urged Member States to implement definite measures countering the present culture of impunity.
- The date was chosen in commemoration of the assassination of two French journalists in Mali on 2 November 2013.
- This landmark resolution condemns all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers.
- It also urges Member States to do their utmost to prevent violence against journalists and media workers, to ensure accountability, bring to justice perpetrators of crimes against journalists and media workers, and ensure that victims have access to appropriate remedies.
- It further calls upon States to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference.

2.8 Bangladesh, US launch joint Naval exercise ‘CARAT Bangladesh 2020’

- The Bangladesh and US navies launched the ‘Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Bangladesh 2020’ to expand relationships and broaden maritime awareness between the two countries.

- CARAT 2020 underscores the shared vision of US and Bangladesh for a free, open, inclusive, peaceful and secure Indo-Pacific region.
- The exercise demonstrates U.S.'s continuing commitment to work with the Bangladesh military to address shared maritime security concerns in the region and strengthen partnership to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region.
- US navy stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Bangladesh in its commitment to a free and open maritime common.
- The CARAT exercises involve people to people interactions and a variety of professional exchanges.
- The sea-phase of the exercise will take place in the Bay of Bengal with ships from both countries.
- The events are designed to enhance interoperability between the two navies. U.S.
- U.S. and Bangladesh will work through coordinated deployment of surface ships, to include tactical maneuvers among other activities.

2.9 Doing Business in India Report, 2020 released by UKIBC



- UK Minister for Investment has released UK India Business Council's 'Doing Business in India Report 2020' during his virtual visit to India.
- This report comes at a time where the UK and India have committed to an Enhanced Trade Partnership.
- The report is the UKIBC's sixth of an annual series dating back to 2015.
- This year's report is based on an in-depth survey of 106 UK organisations operating in India spanning manufacturing, services, and higher education sectors.
- India's score of doing business has improved from 2.74 in 2019 to 22.9 in 2020.
- According to the report, for the third consecutive Year Maharashtra emerged as the state with maximum incremental improvement. It was followed by Karnataka, Delhi, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.
- UK businesses believe that India's business environment is improving, and they see an opportunity for greater UK-India collaboration notwithstanding Brexit.

- India's Atmanirbhar Bharat mission is seen by the UK firms as an opportunity to do more business in India, leveraging UK's innovation for manufacturing in India.
- The report says that 66% of the surveyed organisations believed that the ease of doing business in India is increasing.
- According to the report this change is mainly due to the progressive reforms and improvements in the business environment of India. The changes are predominantly found in availability of support, skilled labour, service providers and supply chain.
- India has surely made significant progress on ease of doing business, but regulatory uncertainty remains a significant challenge.
- Foreign exchange regulations, Goods and Services Tax (GST) process issues, high import tariffs, lack of alignment with international standards remain the top four regulatory irritants.

2.10 8th India-Mexico Joint Commission Meeting

- India and Mexico on October 29, 2020, held their 8th Joint Commission Meeting virtually and reviewed the bilateral cooperation in several areas including agriculture, trade, investment, education, and health.
- The two sides discussed a number of issues and agreed to add new momentum to the relations in the fields of Trade and Commerce, Agriculture, Health, Space, Science & Technology, Energy, Culture & Education amongst others.
- They also underscored the importance of the Joint Commission mechanism in deepening political dialogue, reviewing bilateral and multilateral co-operation.
- The two sides agreed to utilize their forthcoming term in the UN Security Council towards strengthening multilateralism, and to make it more representative and effective.
- The two sides exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest, especially in the context of the post Covid economic recovery plans.
- Both sides appreciated the progress made in the bilateral trade and commercial relations between India and Mexico in recent years.
- India and Mexico will further work on strengthening their 'Privileged Partnership'.
- During the discussion, the countries signed two Memorandum of Understandings. They were:
 - Computer Software and Telecommunications, Electronics and Information Technologies.
 - Foreign Trade, Investment and Technology.

2.11 Cabinet Approves MoC between India, Japan on Cooperation in Field of ICTs

- The Union Cabinet approved the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) that was signed between India and Japan on Cooperation in the field of Information and Communication Technologies on October 29, 2020.

- The Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) is expected to contribute to strengthening bilateral cooperation and mutual understanding in the field of communications
- MoC will serve as a strategic initiative for India as Japan is an important partner with “Special Strategic and Global Partnership” status.
- The MoC will further enhance opportunities for India to get into the global standardization process.
- The MoC will help in cooperation between both countries in various fields like 5G network, telecom security, submarine cable, standard certification of communication equipment, utilization of latest wireless technologies and ICTs
- ICTs capacity building, public protection and disaster relief, artificial intelligence (AI)/block chain, spectrum chain, spectrum management, cooperation on multilateral platforms, etc.

2.12 Memorandum of Understanding between India and Israel

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Israel on cooperation in the field of Health and Medicine.

The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation:

- Exchange and training of medical doctors and other health professionals;
- Assistance in development of human resources and setting up of health care facilities;
- Exchange of information regarding regulation of pharmaceutical, medical devices and cosmetics;
- Sharing expertise for vulnerability assessment for health of citizens against climate risk and public health actions targeted towards mitigation and adaptation;
- Sharing of expertise for facilitating climate resilient infrastructure as well as providing support for development of 'Green Healthcare' (climate resilient hospitals);
- Promote mutual research in various relevant areas; and
- Any other area of cooperation as may be mutually decided upon.
- Each Party shall encourage the participation of the representatives of their countries in round tables, seminars, symposia, workshops and conferences on issues of cooperation, organized by the other Party's relevant bodies.

3. INDIAN ECONOMY

3.1 GST collection hits 8-month high in October 2020



- Union Ministry of Finance informed recently that around Rs 1, 05, 155 crore worth GST revenue was collected in October 2020, which is an 8-month high figure.
- Out of the total GST revenue collection, CGST accounted for Rs 19, 193 crore, SGST was Rs 25, 411 crore, IGST was Rs 52, 540 crore including Rs 23, 375 crore collected on import of goods and Cess amounted to Rs 8, 011 crore including Rs 932 crore collected on import of goods.
- The total number of GSTR-3B Returns filed for October month upto November 1, 2020 was 80 lakh.

Key Highlights

- The government settled Rs 25, 091 crore to CGST and Rs 19, 427 crore to SGST from IGST as a part of regular settlement.
- The total revenue earned by the centre and state governments in October 2020 after regular settlement amounted to Rs 44, 285 crore for CGST and Rs 44, 839 crore for SGST.
- The GST revenues collected in October this year are almost 10 percent higher than the GST revenues earned in October 2019. The GST revenues collected in October 2019 amounted to Rs 95,379 crore.
- This is the first time in the current financial year and the first time after February 2020 that the gross GST revenue collection crossed Rs 1 lakh crore mark.
- During October 2020, the revenues received from the import of goods was 9 percent higher and the revenues from domestic transaction including import of services was 11 percent higher than the revenues from these sources during October 2019.
- The GST revenue growth in comparison to the months of July, August and September 2020 was also at an all-time high amid the COVID-19 pandemic. While July recorded a minus 14 percent

GST revenue growth, August recorded minus 8 percent and September recorded 5 percent growth.

What does this indicate?

- The GST revenue growth in October in comparison to previous months shows a positive growth trajectory. This clearly indicates that the Indian economy is well on its road to recovery after the national lockdown imposed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic forced the economy to come to a standstill in the first quarter of the new fiscal year.
- The gradual opening of the economy by the government while battling the COVID-19 pandemic side-by-side has shown a positive growth trajectory. The reopening guidelines issued by the Union Home Ministry in September had allowed the opening of almost all activities outside the containment zones. The Ministry further allowed the reopening of cinema halls and theatres outside containment zones in its October reopening guidelines.

3.2 Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman expected to unveil another stimulus soon

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will unveil another stimulus soon to boost India's economy, informed Economic Affairs Secretary Tarun Bajaj on November 3, 2020. Bajaj stated that the Finance Ministry is currently looking into suggestions and requests received from various sectors of the economy.
- He said that the Ministry has received a lot of requests and comments from various sectors and we are looking into it. He assured that another stimulus will be announced soon.
- The finance minister had announced a slew of measures last month to spur demand and ramp-up capital expenditure. This was the third stimulus package, which was announced since the COVID-19 outbreak.

Finance Ministry's stimulus packages since COVID-19 pandemic

- 1. The Union government had announced Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) worth Rs 1.70 lakh crore in March 2020 to protect the vulnerable sections from the impact of COVID-19 crisis.
- 2. The Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package worth Rs 20.97 lakh crore was announced in May, which was largely focussed on supply-side measures and long-term reforms.
- After the announcement of various measures to stimulate demand by front-loading or advancing some of the expenditure last month, the finance minister had said that the option for another stimulus package had not been closed.

Rising Food Prices

- Economic Affairs Secretary Tarun Bajaj termed the rise in food prices as a temporary phenomenon. He said that the prices should be back to normal soon after the arrival of new crops and government measures for improving the supply of essential commodities.
- Currently, the prices of basic vegetables like onion, potato and tomato have shot up to almost Rs 100 per kg, much higher than the average price.
- The Economic Affairs Secretary in his press briefing stated that India continues to see growth in the economy for the past few months since the unlock began and there would be further improvement in the coming months.
- He further stated that the economy should hopefully be back on rails. He added saying that it was moving much faster than what had been anticipated by a lot of experts and economists.

What are the projections for Indian economy

- The International Monetary Fund had last month projected the Indian economy to contract by a massive 10.3 percent this year. However, it had also projected a rebound to 8.8 percent in 2021. India had witnessed a growth rate of 4.2 percent in the last financial year.
- The Finance Minister had also said last week that there were visible signs of revival in the economy and that the GDP growth may be in the negative zone or near zero in the current fiscal.

3.3 Six startups under the leadership of women have won the COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge

- Six startups under the leadership of women have won the COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge. It was organized by MyGov in collaboration with UN Women and was launched in April 2020.
- COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge was hosted on the platform of MyGov. It called for the applications from the startups that are led by women as well as those startups who provide solutions to issues faced by a large number of women.
- COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge was implemented in two stages- Proof of Concept Stage and Ideation Stage. It also received an overwhelming response with a total of 1265 entries from all over the nation.

Objective of COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge:

- COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge was organized by MyGov in collaboration with UN women to involve and encourage women-led startups to come up with innovative ideas and solutions that will be able to help in the fight against COVID-19 or assist in solving problems that impact a large number of women.

Highlights

- After the thorough screening of the applications received, 25 startups were shortlisted for the presentations to the jury which included officials from Atal Innovation Mission, UN Women India, and MyGov.

- All the 25 shortlisted startups presented their solutions and ideas to the jury who then evaluated the solutions on the parameters such as usability, innovation, relevance, and its impact on society.
- After the thorough review, 11 finalists were chosen for the next stage. The selected finalists were then awarded a prize amount of Rs. 75,000 each for further developing their ideas.
- After giving time to selected 11 startups for developing their solutions, the final presentations were made again on October 27, 2020.
- After the intense discussion, the jury selected the top 3 entries as winners and recognized additional 3 entries as 'Promising Solutions' in view of the high- quality solutions and ideas presented by them.
- Apart from rewarding Rs. 5 lakhs to the top 3 winners, UN women also agreed to reward Rs. 2 lakhs each to the 3 startups chosen for 'Promising Solutions'.

Top 3 winners of COVID-19 Shri Shakti Challenge

- **P Gayatri Hela**- She is a founder of Resada Life Sciences Private Ltd in Bengaluru. It organizes and develops agricultural and home-based products with the use of plant extracts instead of synthetic chemicals.
- **Romita Ghosh**- She is a cancer survivor and is the founder of iHealHealthTech Private Ltd. in Shimla. It is a healthcare startup that has been at the forefront of the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic and has been providing PPE to the hospitals.
- **Dr. Anjana Ramkumar and Dr. Anushka Ashokan**- They are the product manager and co-founder of Thanmatra Innovations Pvt. Ltd. in Kerala. They have come up with an innovative solution of anti-microbial solution that can be sprayed into dupattas or handkerchiefs for making them safe so that they can be used as face masks.

3 startups identified as 'Promising Solutions'

- **Vasanthi Palanivel**- She is a CEO and co-founder of SeragenBioTherapeutics Pvt Ltd. in Bengaluru. Palanivel as a scientist and researcher studied the impacts and symptoms of the virus and identified that the lungs were one of the worst infected organs in COVID-19. She also developed a plasma solution for treating respiratory distress due to COVID.
- **Shivi Kapil**- She is a co-founder of Empathy Design Labs, Bengaluru. The labs focus on healthcare and took the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity for designing solutions for pregnant women who could not go to the hospitals. Shivi Kapil designed Kriya which is a wearable device for the daily monitoring of pregnancy. It provides alerts and suggestions for expecting parents for timely action.

• **Jaya and Ankita Parashar (Mother and daughter)**- They are the founder and co-founder of STREAM Minds. It is an ed-tech company that works on promoting technology, science, mathematics, reading/writing, and arts education among children all over India. They have also designed 'Dobot', a fully automated robot. It acts as an in-house delivery assistant for making hospitals and healthcare clinics safe from the risks of COVID-19.

3.4 PM Narendra Modi chairs Global Investor Roundtable Conference

- India bravely fought the global pandemic through this year and the world saw India's true strengths and its national character, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi while speaking at the virtual Global Investor Roundtable.
- PM Modi highlighted that India showed remarkable resilience in this pandemic, be it fighting the virus or ensuring economic stability and the resilience was driven by the strength of our systems, support of the people and stability of the government's policies.
- He continued by saying that India successfully brought out traits that Indians are known for, which include a sense of responsibility, a spirit of compassion, spark of innovation and national unity.
- The Prime Minister further added that India's quest to become 'Aatmanirbhar' is not just a vision but a well-planned economic strategy. He highlighted that the strategy aims to use capabilities of our businesses & skills of our workers to make India into a global manufacturing powerhouse.

Global Investor Roundtable Conference

- The virtual Global Investor Roundtable Conference is being organised by the Ministry of Finance along with the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund. The conference aims to provide a common platform for dialogue between Indian business leaders, leading global institutional investors and decision-makers from the Indian Government and Financial Market Regulators.
- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is also attending the conference along with Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das and other dignitaries.

Key Highlights

- The Virtual Global Investor Roundtable Conference is expected to witness participation from twenty of the world's largest pension and sovereign wealth funds with total assets under management worth about USD 6 trillion.
- The virtual conference will witness participation from key decision-makers of these investment funds such as the CEOs and CIOs.
- The global investors will be representing key regions across the globe including the United States, Europe, Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore, Korea and the Middle East. Some of them will be interacting with the Indian government for the first time.

- The conference will also see participation from several top Indian Business Leaders.
- The virtual roundtable will primarily focus on discussions around India's structural reforms, economic and investment outlook and the centre's vision to achieve a USD 5 trillion economy.

Significance

- The virtual Global Investor Roundtable Conference will provide an opportunity to the leading global investors and Indian business leaders to engage and deliberate with senior policymakers on how to further accelerate the growth of international investments in India. The foreign investments in India during the current fiscal have been the highest -ever for the first five months of a financial year.
- The roundtable conference will provide an opportunity to all the stakeholders to further solidify existing partnerships and foster engagement with global institutional investors looking to increase their Indian investments.

3.5 SEBI doubles overseas investment limit for individual mutual fund to \$600 Million

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has doubled the overseas investment limit for individual mutual funds from \$300 million to \$600 Million.
- SEBI announced the same in a circular issued on November 5, 2020, which stated that each fund house can make a maximum of \$600 million in overseas investments within the overall industry limit of \$7 billion.
- Rajeev Thakkar, Chief Investment Officer (CIO) at PPFAS Mutual Fund stated that if the limits had not been increased, some of the larger funds could have hit the upper limit in the coming days.

Key Highlights

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has laid down guidelines on how schemes will be allowed to use the new limits.
- In the case of existing schemes, 20 percent of the last three months' average assets held in overseas investments (ETFs or equities) will be allowed, subject to limits.
- On new fund offers (NFOs), a scheme would need to utilise the available limit within six months from the closure of the NFO otherwise the limits will become available for unutilised industry-wide limits.
- Besides this, SEBI has also reserved \$50 million for each fund house, regardless of whether it has an international scheme offering or not.
- The limits for mutual funds were last changed 12 years back when the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had increased the overall industry limit to \$7 billion from then \$5 billion.

Significance

- There has been a major pick-up in the number of new schemes offered by mutual fund houses, which give investors ample exposure to international equities and investors have shown interest for such funds, as they give geographical diversification to their investment portfolio.

3.6 Production Linked Incentive: List of Sectors included under it & Other Details

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information and Technology (MeitY) notified the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** on April 1, 2020 for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing with an aim to boost domestic manufacturing of mobile phones in India. With the launch of this PLI Scheme, the government looked forward to attract large investments in manufacturing mobile phones including the Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) units. As expected, the Scheme provided impetus to India's electronics sector at the global level. The companies that were enrolled under the scheme were offered with a production linked incentive.
- After witnessing the huge success of the PLI Scheme in terms of number of applications received from the domestic manufacturers and the unprecedented growth in electronics manufacturing, the government later added medical devices, Key Starting Materials (KSMs)/ Drug Intermediates and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) under the scheme to boost manufacturing of medicinal drugs and devices in India.
- Now, the Central Government looks forward to further expand the ambit of the PLI Scheme with the inclusion of about ten more sectors under it, apart from mobile phones, pharmaceutical ingredients and medical devices. Know the important details of the scheme below:

What is Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme?

- The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme is a Central Government scheme that was notified in April 2020 for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing to provide financial incentives for domestic manufacturing of goods and also to attract large investments.
- The scheme was initially launched for domestic manufacturing of Mobile Phones and Specified Electronic Components and was later rolled out for pharmaceutical ingredients and medical devices. The PLI Scheme resonates with the ambitious AatmaNirbhar Bharat campaign and Make in India initiative to make India a self-reliant nation.

What incentive is offered to companies under the PLI Scheme?

- The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme provides 4% to 6% incentive on incremental sales (over base year, 2019-20) to eligible companies for manufacturing goods for 5 years period, subsequent to the base year.
- Companies that are registered in India and are involved in the manufacturing of goods covered under the Target Segments of the scheme can apply under the Scheme. The applicant can also operate existing or new manufacturing unit at one or more locations in the country.

The Sectors included under the PLI Scheme

- Have a look at the list of sectors that are currently included under the scheme:

Sector	Target Segments
Mobile Phones Manufacturing	Mobile Phones Specified Electronic Components: SMT components, transistors, diodes, thyristors, resistors, capacitors, Printed Circuit Boards (PCB), PCB laminates, prepregs, photopolymer films, PCB printing inks, Sensors, transducers, actuators, crystals, System in Package (SIP), Micro / Nano-electronic components, Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) units
Manufacturing of Bulk Drugs	Pharmaceutical Ingredients (Drugs) Fermentation based KSMs/Drug Intermediates Fermentation based niche KSMs / Drug Intermediates / APIs Key Chemical Synthesis based KSMs/Drug Intermediates Other Chemical Synthesis based KSMs/Drug Intermediates/APIs

3.7 Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana: Government launches new employment scheme

- The Government has launched a new employment scheme **Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana** to incentivise the creation of new employment opportunities during the COVID-19 recovery phase.
- The scheme was launched as a part of a fresh stimulus worth Rs 2.65 lakh crore announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on November 12, 2020 to boost the COVID-hit Indian economy.
- The Finance Minister had announced 12 new measures under **Atmanirbhar Bharat 3.0** during her press conference. She had announced the launch of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana' alongside other key announcements to revive employment opportunities in India.

What is Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana?

- The Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana aims to benefit any new employee joining employment in EPFO registered establishments on monthly wages less than Rs 15,000 and those who left their jobs between March 1 to September 30 and are employed from October 1. It will also benefit establishments registered with EPFO subject to certain conditions.

Key Beneficiaries of Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana

- **1.** New employee employed in EPFO registered establishments on monthly wages less than Rs 15000.
- **2.** EPF members drawing monthly salary below Rs 15000 who left employment during COVID pandemic between March 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020 and are employed on or after October 1, 2020.

Eligibility for establishments

- The establishments registered with EPFO will benefit from the scheme if they add new employees compares to the reference base of employees as in September 2020 as under:
 - **1.** Minimum two new employees if reference base is 50 employees or less.
 - **2.** Minimum five new employees if reference base is more than 50 employees
- The establishments registering with EPFO after launch of the scheme to get subsidy for all new employees.
- **Scheme's validity:** The Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana will be operational till June 30, 2021

Other Details

- The organisations up to 1000 employees will receive employee's contribution, 12 percent of wages and employers contributions, 12 percent of wages, totaling 24 percent of wages, for two years.
- The employers with over 1,000 employees will get employees' EPF contribution of 12 percent from the central government.
- Besides this, subsidy support will be credited in Aadhar seeded EPFO account (UAN) of an eligible new employee.
- All EPFO registered organisations, if they hire new employees who had lost jobs between March 1 and September 30, these new employees will get benefits.

3.8 Government expands credit guarantee scheme to include 26 stressed sectors

- The Government has decided to expand the scope of emergency credit guarantees to include 26 sectors that are stressed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This was announced during Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's press conference on November 12, 2020 when she had announced few new measures as a part of the new stimulus package worth Rs 2.65 lakh crore to boost the recovery of the Indian economy.

- Under the expansion of the credit guarantee scheme, the entities will get additional credit up to 20 percent of outstanding credit. The repayment can be done in five years, which includes 1-year moratorium and 4 years of repayment.

Beneficiaries of the Scheme

- The emergency credit line guarantee scheme 2.0 has been launched for 26 stressed sectors including construction, real estate, power and iron and steel manufacturing.

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme 2.0: Key Highlights

- The scheme will provide support to entities in the healthcare sector and 26 stressed sectors identified by the KV Kamath committee, which has been appointed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- It will also enable companies with outstanding credit up to Rs 50 crore previously covered under the existing scheme.
- The scheme does not have any upper ceiling on the annual turnover of the entities.
- The companies will get an additional credit up to 20 percent of outstanding as of February 29, 2020.
- Companies with dues past 30 days as of February 29, 2020 can avail credit from banks.
- The repayment under the scheme can be done in five years, including a one-year moratorium and 4 years of repayment period.
- The scheme's validity will remain till March 31, 2021.

Significance

The scheme aims to provide much-needed relief to the stressed sectors by helping them sustain employment and meet all their liabilities. The scheme will also benefit the MSME sector that provides goods and services to the eligible entities.

Background

- The Finance Ministry announced on November 12, 2020 that it has decided to extend the existing Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme for small businesses, business enterprises, individual loans for business purposes till March 31, 2021.

3.9 MSP for Crops: What is MSP & How is MSP calculated? - Know 1.5-times formula & List of crops under MSP 2020-21

- **MSP for Crops:** The farmers across India are protesting against the three agricultural laws, namely, Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020, Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and Farmers' Produce Trade Act and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020. Though the central government

has held a few rounds of talk with the farmer unions, the issue remains unresolved as of now. The main reason behind the farmers' protest is the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops.

- The farmers fear that these new farm laws will do away with the MSP for crops. The MSP is the minimum price that farmers get for their crops, above the production cost. In 2018-19, the Union Budget announced that the MSP for crops will now be kept at 1.5 times the production cost with an aim to double farmer incomes by 2022. Accordingly, the Government has increased the MSPs for marketing season 2020-21 for Kharif, Rabi and other commercial crops.
- Here we have shared what is MSP, how is MSP calculated and the 1.5 times formula to calculate the increased MSP. Also, look at the list of crops put under the MSP for marketing season 2020-21.

What is MSP?

- The Minimum Support Price (MSP) is the price fixed by government of the crops produced by farmers. It is the price which government pays to procure the crops from farmers. The MSP is a guarantee price that safeguards farmers with a minimum profit for their harvest, in case the open market keeps lesser price for their crops.

Who fixes the Minimum Support Price (MSP)?

- The Central Government fixes the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of the 23 agricultural crops based on the recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), which is also responsible for fixing the FRP (Fair and Remunerative Price) of sugarcane.
- The CACP fixes the MSP after taking into consideration the domestic and international prices of crops, intercrop price parity, and the demand-supply situation.

How is MSP Calculated?

- The Swaminathan Committee prescribed three variables to determine the production cost. These three variables are:
 - **A2:** These are the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by farmers including loans for fertilisers, fuel, machinery, irrigation, etc. and cost of leasing land.
 - **A2+FL:** This is the estimated value of the unpaid labour for harvesting crops such as contribution of family members and others. It is in addition to paid-out cost.
 - **C2:** Comprehensive Cost (C2) is the actual cost of production as it takes into account for rent and interest foregone on the land and machinery owned by farmers, in addition to the A2+FL rate.
- As per the Committee, the ideal formula to calculate the MSP would be:
- **MSP = C2+ 50% of C2**

What is 1.5 times formula to calculate the increased MSP?

- The Union Budget 2018-19 called for increasing the MSP at 1.5 times the production cost. However, the Budget speech did not mention the formula to calculate the 1.5 times MSP formula.
- However, the 'Price Policy for Kharif Crops: The Marketing Season 2018-19' of the CACP stated the given 1.5 times formula to calculate the MSP:

1.5 times MSP Formula = 1.5 times the A2+FL costs

- However, farmers demand that the 1.5-times MSP formula should be applied on the C2 costs. Considering this, the Government in March 2020 stated that the Production Cost is one of the main factors to determine the MSP and the CACP considers all the costs in comprehensive manner.
- The CACP considers both C2 and A2+FL costs to determine the MSP. CACP considers the A2+FL formula for return and C2 formula as a benchmark reference costs to make sure that the MSP covers the production cost.

List of Crops under MSP for 2020-21

- Have a look at the list of Kharif Crops under MSP for marketing season 2020-21:

Kharif Crops	MSP for 2020-21
Paddy (Common)	1,868
Paddy (Grade A)^	1,888
Jowar (Hybrid)	2,620
Jowar (Maldandi)^	2,640
Bajra	2,150
Ragi	3,295
Maize	1,850
Tur (Arhar)	6,000
Moong	7,196
Urad	6,000
Groundnut	5,275
Sunflower Seed	5,885
Soybean (yellow)	3,880

Sesamum	6,855
Nigerseed	6,695
Cotton (Medium Staple)	5,515
Cotton (Long Staple)^	5,825

Why Farmers fear that Farm Laws will do away with the MSP?

- Farmers fear that the three farm bills passed by the central government will do away with the MSP as these bills mention just a little or nothing about the MSP. Though the government has announced verbally that the MSP will stay, farmers find it hard to trust the same.

3.10 United States second biggest FDI source for India during first half of FY 2020-2021

- As per the data made available by the commerce and industry ministry, the United States has emerged as the second-biggest source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for India during April-September 2020. It replaced Mauritius during the first half of the Financial Year 2020.
- The data showed by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, India had attracted FDI worth USD 7.12 billion from the United States and USD 2 billion from Mauritius, which slipped to 4th position during April-September 2020.
- Earlier during the same period in 2019-20, Mauritius was the second-biggest source of FDI and the US was the fourth biggest investor in India. Singapore with an investment of USD 8.30 billion in India retains its position on top in April-September 2020.

Increase of foreign inflow in India:

- In India, the foreign inflow has grown by 15% to USD 30 billion in the first half of the financial year 2020-2021. In August 2020, India has attracted USD 17.5 billion worth of foreign investments. The data reflects the cordial economic ties of India with countries even with the pandemic's effect on the world economy.
- The increasing Foreign Direct Investment from the United States reflects the further strengthening of economic ties between the two nations. The United States was also the top trading partner of India in Financial Year 2019-20.
- The foreign inflow clearly indicates that technology companies in the US are buying stakes in Indian companies which is showing the increase in FDI numbers.
- Foreign inflow in India from other countries:

Countries	Foreign inflow in India
Cayman Islands	USD 2.1 billion

Netherlands	USD 1.5 billion
UK	USD 1.35 billion
France	USD 1.13 billion
Japan	USD 653 million
Germany	USD 202 million
Cyprus	USD 48 million

Mauritius maintains its significance as an investor in India:

- Despite the fact that the foreign inflows from Mauritius have been coming down, it still accounts for 29% of the total inflows that have been received during April 2000 and September 2020. In this time period, India has attracted USD 500.12 billion in foreign direct investment.

3.11 India officially enters technical recession, GDP contracts by 7.5 percent in Q2 of FY21



- The Indian economy contracted by 7.5 percent in the second quarter of the fiscal year 2020-21 (July to September), as per government data that was released on November 27, 2020. With this contraction, India officially entered a technical recession for the first time.
- The contraction is a rebound from the earlier quarter of the fiscal year 2020-21. India's economy had contracted by 23.9 percent in the April to June quarter (Q1 FY21), which marked the first contraction in more than 40 years as the COVID-19 pandemic majorly impacted consumer demand and private investments.
- According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the gross value added (GVA) came in at minus 7 percent during the second quarter of FY21.

Key Details

- The GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in Q2 of FY 2020-21 was estimated at Rs 33.14 lakh crore, as against Rs 35.84 lakh crore in Q2 of FY 2019-20. This shows a contraction of 7.5 percent as compared to 4.4 percent growth in the second quarter of the Fiscal Year 2019-20.
- The quarterly GVA at Basic Prices at Constant (2011-12) Prices for the second quarter of FY 2020-21 was estimated at Rs 30.49 lakh crore, as against Rs 32.78 lakh crore in Q2 of 2019-20. This showed a contraction of 7 percent.
- The second quarter of FY 2020-21 saw a -15.6 percent drop in trade, transport, communication and hotels. On the other hand, defence, public administration and other services saw a contraction of -12.2 percent.
- Further, the real estate, financial and professional services sector saw a contraction of 8.1 percent and construction by 8.6 percent.

Sectors that showed a rebound in Q2 FY21

- Some sectors bounced back with the resumption of economic activities, as electricity, water supply, gas and other utility services showed a growth of 4.4 percent.
- Other sectors including agriculture, the fishing sector and forestry also showed 3.4 percent growth and the manufacturing sector showed a marginal growth of 0.6 percent.

Background

- The Indian economy was already slowing before the pandemic struck, growing only 4.2 percent in the last fiscal year, its slowest pace in 11 years.

3.12 UNDP, Invest India launch SDG Investor Map for India

- UNDP and Invest India have jointly launched the SDG Investor Map for India, which has identified 18 Investment Opportunities Areas in six critical SDG enabling sectors, that can help India push its Sustainable Development efforts.
- According to Invest India CEO & MD Deepak Bagla, India occupies a key role in determining the success of the SDGs globally and the 'SDG Investor Map for India' will be an instrumental stride in India's development trajectory.
- Shoko Noda, UNDP India Resident Representative said that the SDG Investor Map comes at a critical time for India, as the financing gap for the SDGs in India has only widened further with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SDG Investor Map: Key highlights

- Among the identified 18 investment opportunities areas (IOAs), 10 are already mature investable areas that have seen strong private equity and venture capital activity.
- The areas have companies that have been successful in unlocking scale and demonstrate profitability.

- The remaining 8 IOAs are emerging opportunities, which have received attention from early-stage investors.
- Besides the IOAs, the map also identified 8 white space that have the potential to grow into IOAs within 5-6 years. The areas have seen considerable investor interest.
- The white spaces would, however, require further policy support and private sector participation to mature into commercially attractive IOAs.
- Almost 50 percent of the shortlisted investment opportunities areas have historical investments that have yielded IRRs over 20 percent.
- Besides this, 84 percent of the areas have investment timeframes ranging from the short term (less than 5 years) to the medium-term (between 5- 15 years).

Significance

The observations from the map present a strong case for investing in the investment opportunities areas and SDG enabling sectors, closing the gap between high-level development targets and the need for commercially viable returns.

Investing in the Sustainable Development Goals will also be crucial for **‘Building Back Better’** from COVID-19 and enhance India’s resilience to future threats.

Benefits

- Investing in opportunities that enhance employment and employability would boost the inclusion of underserved communities and leverage technology that will be of the essence to India, as it combats the challenges of a post-COVID economy.
- Around 83 percent of the identified investment opportunities areas address job creation and industrialization needs, while 70 percent focus on inclusive business models and 50 percent on leveraging digital technologies to deliver commercial returns and impact at scale.

Other Details

- The SDG Investor Map lays out ways to bring together private-sector investment and public sector support for 6 SDG-enabling sectors including Healthcare, Education, Financial Services, Sustainable Environment, Agriculture & Allied Activities and Renewable Energy & Alternatives.
- The ways are found by mapping the overlaps and gaps between public sector priorities and private sector interest.
- These sectors and the IOAs were selected after a detailed analytical process that included extensive consultations with major domestic and international investors, government stakeholders and think-tanks.
- This way, the map’s findings were truly reflective of the market sentiment.

4. ENVIRONMENT

4.1 GREEN INITIATIVE

In the first funding for NTPC Ltd under Japan Bank for International Co-operation (JBIC)'s GREEN or Global Action for Reconciling Economic growth and Environment preservation initiative, India's largest power producer today entered into foreign currency loan agreement with Japanese Government's financial institution for JPY 50 billion (approx. USD 482 million or Rs. 3,582 crore).

Background

JBIC will provide 60% of the facility amount and the balance will be given by commercial banks (viz., Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, the Bank of Yokohama Ltd., the San-In Godo Bank Ltd., the Jyo Bank Ltd. and The Nanto Bank Ltd.), under JBIC guarantee.

Highlights

- The facility is extended under JBIC's outreach for projects, which ensure conservation of the global environment.
- The loan proceeds will be utilized by NTPC Ltd, the PSU under Ministry of Power, for funding its capex for Flue Gas Desulphurization (FGD) & Renewable Energy projects.
- FGD, substantially reduces the SOx emission in the flue gases of thermal power plants and is a critical step towards environmental sustainability.
- The loan agreement was signed by Shri Anil Kumar Gautam, Director (Finance), NTPC and Mr. TANIMOTO Masayuki, Managing Executive Officer, Global Head of Infrastructure & Environment Finance Group, JBIC through video conferencing.

4.2 SARDAR VALLABHAI PATEL ZOOLOGICAL PARK

- The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated Sardar Patel Zoological Park and Geodesic Aviary Dome in Kevadia.
- He dedicated to the nation 17 projects under Integrated Development of Kevadia and laid the foundation Stone for 4 new Projects.

Background

- The projects include Navigation Channel, New Gora Bridge, Garudeshwar Weir, Government Quarters, Bus Bay Terminus, Ekta Nursery, Khalwani Eco Tourism, Tribal Home Stay.
- He flagged-off the Ekta Cruise Service to the Statue of Unity.

Highlights

- The Jungle Safari is in the state of the art zoological park spread over an area of 375 acres at seven different levels ranging from 29 to 180 meters.
- It has more than 1100 Birds & Animals and 5 lakh plants.

- It is the fastest ever built Jungle Safari. The zoological park has two aviaries - one for domestic birds and another for exotic birds.
- It is the world's largest geodesic dome for aviary.
- The aviaries would be enclosed by a petting zone which would provide a unique touch, feel and exhilarating experience of cuddling the animals like Macaw, Cockatoo, Rabbits, Guinea Pig, etc.
- Through the Ekta Cruise Service one can experience the viewing of Statue of Unity through the Ferry Boat Service from Shrestha Bharat Bhavan to Statue of Unity by covering a distance of 6 km.
- The 40 min ride can be covered by a boat which can ferry 200 passengers at a time.
- New Gora Bridge is built especially for the operation of the ferry service.
- Boating Channel is constructed to provide boating services to tourists visiting the Statue of Unity.

4.3 2015 PARIS AGREEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND US

The United States formally exited from the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change which is a global deal to take collective actions for saving the world from disastrous consequences of global warming.

Background

- Though the US under President Donald Trump had announced his decision to withdraw from the Agreement in 2017, the formal withdrawal could technically happen only a day after the US presidential election as per the UN climate body's exit procedures for the deal.
- It made the US the first country to withdraw from the Agreement.

Highlights

- With contributing 14% of total carbon emission, the US is currently the second biggest emitter after China (26%).
- The EU nations collectively contribute to 9% of total emission followed by India at 7%.
- Recently, countries such as China, Japan and South Korea had announced their intentions to raise climate action ambition to reach respective 'net zero targets', aligning themselves with the EU's similar plan.

4.4 PRIVATE SECTOR FIRMS JOIN HANDS WITH GOVERNMENT TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

Some of India's biggest private sector companies pledged to work with the government to tackle climate change and build sustainable economies, thereby helping the country achieve its targets under the Paris Agreement.

Background

- CEOs of companies like Reliance Industries Ltd, Tech Mahindra, Dalmia Cement, Ambuja Cement, Dr Reddy's, Sun Pharma and Adani Transmission etc. held a virtual discussion with Union Environment Minister at the India CEO Forum on Climate Change.
- Following the discussion, they issued a 'Declaration of Private Sector on Climate Change', pledging to take necessary action to help India achieve its targets under the Paris Agreement.

Highlights

- The companies stated they aim to go beyond promotion of renewable energy, enhanced energy and material efficiency, improved processes and technologies, water efficiency processes, planned afforestation, waste management and recycling, etc.
- India is party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- India has ratified the Paris Agreement. India submitted its ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in 2015 under the Paris Agreement for the post-2020 period with three quantitative goals.

Major Goals

- The reduction in emissions' intensity of GDP by 33-35 per cent by 2030 from the 2005 level.
- To achieving about 40 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030, and
- To creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

4.5 NATIONAL WATER AWARDS

- Second National Water Awards to be conferred on 11th and 12th November to commend efforts of those working in the field of water resources conservation and management.
- The awards are given to motivate the individuals/organizations who are doing commendable work in the field of water resources conservation and management.

Background

- The event is an occasion for all people and organisations to further cement a strong partnership in water resources conservation and management activities.
- Also, it strives to create awareness among the people about importance of water and motivate them to adopt the best water usage practices.

Highlights

- The event is an occasion for all people and organisations to further cement a strong partnership in water resources conservation and management activities.
- The NWAs focuses on the good work and efforts made by individual and organisations across the country, and the government's vision for the path to a 'Jal Samridh Bharat'.

- The event provides a good opportunity to start-ups as well as leading organisations to engage and deliberate with senior policymakers.
- The event also presents an opportunity to discuss on how to further accelerate the 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan' in India.

4.6 **MINK**

- Denmark, which has recorded more than 55,000 cases of COVID-19 so far, has also recorded over 200 human cases infected with SARS-CoV-2 variants that are associated with farmed minks.
- These include 12 cases with a unique variant, which were reported on November 5.

Background

- After the Danish Public Health Authority (Statens Serum Institut) discovered the mutated version of coronavirus in mink, the government decided to cull all of the country's over 17-million population of the animal.
- As per the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA), Denmark has experienced extensive spread of SARS-CoV-2 on mink farms since June 2020, which was followed by virus transmission between the animals and a "spill back" to humans.
- So far, over 207 farms in the country are infected.

Highlights

- Denmark is the world's largest mink producer, with a 15-17 million strong mink population across 1,100 farms, according to The Copenhagen Post.
- The country's mink population is valued at roughly 3 billion kroner.
- The minks were likely infected following exposure to infected humans.
- Minks can not only serve as a reservoir for SARS-CoV-2, but are also capable of spreading it to humans.
- As per the WHO, the severity, clinical presentation and transmission among those infected are similar to those of other circulating SARS-CoV-2 viruses.
- This variant, which is referred to as the "cluster 5" variant, is characterised by a combination of mutations that have not been observed previously.

4.7 **SAFFRON BOWL OF INDIA EXTENDS TO THE NORTH EAST**

The North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) has undertaken a pilot project to explore the feasibility of growing saffron in North East region of the country.

Background

"The saffron bowl, which was so far confined to Kashmir, may soon expand to the North East of India. Plants from seeds transported from Kashmir to Sikkim and acclimatized there are now flowering in Yangyang in the Southern part of the North-East state," said the statement from NECTAR.

Highlights

- Saffron production has long been restricted to a limited geographical area in the Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir. Pampore region, commonly known as Saffron bowl of Kashmir, is the main contributor to saffron production, followed by Budgam, Srinagar, and Kishtwar districts.
- Saffron has traditionally been associated with the famous Kashmiri cuisine.
- It's medicinal values were considered as part of the rich cultural heritage of Kashmir.
- As saffron growing was confined to very specific areas in Kashmir, its production remained limited.
- Though the National Mission on Saffron focused on several measures to improve its farming, the measures were still limited to the specified areas of Kashmir.

4.8 ALL DISCOMS TO COME UNDER ENERGY CONSERVATION ACT

The power ministry said it has mandated all electricity distribution utilities or discoms to comply with the Energy Conservation (EC) Act, 2001, which would reduce energy losses and bring in more transparency in the sector.

Background

- Earlier, only discoms with annual energy losses equal to or above 1,000 MU (million units), notified as designated consumers, used to come under the purview of the EC Act.
- The ministry had issued a notification on September 28, 2020 to cover all electricity distribution companies (discoms) under the preview of the EC Act, it said in a statement.

Highlights

- As per the notification, which was formulated in consultation with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), "All entities having issued distribution license by State/Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission under the Electricity Act, 2003..." are notified as designated consumers (DCs).
- After this notification, all discoms will be governed under various provisions of the EC Act, such as appointment of energy manager, energy accounting and auditing, identification of energy losses category-wise, and implementation of energy conservation and efficiency measures.
- With this, the number of discoms covered under the EC Act will increase from 44 to 102.
- This decision will facilitate energy accounting and auditing as mandatory activity for all the discoms, leading to the actions towards reducing losses and increase their profitability, the ministry said.
- The amendment is expected to help discoms to monitor their performance parameters and bring in transparency in the distribution sector through professional inputs, it added.
- It will also assist in developing projects for reducing the electricity losses by discoms and implementing effective solutions.

- The amendment is expected to improve the financial state of discoms. The quarterly data of these discoms will be collected and monitored by the government to suggest measures for increasing the efficiency and reduce the energy losses.
- This move is expected to gradually become more effective if extended upto the level of end-consumers.
- The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) is a statutory body under the Ministry of Power.
- It assists in developing policies and strategies with the primary objective of reducing the energy intensity of the Indian economy.

4.9 **SAFAR**

- The air quality in Delhi continues to remain in 'severe' category.
- The System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research, SAFAR has advised people to avoid all physical activity outdoors.

Highlights

- It was indigenously developed by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune and is run by India Meteorological Department (IMD).
- The objective is to provide Real-time air quality index on 24x7 basis with colour coding along with 72-hour advance weather forecast; To issue Health advisory to prepare citizens well in advance.
- Pollutants: PM1, PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, CO, NOx (NO, NO2), SO2, BC, Methane (CH4), Non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHC), Black Carbon, VOC's, Benzene and Mercury.
- Meteorological Parameters: UV Radiation, Rainfall, Temperature, Humidity, Wind speed, Wind direction, solar radiation.

4.10 **TRISTAN DA CUNHA**

The isolated UK Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha, the world's most remote human settlement, has been declared the largest fully protected marine reserves in the Atlantic Ocean at 687,000 square kilometres.

About Tristan da Cunha

- Tristan da Cunha, which is inhabited by less than 300 humans is a small chain of islands over 6,000 miles from London in the South Atlantic and the water around the islands are considered to be the richest in the world.
- The mountainous archipelago is home to tens of millions of seabirds and several unique land birds that are comparable to the Galapagos island finches.
- The island group is also home to the World Heritage Site of Gough and Inaccessible Islands, which is one of the most important seabird islands in the world.

Highlights

- After joining the UK's Blue Belt Programme, it will become the largest no-take zone in the Atlantic and the fourth largest on the planet.
- This will close over 90 per cent of their waters to harmful activities such as bottom-trawling fishing, sand extraction and deep-sea mining.
- The almost 700,000 square kilometres of the Marine Protection Zone (MPZ) is almost three times the size of the UK and will safeguard the future of sevengill sharks, Yellow-nosed albatrosses and rockhopper penguins.
- MPZs involve the management of certain natural areas for biodiversity conservation or species protection and are created by delineating zones with permitted and non-permitted areas within that zone.

4.11 PUERTO RICO

For the third time in ten years, the United States territory of Puerto Rico has voted in favour of statehood, and thus be treated at par with the current 50 states of the country.

Background

- Originally populated by the indigenous Taíno people, Puerto Rico was colonized by Spain following the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1493.
- In 1898, following the Spanish–American War, the United States acquired Puerto Rico, which remains an unincorporated territorial possession, making it the world's oldest colony.



Highlights

- Puerto Rico, officially the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States.
- Puerto Ricans have been citizens of the United States since 1917, and can move freely between the island and the mainland.
- As it is not a state, Puerto Rico does not have a vote in the U.S. Congress, which governs the unincorporated territory with jurisdiction under the Puerto Rico Federal Relations Act of 1950.

4.12 NEW ADDITION TO RAMSAR SITES

- India has added two more Ramsar sites.

- They are Lonar lake in Maharashtra which is the only crater lake of the country while the other is Sur Sarovar, also known as Keetham lake in Agra of Uttar Pradesh.

Background

- Wetlands are the world's natural water filters and one of the most productive ecosystems on the planet.
- The Ramsar Convention signed on 2nd February, 1971, is one of the oldest inter-governmental accord signed by member countries to preserve the ecological character of their wetlands of international importance.

Highlights

- The aim of the Ramsar list is to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits.
- Wetlands declared as Ramsar sites are protected under strict guidelines of the convention.

4.13 JAL JEEVAN MISSION

A multi-disciplinary Technical Committee in the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti has recommended five technologies in Drinking Water and Sanitation to provide Field Level Solutions to the States.

Background

The Ministry of Jal Shakti gives primacy to the infusion and deployment of innovative technological solutions to realize the ambitious objective of the Jal Jeevan Mission to provide Functional Household Tap Connection to every rural home by 2024.

Highlights

- The first of the five technologies that have been recommended is GrundfosAQpure, a solar energy based water treatment plant based on ultra-filtration.
- The Second is Janajal Water on Wheel, an IoT based electric vehicle based on GPS location to enable delivery of safe water to the doorstep of households.
- Another technology is Presto Online Chlorinator, a non-electricity dependent online chlorinator for disinfection of water for removal of bacterial contamination.
- Johkasou technology recommended is an inbuilt sewage and Kitchen and bath water treatment system having advanced anaerobic-aerobic configuration that can be installed underground.
- The last innovative technology is FBTec®, a site assembled in a decentralised sewage treatment system using fixed filter media.

5. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

5.1 DAM REHABILITATION AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (DRIP)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) Phase II & Phase III with the financial assistance of the World Bank (WB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

ALL ABOUT DRIP

- Project is in operation in Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka
- Karnataka submits detailed proposal for 116 dams in 2012 to CWC seeking Rs. 449.61 crore
- State, World Bank sign project agreement in November 2014

IN PHASE I Tenders called for Almatti and Narayanpur dams in February 2105

IN PHASE II State submits proposal on 5 dams – Amarja and Bennethora in Kalaburagi district, KRS in Mandya, and Hidkal and Malaprabha in Belagavi district



IN PHASE III Project report on 10 dams to be submitted by June-end

● International Development Association funding the projects

● Repayment period is 30 years. Interest rate is 1%

● Central Water Commission is coordinating the project

Background

- The objective is to improve the safety and operational performance of selected dams across the whole country, along with institutional strengthening with a system-wide management approach.
- The Scheme envisages comprehensive rehabilitation of 736 existing dams located across the country.
- The Project will be implemented over a period of 10 years duration in two Phases, each of six years duration with two years overlapping from April 2021 to March 2031.

Highlights

To achieve the objective, DRIP Phase II & Phase III has the following components:

- Rehabilitation and improvement of dams and associated appurtenances,
- Dam safety institutional strengthening in participating States and Central agencies,
- Exploration of alternative incidental means a few of selected dams to generate the incidental revenue for sustainable operation and maintenance of dams, and
- Project management.

5.2 SERB-POWER

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Health & Family Welfare launched a Scheme titled “SERB-POWER (Promoting Opportunities for Women in Exploratory Research)”, designed exclusively for women scientists, in a function today on an e-platform.

Background

The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), a Statutory body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, has been contemplating to institute a scheme

to mitigate gender disparity in science and engineering research in various S&T programs in Indian academic institutions and R&D laboratories.

Highlights

- SERB – POWER Scheme will have two components namely (i) SERB-POWER Fellowship (ii) SERB- POWER Research Grants. The salient features of each of these are as follows:
- Salient features of the SERB-POWER Fellowship:-
- Target: Women researchers in 35-55 years of age. Up-to 25 Fellowships per year and not more than 75 at any point in time.
- Components of support: Fellowship of Rs. 15,000/- per month in addition to regular income; Research grant of Rs. 10 lakh per annum; and Overhead of Rs. 90,000/- per annum.
- Duration: Three years, without the possibility of extension. Once in a career.

Salient features of the SERB – POWER Research Grants :

- POWER Grants will empower women researchers by funding them under following two categories:
- Level I (Applicants from IITs, IISERs, IISc, NITs, Central Universities, and National Labs of Central Government Institutions): The scale of funding is up to 60 lakhs for three years.
- Level II (Applicants from State Universities / Colleges and Private Academic Institutions): The scale of funding is up to 30 lakhs for three years.
- POWER Grant will be regulated through terms of reference conforming to SERB-CRG(Science and Engineering Research Board-Core Research Grant) guidelines.
- While a Search-cum-Selection Committee constituted for the purpose will help in identifying the POWER Fellowship, the existing Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) mechanism will be used to select the POWER Research Grants.

5.3 3D ATOMIC MAP OF CORONAVIRUS REPLICATION MECHANISM

- In the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 is an enzyme called the main protease, which drives its replication once it infects the human cell.
- For the first time, scientists have completed a 3D map that reveals the location of every atom in the molecule of this enzyme.
- As Covid-19 cases surge again in several countries, this 3D mapping will allow scientists to better understand how the coronavirus behaves, and how it can be stopped.

Background

- The mapping was done by researchers at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory under the US Department of Energy.
- The results are published in the Journal of Biological Chemistry.

Highlights

- SARS-CoV-2 expresses long chains of proteins. When these chains are broken down and cut into smaller strands, it enables the virus to reproduce.
- This task is performed by the main protease.
- Its structure: two identical protein molecules held together by hydrogen bonds.
- If a drug can be developed that inhibits or blocks the protease activity, it will prevent the virus from replicating and spreading to other cells in the body.
- Researchers used a technique called neutron crystallography.
- The site containing the amino acids where the protein chains are cut, these experiments revealed, is in an electrically charged reactive state — not in a resting or neutral state, contrary to previously held beliefs.
- Second, researchers mapped the location of each hydrogen atom in the places where drug inhibitors could bind to the protease enzyme, as well as the electrical charges of the associated amino acids.

5.4 **16 PSYCHE**

- A recent study has found that asteroid 16 Psyche, which orbits between Mars and Jupiter, could be made entirely of metal and is worth an estimated \$10,000 quadrillion — more than the entire economy of Earth.
- Located around 370 million kilometres away from Earth, asteroid 16 Psyche is one of the most massive objects in the asteroid belt in our solar system.

Highlights

- The somewhat potato-shaped asteroid has a diameter of around 140 miles, according to NASA.
- It was first discovered on March 17, 1853, by the Italian astronomer Annibale de Gasparis and was named after the ancient Greek goddess of the soul, Psyche.
- New images from NASA's Hubble Space Telescope offer a closer view of the asteroid 16 Psyche, whose surface may mostly comprise iron and nickel, similar to the Earth's core.
- Scientists believe that the asteroid may be the leftover core of an earlier planet that lost its crust and mantle after multiple collisions during the creation of our solar system.
- The exact composition and origins of the asteroid will be uncovered in 2022, when NASA sends an unmanned spacecraft to study it up close.

5.5 **NATIONAL MONSOON MISSION**



Union Minister of Science and Technology, Health and Family Welfare and Earth Sciences, Dr. Harsh Vardhan released the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) Report on "Estimating the economic benefits of Investment in Monsoon Mission and High Performance Computing (HPC) Facilities".

Background

- The Minister said that the report has highlighted, “For every rupee spent by the government on the National Monsoon Mission and High-performance Computing programs of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), the country would gain economic benefits worth fifty rupees, which is 50 times more benefit on the investment over the next five years period”.
- NCAER is an independent, not for profit, economic policy research think tank based in New Delhi.
- The report is based on a study commissioned by M/o Earth Sciences, GoI.

Highlights

- A total of Rs. 1000 crores has been invested in setting up National Monsoon Mission (NMM) and High performance Computing (HPC) facilities by Government of India.
- 76% of the livestock owners are using weather information for taking decisions on modification of shelter; vaccination against seasonal disease; and fodder management.
- 82% of fishermen reported using Ocean State Forecast (OSF) advisories every time before venturing into sea.
- The total annual economic benefits to the 1.07 Crore below Poverty Line (BPL) agricultural households works out to be Rs. 13,331 Crores and incremental benefit over the next five years is estimated to be about Rs. 48,056 Crores for the farming community.

- Annual income gained by 53 Lakh BPL fisher households is estimated to be Rs. 663 Crores and the present value of benefits accruing to fisher-folk works out to be Rs. 2,391 Crores over a period of 5 years.
- With an initial investment of Rs. 1,000 Crores, NMM and HPC facilities result in a 50-fold increase in its economic benefits.
- Derived estimated benefits realized by the women works out to be Rs. 13,447 Crores, which is 26.6 percent of the total benefit.

5.6 LEISHMANIA DONOVANI

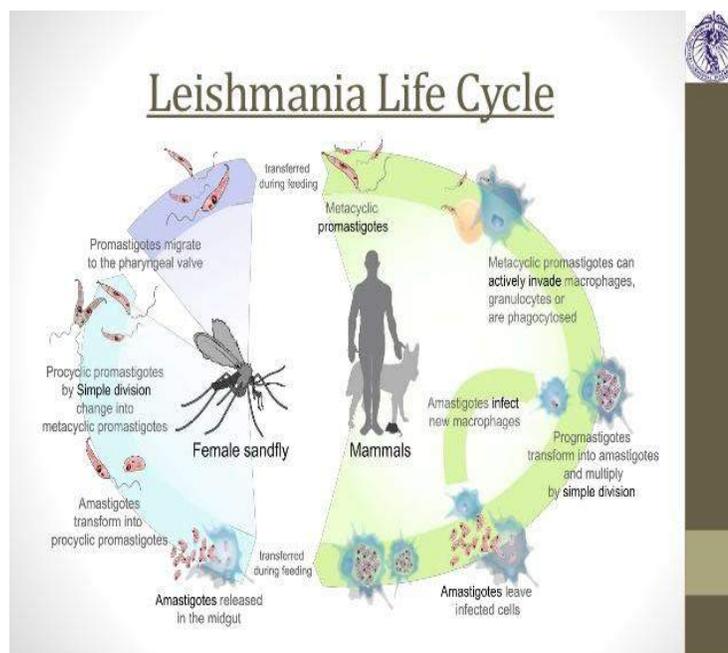
To recognize the significant contributions towards defining the survival tactics of *Leishmania donovani*, Society of Biological Chemists (India) has chosen Dr Susanta Kar, Senior Scientist, Molecular Parasitology and Immunology, CSIR-CDRI, Lucknow for this year's Prof. A N Bhaduri Memorial Lecture Award.

About *Leishmania donovani*

- *Leishmania donovani* is a protozoan parasite that infects macrophages and is a causative agent of visceral leishmaniasis (Kala Azar), a lethal infectious disease affecting millions worldwide.
- DR. Susanta Kar's research group studied the interaction of *Leishmania* with immune cells like macrophages, dendritic cells and T cells and the fate of these interactions on modulation of various intracellular signalling cascades that ultimately affect immune response/infection progression.

Highlights

- Society of Biological Chemists (India) has instituted many awards, in order to recognize the meritorious and significant contributions made by the researchers/scientists on the development of biological sciences in the country, The Society of Biological Chemists (India) or SBC (I) was founded in 1930, with its Head Quarters at Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.
- This prestigious society was registered under the Societies Act in the then Princely State of Mysore.
- The award is conferred in every two years.
- Recipient of the award should be below 50 years of age.



- The Award is given for Biological Chemistry and Allied sciences, preferably related to parasitic infections.

5.7 ENHANCED PINAKA ROCKET

- Enhanced PINAKA rocket, developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has been successfully flight tested from Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the coast of Odisha.
- Development of the Enhanced Pinaka system was taken up to achieve longer range performance compared to earlier designs with reduced length.

Background

The design and development has been carried out by Pune based DRDO laboratories, namely Armament Research and Development Establishment, ARDE and High Energy Materials Research Laboratory, HEMRL.

About Pinaka

- A total of six rockets were launched in quick succession and the tests met complete mission objectives.
- Rockets tested have been manufactured by M/s Economic Explosives Limited, Nagpur, to whom the technology has been transferred.
- All the flight articles were tracked by Range instruments such as telemetry, radar and Electro Optical Tracking Systems which confirmed the flight performance.
- Enhanced version of the Pinaka rocket would replace the existing Pinaka Mk-I rockets which are currently under production.

5.8 GANDHIAN YOUNG TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Union Minister of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare gave away Students Innovations for Advancement of Research Explorations - Gandhian Young Technological Innovation (SITARE-GYTI) and Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technological Innovations-Gandhian Young Technological Innovation (SRISTI-GYTI) awards.

About the awards

- The awards are given every year to the most promising technologies developed by the students in life sciences, biotechnology, agriculture, medical devices etc.
- SRISTI-GYTI awards are given to students in other engineering disciplines.
- These awards and appreciations are given to encourage technology students to move towards setting up Biotech and other start-ups.
- They constitute two categories of awards, namely:

- SITARE–GYTI under Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), Department of Biotechnology (DBT)
- SRISTI-GYTI given by SRISTI.

Highlights

- The awards and appreciations are given under these two categories to encourage technology students to move towards setting up Biotech and other start-ups.
- The SITARE-GYTI awards are given every year to the most promising technologies developed by the students in life sciences, biotechnology, agriculture, medical devices etc.
- SRISTI-GYTI awards are given to students in other engineering disciplines.

5.9 GOV-TECH-THON 2020

Gov-Tech-Thon 2020, 36 hours, pan-India virtual hackathon organized by IEEE, National Informatics Centre (NIC) and Oracle, under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, witnessed a successful conclusion.

Background

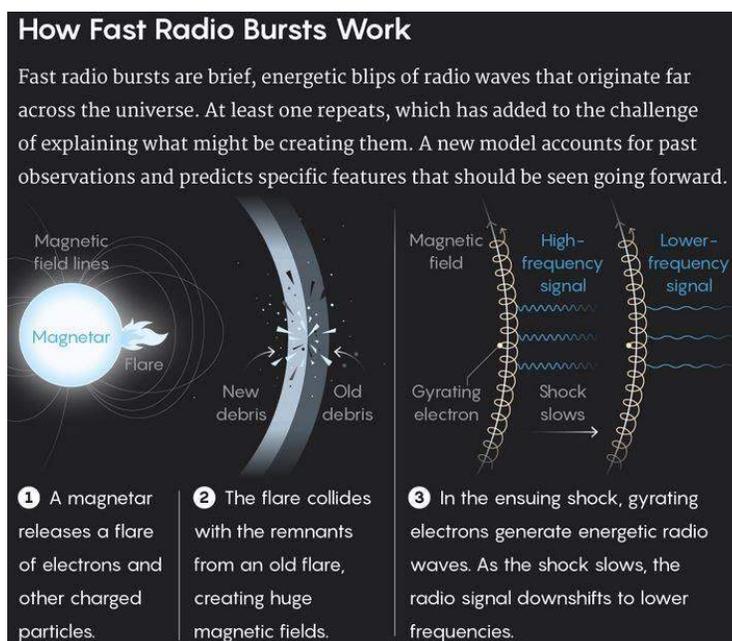
Shortlisted 447 enthusiasts from 100 teams participated in the Hackathon on the five problem statements provided by 3 central Government Ministries – Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Ministry of Road Transport and Highway and Ministry of Education.

Highlights

- National Informatics Centre (NIC) is attached office of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). NIC was established in 1976.
- IEEE is the world's largest technical professional organization dedicated to advancing technology for the benefit of humanity.
- The Oracle Cloud offers a complete suite of integrated applications for Sales, Service, Marketing, Human Resources, Finance, Supply Chain etc.

5.10 FAST RADIO BURST

- NASA has reported that on April 28, it observed a mix of X-ray and radio signals never observed before in the Milky Way. Significantly, the flare-up it observed included the first fast radio burst (FRB) seen within the galaxy.
- Three papers reporting the detection of



the phenomenon called FRB were published in the journal Nature.

Background

- The X-ray portion of the simultaneous bursts was detected by several satellites, including NASA's Wind mission, and the radio component was discovered by the Canadian Hydrogen Intensity Mapping Experiment (CHIME), a radio telescope located at Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory in British Columbia, which is led by McGill University in Montreal, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Toronto.
- Further, a NASA-funded project called Survey for Transient Astronomical Radio Emission 2 (STARE2) also detected the radio burst seen by CHIME. STARE2 is operated by Caltech and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California and the team behind it determined that the burst's energy was comparable to FRBs.

Highlights

- The first FRB was discovered in 2007, since when scientists have been working towards finding the source of their origin.
- Essentially, FRBs are bright bursts of radio waves (radio waves can be produced by astronomical objects with changing magnetic fields) whose durations lie in the millisecond-scale, because of which it is difficult to detect them and determine their position in the sky.
- The source of the FRB detected in April in the Milky Way is a very powerful magnetic neutron star, referred to as a magnetar, called SGR 1935+2154 or SGR 1935, which is located in the constellation Vulpecula and is estimated to be between 14,000-41,000 light-years away.
- The FRB was part of one of the magnetar's most prolific flare-ups, with the X-ray bursts lasting less than a second.
- The radio burst, on the other hand, lasted for a thousandth of a second and was thousands of times brighter than any other radio emissions from magnetars seen in the Milky Way previously.
- It is possible that the FRB-associated burst was exceptional because it likely occurred at or close to the magnetar's magnetic pole.
- This flare-up, which lasted for hours, was picked up by NASA's Fermi Gamma-ray Space telescope and NASA's Neutron star Interior Composition Explorer (NICER), which is an X-ray telescope mounted on the International Space Station.

5.11 AIM-SIRIUS INNOVATION PROGRAMME 3.0

The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), a flagship initiative by the NITI Aayog, and Russia's Sirius (Scientific International Research In Unique Terrestrial Station) have jointly launched 'AIM-Sirius Innovation Programme 3.0'.

- AIM–Sirius Innovation Programme 3.0 is a 14-day virtual programme for Indian and Russian schoolchildren.

Highlights

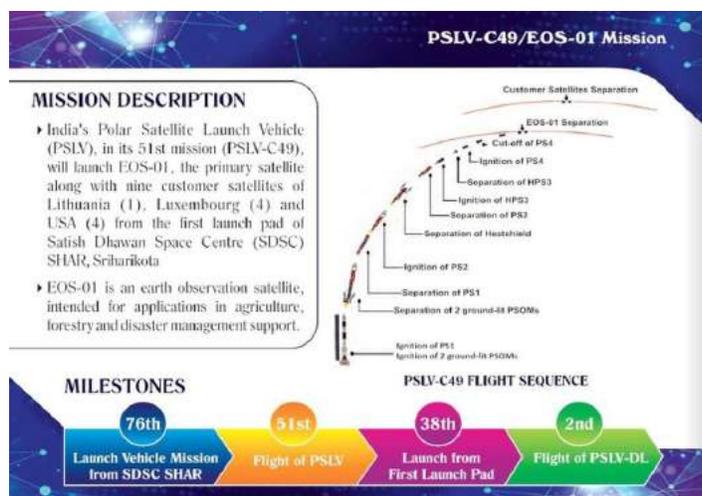
- It is the first Indo-Russian bilateral youth innovation initiative, which seeks to develop technological solutions, both web-based and mobile-based, for the two countries.
- During the event, around 48 students and 16 educators and mentors will create 8 virtual products and mobile applications to address global challenges across a wide range of areas, in the wake of the covid-19 pandemic.
- These areas include culture, distance education, applied cognitive science, health and well-being, sports, fitness, and games training, chemistry, artificial intelligence, and digital financial assets.

5.12 PSLV-C49/EOS-01

India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, in its fifty first flight (PSLV-C49), successfully launched EOS-01 along with nine international customer satellites from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota.

Highlights

- PSLV-C49 is the 2nd flight of PSLV in 'DL' configuration (with 2 solid strap-on motors).
- EOS-01 is an earth observation satellite, intended for applications in agriculture, forestry and disaster management support.
- The nine customer satellites from Lithuania (1), Luxembourg (4) and USA (4) were launched under a commercial arrangement with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL).
- This is the first launch in the last ten months with the previous launch from Sriharikota was on December 11, 2019, when ISRO launched the 50th PSLV and its 75th launch from the spaceport.



5.13 STANFORD UNIVERSITY'S LIST OF TOP 2 PER CENT SCIENTISTS

- Stanford University has recently released a list that represents the top 2 percent of the most-cited scientists in various disciplines.
- The exhaustive list has 1,59,683 persons with nearly 1,500 Indians in it.

Background

- This database includes the top 2 percent of scientists of the world from different fields on the basis of standardized citation indications.

- These include information on the number of citations, H -Index, co-authorship and a composite indicator.

Highlights

- In the exhaustive list of 1,59,683 persons, 1,492 Indians have found a place, with a majority of them being from IITs and IISc and other top institutes.
- There were 16 Indian scientists who are ranked 30 or higher in the world, in their respective fields.
- In the field of Nuclear & Particle Physics, there are two Indians: AshokeSen (ranked 13) and T. Padmanabhan (ranked 24).
- There are two Indian in the field of Inorganic and Nuclear Chemistry: Prof GautamDesiraju, (ranked 2) and CNR Rao (ranked 3) close to the top.
- Biotechnology also has two names: Dr Ashok Pandey, (ranked 8) and Dr S VenkataMohan, (rank 29).

5.14 OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

- The Department of Telecom eased rules for other service providers (OSP) in the business process outsourcing (BPO) and information technology-enabled services (ITes).
- OSPs or other service providers are companies or firms which provide secondary or tertiary services such as telemarketing, telebanking or telemedicine for various companies, banks or hospital chains, respectively.

Background

- The new rules do away with the registration requirement for OSPs, with such BPOs that are engaged only in data work have been taken out of the category of OSPs altogether.
- With the government recognising OSP employees as extended or remote agent, companies providing such services will no longer have to carry the additional compliance burden of providing the details of all such employees to the DoT.

Highlights

- Doing away of registration norms will also mean that there will be no renewal of such licenses and therefore will invite foreign companies to set up or expand their other service providing units in India.
- An important change, which takes data-based OSPs completely out of the ambit of BPOs would mean that such firms can function like any other service firm without the strict and cumbersome guidelines such as presence of agent on location.

5.15 DRDO DEVELOPS FIRE-FIGHTING SYSTEM FOR BUSES

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed for passenger buses a technology called Fire Detection and Suppression System (FDSS).

- FDSS technology can detect fire in buses in less than 30 seconds and extinguish it in 60 seconds thereby reducing the risk to life and property to a significant extent.

Highlights

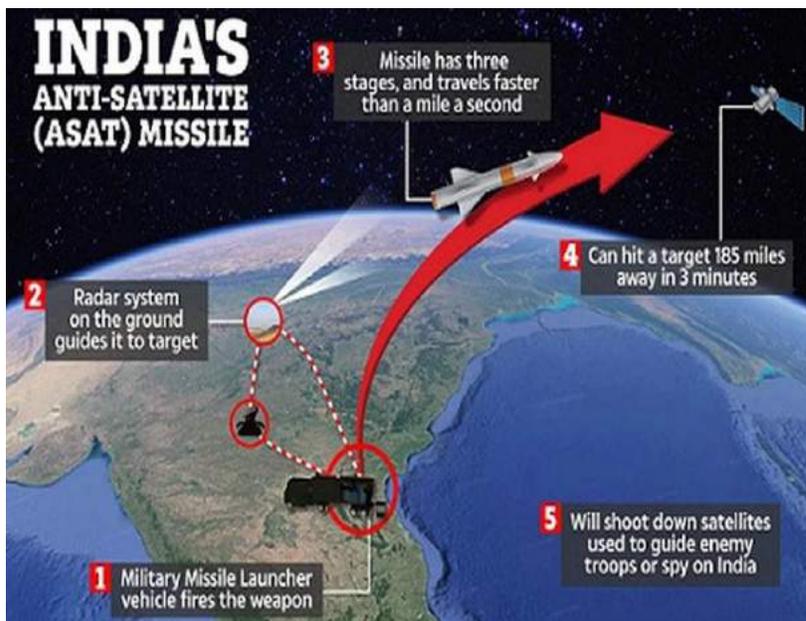
- Demonstrations were given on water mist-based FDSS for the passenger compartment and aerosol-based FDSS for an engine fire.
- DRDO's Centre for Fire Explosive and Environment Safety (CFEES), Delhi has developed the technology.
- The FDSS for the passenger compartment comprises a water tank of 80 litre capacity, a 6.8 kg nitrogen cylinder pressurised to 200 bar installed at an appropriate location in the bus and a network of tubing with 16 number of atomizers inside the passenger compartment.
- The FDSS for the engine comprises of an aerosol generator with which the fire suppression could be achieved within 5 seconds of the system activation.

5.16 ANTI-SATELLITE (A-SAT) MISSILE

A model of Anti Satellite (A-SAT) Missile installed inside the DRDO Bhawan premises was unveiled today by RakshaMantriRajnath Singh.

Highlights

- 'Mission Shakti' was country's first ever Anti-Satellite (ASAT) Missile Test successfully conducted on 27th March 2019 from Dr AP J Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha, where a fast-moving Indian orbiting target satellite in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) was neutralised with pinpoint accuracy.
- This was a highly complex mission, conducted at extremely high speed with remarkable precision.
- The successful conduct of Mission Shakti made India the fourth nation in the world with the capability to defend its assets in outer space.



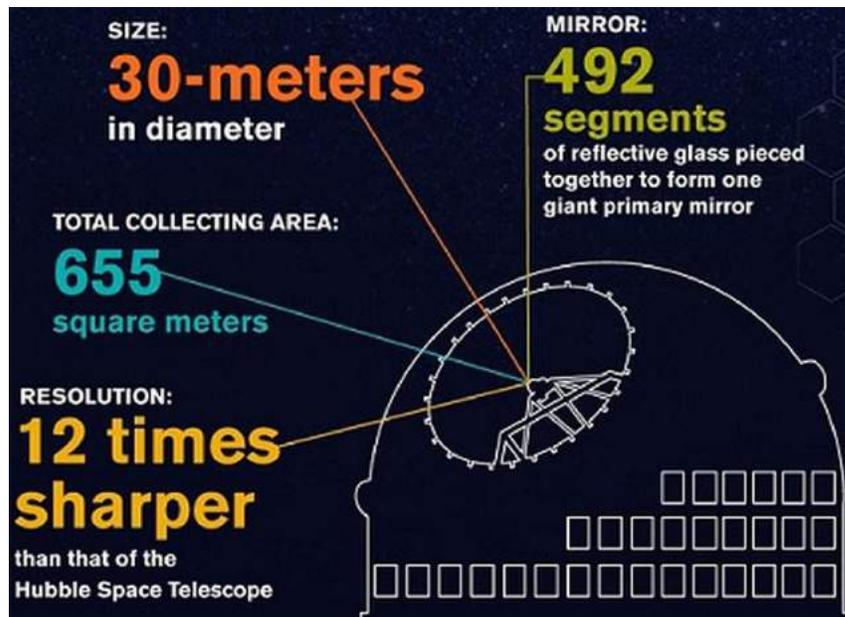
5.17 THIRTY METER TELESCOPE (TMT) PROJECT

2020 Physics Nobel Laureate Prof. Andrea Ghez had worked closely with Indian astronomers on the design of back-end instruments and possible science prospects of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT)

project being installed at Maunakea in Hawaii, which can revolutionized the understanding of the universe and the enigmas in it.

Background

- The Thirty-meter telescope (TMT) project is an international partnership between CalTech, Universities of California, Canada, Japan, China, and India; through the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).
- Some of the Indian astronomers like Dr. Annapurni Subramaniam, Director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) and Dr. Shashi Bhushan Pandey, a scientist at Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES) along with many others collaborated with Prof. Ghez in the ongoing research and developmental activities of the TMT project.



Highlights

- It had resulted in two significant papers, among many others.
- The scientific prospects and simulations by the first generation instrument for the TMT called the Infrared Imaging Spectrograph (IRIS), were described in one of the SPIE proceedings in 2016.
- The latest end-to-end data simulator on Solar System bodies, the Galactic center, energetic transient objects, active galactic nuclei, and distant gravitationally-lensed galaxies were used.
- It showed the capabilities of IRIS/TMT to continue front-line scientific research in the near future to understand the nature of the supermassive compact object at the centre of our Galaxy and many more new aspects to discover "unknown-unknowns".
- The scientists highlighted the necessity of an advanced data management system and data reduction pipeline.
- The Thirty Meter Telescope, which seeks to advance scientific knowledge while fostering connection among the partner countries and their citizens, and in which Indian astronomers worked closely with Prof. Andrez Ghez, is expected to provide facilities with even greater capabilities to

gather the observations needed to answer new and emerging questions in astronomy and physics in general.

5.18 KALVARI-CLASS SUBMARINES

- Indian Navy's fifth Kalvari-class Diesel Electric attack submarine INS Vagir was launched at Mazgaon Dock in Mumbai.
- The design of Kalvari class of submarines is based on Scorpene class of submarines designed and developed by French defence major Naval Group formerly DCNS and Spanish state owned entity Navantia.

Background

- This class of submarines have Diesel Electric transmission systems and these primarily attack submarines or 'hunter-killer' type which means they are designed to target and sink adversary naval vessels.
- These submarines are around 220 feet long and have a height of 40 feet.
- It can reach the highest speeds of 11 knots when surfaced and 20 knots when submerged.
- The modern variants of the Scorpence class of submarines have what is called the Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) which enables non-nuclear submarines to operate for a long time without access to surface oxygen.

Highlights

- Indian Naval Ship (INS) Vagir is the fifth among the six Kalvari-class submarines being constructed by the public sector shipbuilder Mazagon Dock Ltd (MDL) in Mumbai.
- The other vessels in the class are INS Kalvari, INS Khanderi, INS Karanj, INS Vela and INS Vagsheer.
- Of these Kalvari and Khanderi have been commissioned in 2017 and 2019, Vela and Karanj and undergoing sea trials, Vagir has now been launched and Vagsheer is under construction.
- Like Kalvari – which means Tiger Shark, Vagir has been named after a Sand Fish, a predatory marine species. Khanderi has been named after an Island Fort built by Chhatrapati Shivaji, which played a key role in his Navy. Karanj has also been named after an Island located South of Mumbai.

5.19 LEONID METEOR SHOWER

- The Leonid meteor showers are currently making their yearly appearance and will reach their peak in India on November 17 and 18.
- In August this year, there was another meteor called Perseids Shower.

About Leonid Meteor Shower

- Meteor showers are named after the constellation they appear to be coming from.

- The Leonids originate from the constellation Leo the Lion– the groups of stars which form a lion’s mane.
- They emerge from the comet Tempel-Tuttle, which requires 33 years to revolve once around the Sun.
- These meteors are bright and among the fastest moving– travelling at speeds of 71 km per second.
- During this year’s showers, peaks of around 10 to 15 meteors are expected to be seen every hour.
- The Leonid showers include fireballs– bright and large meteors than can last longer than average meteors, and “earthazers”– meteors which appear close to the horizon with colourful and long tails.

About meteor shower

- On its journey around the Sun, the Earth passes through large swathes of cosmic debris.
- The debris is essentially the remnants of comets — great frigid chunks of matter that leave behind dirty trails of rocks and ice that linger long after the comets themselves have passed.
- As the Earth wades through this cloud of comet waste, the bits of debris create what appears from the ground to be a fireworks display in the sky — known as a meteor shower.
- Several meteor showers can be seen around the year.
- According to NASA, over 30 meteor showers occur annually and are observable from the Earth.

5.20 PINCER CATALYTIC SYSTEMS

Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati, have formulated efficient “pincer” catalytic systems that transform industrial or biomass wastes into valuable chemicals.

Background

- According to the team, tiny amounts of these “pincer catalysts” repeatedly convert large amounts of industrial waste such as glycerol into lactic acid and hydrogen.
- Such catalysts also efficiently convert bioethanol, a low-energy density fuel, into high-energy density butanol.

Highlights

- Pincer catalysts are complex molecules in which, an organic moiety holds on tightly to a metal core, much like the claws of a Crab.
- Such an arrangement not only confers stability to the catalyst, but also selectivity to bring about the intended transformations.
- The most efficient pincer catalyst was found to be one that had least crowding around the metal centre.
- Such an arrangement enabled easy removal of hydrogen from the starting materials, Glycerol and Ethanol, and their selective conversion into Lactic acid and Butanol, respectively.

- The findings of the time have also been featured in the Royal Society of Chemistry journals-- Chemical Communications and Catalysis Science and Technology.

5.21 LILAVATI AWARDS, 2020

Union Minister of Education recently virtually launched Lilavati Award-2020: AICTE's Innovative education program to empower women.



Objective

- To treat women with 'equality and fairness' in all spheres of life, by the means of this initiative, all the stakeholders (especially the girl students) in AICTE approved institutions would get a unique opportunity.
- The opportunity is to present a solution to the prevalent issues of gender discrimination, which includes illiteracy, unemployment, economic and nutritional disparities, maternal mortality, human rights, etc.
- Also, if anyone has already made a successful effort towards making a mark in the society, in establishing women's emancipation/ empowerment at large, she/ he can showcase their efforts/ contributions.

About the awards

- Theme: Women empowerment
- Objective: To create awareness about issues like sanitation, hygiene, health, nutrition, literacy, employment, technology, credit, marketing, innovation, skill development, natural resources, and rights among women.
- Covering multidisciplinary areas: Women's health, self-defense, sanitation, literacy, entrepreneurship, and legal awareness
- Significance: The program is expected to ensure the participation of women and enable them to hold higher positions in educational institutions.

5.22 GLOBAL COALITION AGAINST HIV

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare digitally addressed the Ministerial meeting of the Global Prevention Coalition (GPC) for HIV Prevention, through Video Conference.

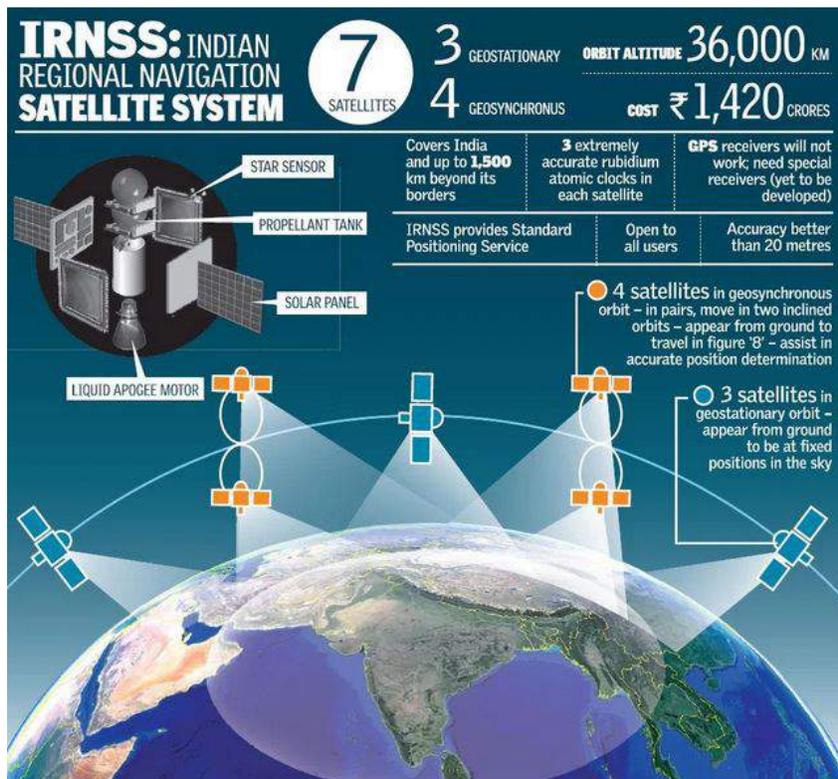
Background

- Hosted by UNAIDS and UNFPA on behalf of the Global HIV Prevention Coalition (GPC), the conference this year holds significance in achieving the 2016 UNGA commitment to end AIDS by 2030.
- Member States of GPC had agreed to reduce new adult HIV infections by 75% at the end of 2020 from 2010 levels.

Highlights

- Acknowledging that Global AIDS response has shown remarkable success in reducing new infections, improving access to prevention services for key population and treatment services for People living with HIV (PLHIV), reducing AIDS related mortality, enabling reduction in mother to child transmission of HIV and creating an enabling environment, Dr. Harsh Vardhan noted that the organization “has shown to the world a model where multiple stakeholders can come together and work cohesively towards a common goal.”
- India’s unique HIV prevention model which is centered around the concept of ‘Social Contracting’ through which the Targeted Interventions (TI) programme is implemented.
- With support from Non-Government Organizations, the programme is aimed at providing outreach, service delivery, counselling & testing and ensuring linkages to HIV care. India’s prevention model can be adopted and scaled up in many countries by tailoring the intervention as per local settings.
- It can also be replicated in other prevention and disease control programmes.

5.23 INDIAN REGIONAL NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEM (IRNSS)



- The Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) has been accepted as a component of the World Wide Radio Navigation System (WWRNS) for operation in the Indian Ocean Region by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
- This will enable merchant vessels to use IRNSS for obtaining position information similar to GPS and GLONASS to assist in the navigation of ships in ocean waters within the area covered by 50°N latitude, 55°E longitude, 5°S latitude and 110°E longitude.

About IRNSS

- IRNSS is an independent regional navigation satellite system developed by India.
- It is designed to provide accurate position information service to assist in the navigation of ships in Indian Ocean waters.
- India has become the fourth country in the world to have its independent regional navigation satellite system recognised by the IMO as a part of the WWRNS.
- The other three countries that have its navigation systems recognised by the IMO are the US, Russia and

5.24 SEISMIC SURVEY CAMPAIGN

- Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister inaugurated the Seismic Survey Campaign by Oil India Limited.
- The survey under the Open Acreage Licensing Policy, OALP, will be undertaken in 5 blocks of 8 districts of Odisha in the Mahanadi basin and nearby areas.

Highlights

- Declaring the campaign open through virtual mode, Union Minister said that the commercial production of oil and gas from the Mahanadi basin will be a game changer in the socio-economic development of Odisha.
- Mahanadi basin would emerge as an established and important hydrocarbon reserve in the oil map of India.

5.25 DELIRIUM

- A new study supports evidence that delirium can predict corona virus infection in older patients who show no other typical symptoms of Covid-19.
- Published in the journal JAMA Network Open, the study is by researchers at Hebrew SeniorLife, a healthcare, education and



research facility affiliated to Harvard Medical School.

About Delirium

- Delirium is an acute state of confusion, marked by disorientation, lack of attention etc.
- Even beyond Covid-19, delirium is a common symptom in older adults with severe disease.
- And in Covid-19, adults aged 65 years and older are at greatest risk of severe disease, and death.

Highlights

- The new study examined 817 elderly patients of Covid-19.
- The researchers found that almost a third of the patients had delirium.
- A delirium diagnosis was the main presenting symptom for 16% of those patients, and 37% had no typical COVID-19 symptoms.
- Delirium was the sixth most common presenting symptoms in all patients.
- The researchers stressed the importance of including delirium on the checklist of Covid-19 symptoms.

5.26 SITMEX

Indian Navy (IN) Ships including indigenously built ASW corvette Kamorta and missile corvette Karmuk participated in the 2nd edition of India, Singapore and Thailand Trilateral Maritime Exercise SITMEX-20, from in Andaman Sea.

Highlights

- The first edition of SITMEX, hosted by Indian Navy, was conducted off Port Blair in September 2019.
- The SITMEX series of exercises are conducted to enhance mutual inter-operability and imbibing best practices between IN, Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) and Royal Thai Navy (RTN).
- The 2020 edition of the exercise is being hosted by RSN.

5.27 SIMBEX -20

- Indian Navy is scheduled to host the 27th edition of India - Singapore Bilateral Maritime Exercise SIMBEX-20 in Andaman Sea.
- It will continue till 25th of this month.

Background

- The SIMBEX series of exercises between Indian Navy and Republic of Singapore Navy being conducted annually since 1994 , are aimed at enhancing mutual interoperability and imbibing best practices from each other.
- The scope and complexity of these exercises has increased steadily over the past two decades to include advanced naval drills covering a wide spectrum of maritime operations.

About the exercise

- The 2020 edition of SIMBEX will witness participation by Indian Navy ships including destroyer Rana with integral Chetak helicopter and indigenously built corvettes Kamorta and Karmuk.
- According to Ministry of Defence, the exercise, being conducted as a ‘non-contact, at sea only’ exercise in view of COVID-19 pandemic, highlights the high degree of mutual trust and confidence, synergy and cooperation in the maritime domain between the two friendly navies and maritime neighbours
- SIMBEX-20 will witness the two friendly navies participate in advanced surface, anti-air warfare and anti-submarine warfare exercises including weapon firings, over three days of intensive joint operations at sea.
- SIMBEX series of exercises exemplify the high level of coordination and convergence of views between India and Singapore, particularly in the maritime domain, towards enhancing the overall maritime security in the region and highlight their commitment to a rules-based international order.

5.28 NATIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba chaired a meeting of the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) to review the status of impending cyclone with the Chief Secretaries of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry through video conferencing.

Background

- The Chief Secretaries of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry briefed the NCMC about their preparedness.
- They mentioned that the authorities are fully prepared to meet any eventuality.
- They also informed about the coordination with the NDRF and other agencies to meet this challenge.

Highlights

- At the national level, Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) and National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) are the key committees involved in the top-level decision-making wrt Disaster Management (DM).
- It deals with major crisis which have serious or national ramifications.
- Cabinet Secretary is the Chair person.

5.29 10th NATIONAL SCIENCE FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA

- National Science Film Festival of India (NSFFI) is a flagship event of VigyanPrasar, Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India.
- The festival offers a unique platform to showcase the science films made by professionals, amateur and student filmmakers under various themes.

Background

- National Science Film Festival of India (NSFFI) aims to celebrate the science outreach through cinema.
- NSFFI is India's first of its kind of film festival where documentaries and short films on popular science, technology, health & environmental issues are being screened.
- It is a national level competition of science films being organised annually.

Highlights

- VigyanPrasar, an autonomous agency under the Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India.
- The national science film festival 2020 is being jointly by organized VigyanPrasar, and the Tripura State Council of Science and Technology, Govt. of Tripura.
- It has been organizing this festival as a part of its science popularization endeavour.
- The tenth edition of prestigious science film festival got off in a virtual mode.
- These include films in Hindi, English, Urdu, Malayalam, Kashmiri, Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi and Tamil languages.

5.30 PREFIX '0'

- All fixed to mobile calls will be dialed with the prefix '0' from January 15, 2021, said the Ministry of Communications.
- "With the consideration of TRAI Recommendation on 'Ensuring Adequate Numbering Resources for Fixed Line and Mobile Services' Department of Telecommunications has taken the decision of implementing the following: All Fixed to Mobile calls will be dialed with prefix '0' from 15th January, 2021.

Background

- There will be no change in dialing plan from fixed to fixed, mobile to fixed and mobile to mobile calls.
- Suitable announcement will be made for the same.
- This announcement shall be played whenever a subscriber dials a fixed to mobile call without prefixing '0'.
- All fixed line subscribers will be provided with '0' dialing facility," read a press statement from the Ministry of Communications.

Highlights

- According to the statement, A total of approximately 2539 million numbering series is expected to be generated from the above.
- This will free up sufficient numbering resources for future use.

- With the freeing up of sufficient numbering resources, more number of connections can be added in future which will be beneficial to the mobile customers at large.
- The above changes have been done in order to have minimum inconvenience to the subscribers and freeing up essential numbering resources, the statement added.

5.31 FDI IN TELECOM

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the FDI proposal for acquisition of 12.32 per cent of equity share capital, on a fully diluted basis, of ATC Telecom Infrastructure Pvt Ltd by ATC Asia Pacific PTE Ltd.

About Background

- The acquisition is being done as a result of exercise of option by Tata Tele Services Ltd (TTSL) and Tata Sons Pvt Ltd (TSPL).
- This share purchase would lead to foreign direct investment inflow of ₹2,480.92 crore, a government statement said.

Highlights

- With this approval, the cumulative FDI of ATC Asia Pacific PTE Ltd (ATC Singapore) into ATC Telecom Infrastructure Pvt Ltd (ATC India) will be ₹5,417.2 crore in financial years 2018-19 to 2020-21.
- ATC Telecom Infrastructure Pvt Ltd is engaged in the business of providing passive telecom infrastructure services to telecom operators, pursuant to various approvals granted to it by Department of Telecommunications.
- The company has existing FDI approval up to 86.36 per cent and with this approval, it will rise to 98.68 per cent, on a fully diluted basis.
- The inflow of foreign investment to India will spur economic growth; as well as foster innovation, the government release said.

5.32 CYCLONE NIVAR

A very severe cyclonic storm is likely to make landfall on the coast of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, according to weather experts.

The Meteorological Department said the cyclone christened 'Nivar' will cross the Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coasts between Karaikal and Mamallapuram as a very severe cyclonic storm with a wind



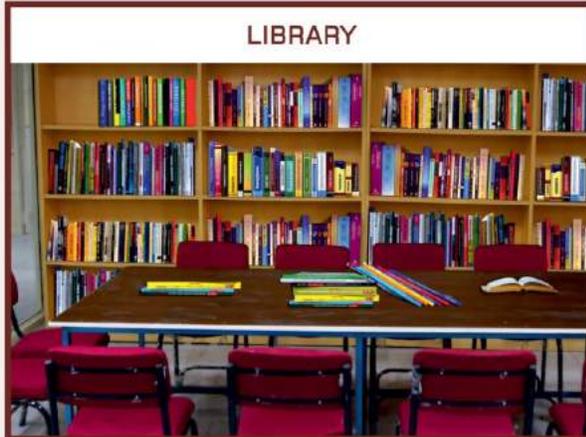
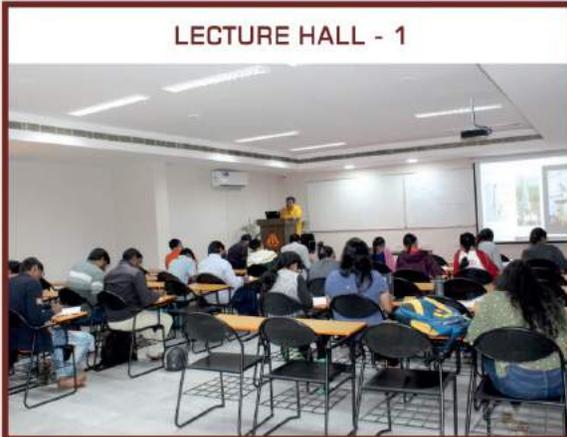
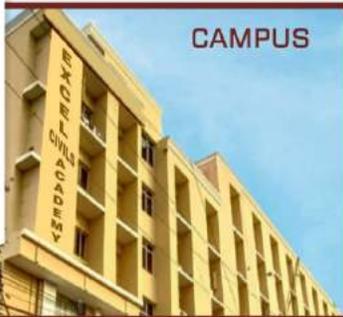
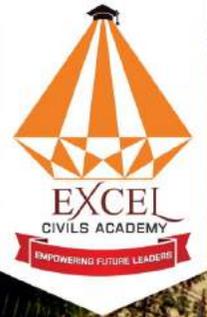
speed of 120-130 kilometers per hour gusting to 145 kmph.

Background

- Nivar is the second cyclone in the Bay of Bengal this year.
- In May, Cyclone Amphan had developed into a 'super cyclonic storm'.

Highlights

- With the arrival of the cyclone Nivar, the weather departments have predicted heavy rainfall in most places of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and Karaikal.
- There's prediction of extremely heavy rainfall for isolated places in southern coasts.
- The Tamil Nadu region witnessed intermittent rainfall influenced by the cyclonic storm, which caused traffic congestion and water logging in several areas.



A Monthly Magazine from
EXCEL CIVILS ACADEMY
NTR Bhavan, Rd. No. 2, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad.
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