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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Russian supermodel Vodianova is new UN goodwill ambassador

- Russian supermodel and philanthropist Natalia Vodianova has become a United Nations goodwill ambassador, to promote the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls and tackle stigmas surrounding their bodies.
- She will be a campaigner for the UN Population Fund, which now calls itself the UN's sexual and reproductive health agency, known as UNFPA.

Irakli Garibashvili as New Prime Minister of Georgia

- The Parliament of Georgia confirmed Irakli Garibashvili as Prime Minister along with a vote of confidence in the cabinet Garibashvili put forward. Garibashvili pledged to create a long-term development strategy for Georgia in his first one hundred days in office.
- First, on the agenda, Garibashvili will continue the essential work of the government to ably manage the pandemic and accelerate the focus on rebuilding the economy while continuing to strengthen Georgia's security and democratic institutions.

India, Australia and France hold trilateral dialogue with focus on Indo-Pacific

- A trilateral dialogue was held among India, France, and Australia on February 24, 2021, at the senior officials' level, with a focus on further enhancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The aim of this trilateral dialogue is to build strong bilateral relation among the three countries and synergies their respective strength to ensure a peaceful, secure, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.
- It must be remembered that the first India-France-Australia Trilateral Dialogue was held virtually on September 9, 2020, at Foreign Secretary-level, for better coordination in the region.
- At the senior official level, the Indian side was led by Joint Secretary (Europe West) in MEA, Sandeep Chakravorty, while the French side was led by Bertrand Lortholary, Director (Asia and Oceania), and the Australian side was led by Mr Gary Cowan, First Assistant Secretary (North and South Asia Division) and Mr John Geering, First Assistant Secretary (Europe and Latin America Division).

China Surpasses US to become India's top trade partner in 2020

- China has regained its position as the top trading partner of India in 2020, which was held by the United States, since 2018-19. The two-way trade between India and China stood at \$77.7 billion in 2020 despite the conflict along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the rising anti-China sentiment.
- The India-US bilateral trade stood at \$75.9 billion, according to provisional data from the commerce ministry. Meanwhile, the UAE continues to remain India's third-biggest trading partner.

Spacecraft Named in Honor of Black Woman 'hidden Figures' Mathematician

- A space supply ship, Cygnus NG-15 cargo dubbed as 'S.S. Katherine Johnson' has been

named in honour of Katherine Johnson, a Black NASA mathematician, who played a critical role in the success of the first U.S. crewed spaceflight, Mercury-Atlas 6 Mission. The S.S. Katherine Johnson arrived on February 22, 2021, and will be at the International Space Station until May 2021.

Cygnus NG-15 cargo:

- A Northrop Grumman-built Cygnus cargo ship, a space supply ship, was launched by NASA on February 20, 2021, from Virginia to carry vital supplies for astronauts on the International Space Station (ISS).
- The launch coincided with the 59th anniversary of America's first orbit around the Earth. On 20 February 1962, astronaut John Glenn, became the first American to orbit Earth.
- The space supply ship carried more than 8,200 lbs. (3,719 kilograms) of cargo including scientific equipment, fresh food and supplies, new hardware and spacewalk equipment for the seven astronauts onboard the International Space Station.
- Mrs Johnson was a pioneering mathematician known for her hand-written calculations. She helped astronaut John Glenn, to become the first American to orbit Earth, after personally verifying his Mercury missions' orbital trajectory calculations. Her contributions were also featured in the Oscar-nominated film Hidden Figures.

Israel launches "green pass" for people with vaccination certificate

- Israel has launched a coronavirus "green pass" system, which allows people who have been vaccinated to access public facilities that would otherwise be off-limits. As of Sunday COVID-19 inoculation is a sort of status symbol in Israel.
- Israelis who have gotten both Pfizer vaccine shots and those who have recovered from the virus get a "Green Pass" certificate in the form of a QR code or printout for people without smart phones. The pass allows entry to gyms, swimming pools, hotels, entertainment venues and sporting events. Green Pass privileges and restrictions are raising legal and moral questions.

United States officially re-joins Paris Climate Agreement

- The United States has officially rejoined the Paris Agreement, under the Presidency of US President Joe Biden. Earlier, in November 2020, the US had officially exited the agreement on the order of then-President Donald Trump.
- The landmark Paris climate agreement was signed in 2015, as per which countries are expected to enhance their commitments to curb greenhouse gas emissions every five years. The goals of the global pact are to limit global warming to well below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.

Youngest solo female to row Atlantic Ocean : Jasmine Harrison

- Jasmine Harrison on being youngest solo female to row Atlantic Ocean. Jasmine Harrison has described the moment she became the youngest woman to row solo across the Atlantic Ocean.
- The 21-year-old swimming teacher, from Thirsk in North Yorkshire, arrived in Antigua on

Saturday after a 70-day journey.

President Biden, Canada's Trudeau to meet virtually next week

- President Biden is set to have his first bilateral meeting since taking the White House, via a virtual get together with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.
- The session will take place Tuesday, with the two leaders expected to tackle climate change and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- "I look forward to renewing the strong friendship between the United States and Canada and working to tackle the shared challenges we face," Biden said in a tweet.

China Overtakes the US as Largest Trading Partner of European Union

- The People's Republic of China has overtaken the United States (US) as the biggest trading partner of the European Union (EU) in 2020, according to the data by the European Union statistics agency, Eurostat. Britain, which left the European Union in 2020, was the third-largest trading partner for the bloc, behind China and the United States.
- The trade volume of the EU with China reached 586 billion euros (\$711 billion) in 2020, compared to 555 billion euros (\$673 billion) for the US. Bilateral trade with the UK reached 444.7 billion euros.
- The EU exports to China rose by 2.2 per cent to 202.5 billion euros while imports from China increased by 5.6 per cent to 383.5 billion euros.
- Similarly, EU exports to the United States fell by 13.2 per cent in the same period and imports by 8.2 per cent.
- Exports to the UK fell by 13.2 per cent, while imports dropped by 13.9 per cent.

'Pahela Phagun' spring festival celebrated in Bangladesh

- The first day of the spring called 'Pahela Phagun' was celebrated in Dhaka, Bangladesh despite the continued shadow of Corona pandemic in the country. Cultural organisations held programmes at different venues in the city to herald the beginning of the spring. Programmes were held at the Suhrawardy Udyan, Nandan Manch of Shilpakala Academy and several other locations.
- The Jatiya Basanta Utsab Udjapan Parishad organized the programme at the Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka. Young women wearing yellow saris and youth dressed in 'Punjabis' took part in the festivity. The programme featured dance and musical performances. The traditional programme of 'Basanta Utsab' at the Fine Arts faculty in Dhaka university was cancelled since educational institutions have been closed till Feb. 28 by the government due to the Corona pandemic.

Preeti Sinha appointed to head United Nations Capital Development Fund

- The UN Capital Development Fund has appointed Indian-origin investment and development banker Preeti Sinha as its Executive Secretary, the highest leadership rank in the institution. She succeeds Judith Karl. He will work with a focus on providing micro-finance assistance to women, youth, small and medium-sized enterprises in under-served

communities.

- The New York-based United Nations Capital Development Fund is an autonomous UN organization affiliated with UNDP. It was established in 1966.
- The original mandate of UNCDF: to assist developing countries in the development of their economies by supplementing existing sources of capital assistance by means of grants and loans.
- The organisation provides micro-finance access to the 47 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) of the world, to help them unlock the full potential of public and private finance.

India accounts for 11 per cent of global death in road accidents: World Bank

- With only 1 per cent of the world's vehicles, India accounts for 11 per cent of the global death in road accidents, the highest in the world, according to a report by the World Bank.
- The country accounts for about 4.5 lakh road crashes per annum, in which 1.5 lakh people die.
- "India tops the world in road crash deaths and injuries. It has 1 per cent of the world's vehicles but accounts for 11 per cent of all road crash deaths, witnessing 53 road crashes every hour; killing 1 person every 4 minutes," the report said.
- In the last decade, 13 lakh people died and another 50 lakh got injured on Indian roads, it said.

US-Russia Extends New START Arms Reduction Treaty

- The United States has extended the "New START" nuclear disarmament treaty with Russia for a period of five years. The New START, which stands for Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, is a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation.
- The new strategic arms reduction treaty was formally signed on April 8, 2010, and after ratification, entered into force on 5 February 2011. The New START treaty was set to expire on February 5, 2021, but both the parties have further extended it for five more years, till February 2026.

Mario Draghi sworn in as prime minister of Italy

- The former European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi has been sworn in as Italy's prime minister at the head of a unity government called on to confront the coronavirus crisis and economic slump.
- Draghi, a respected figure at home and internationally, managed to convince almost all of the country's main parties to support his government, with leaders from the far-right League and populist Five Star Movement (M5S) adopting more moderate, pro-European tones in recent days.

India Gifts 2000 Tonnes Of Rice To Syria To Strengthen Food Security

- India has gifted 2000 metric tonnes of rice to Syria with an aim to strengthen food security in the middle eastern country.

- The first consignment of 1000 metric tonnes of rice was handed over by India Ambassador to Syria, Hifzur Rahman to the Minister of Local Administration and Head of Supreme Relief Committee Hussain Makhoul on Thursday, Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement on Friday.
- The remaining 1000 metric tonnes of rice is expected to reach Syria on February 18. The rice is being supplied in response to a request from the Syrian government for emergency humanitarian assistance.

Karim Khan: UK lawyer elected chief prosecutor at ICC

- Karim Khan, 50, currently heads a United Nations investigation into war crimes committed by the Islamic State group in Iraq.
- The ICC is the only permanent body investigating crimes against humanity.
- Mr Khan won the votes of 72 out of 123 countries in the second round of voting, and will begin his nine-year term at the court in the Hague in June.

Rashmi Samant First Indian Woman To Head Oxford Students' Union

- Rashmi Samant has made history by becoming the first Indian woman to head the Oxford Students' Union. An alumnus of Karnataka's Manipal Institute of Technology, Ms Samant in her LinkedIn profile says she is "a sustainable energy enthusiast who believes in effective policymaking and energy equality for healing the deteriorating climate of the world".
- Ms Samant won the students' union election with 1,996 votes, more than all her opponents put together, the university said in a post on its website.
- In her manifesto, Ms Samant promised to "tackle the institutional homophobia and transphobia", "decolonisation of the syllabi" and "remove all statues proven to be imperialist, including Christopher Codrington".

Pakistan Army successfully test-fires Babur cruise missile

- The Pakistan Army conducted a successful test-firing of a short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile 'Babur' on February 11, 2021. This test was the third missile test carried out over the past three weeks.
- The Babur cruise missile was launched from Multi Tube Missile Launch Vehicle.
- This missile is capable of hitting land and sea targets with "high precision" up to 450 kilometres away.
- Earlier, Pakistan army conducted a successful test of the surface-to-surface ballistic missile Shaheen-III in January 2021, followed by the 'training launch' of nuclear-capable ballistic missile Ghaznavi in February 2021.

Nigeria's Okonjo-Iweala set to become first female Chief of WTO

- Nigerian economist Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has been chosen as the next Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). She would be the first woman as well as the first African nation to lead the organization.
- Okonjo-Iweala, the former finance minister of Nigeria, will succeed Roberto Azevedo, who

stepped down in August 2020.

Indonesia approves China's Sinovac vaccine for the elderly

- Indonesia has approved Sinovac Biotech's C-19 vaccine for use in the elderly, a letter from the food and drug agency shows, potentially changing the country's strategy which has prioritised its working population first.
- The food and drug agency (BPOM) said in a letter seen by Reuters that it had authorised the use of Sinovac's CoronaVac for the elderly "taking into account the emergency situation of the C-19 pandemic and the limited information on the benefits and safety of that vaccine".
- It was sent to Sinovac's Indonesian partner, state-owned Bio Farma.

South Korea to Build World's Largest Offshore Wind Farm

- President Moon Jae-in-led, South Korea Government has approved a plan to build the world's largest wind power plant in the country by 2030. Currently, the world's largest offshore wind farm is Hornsea 1 in Britain, which has 1.12 GW capacity.
- The project will help to foster an environmentally-friendly recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and fasten the step to achieve the target of becoming carbon neutral by 2050.
- The estimated cost of the project is 48.5 trillion won (\$43.2 billion).
- The Windpower Plant will be located in the southwestern coastal town of Sinan. It will have a maximum capacity of 8.2 gigawatts.

Paypal to shut domestic payments service in India from April 1

- The California-based global digital payment platform PayPal has announced that the company has decided to wind down its domestic payment services in India with effect from April 01, 2021. The decision has been taken because the company wants to shift its focus on cross-border payments business.
- However, the global customer will be able to pay Indian merchants using Paypal. PayPal was a payments options on many Indian online apps such as travel and ticketing service MakeMyTrip, online film booking app BookMyShow, and food delivery app Swiggy.

India & Bahrain join hands for Renewable Energy

- The first India-Bahrain Joint Working Group meeting in the field of Renewable Energy was held in a virtual format on February 04, 2021, for promoting bilateral cooperation in the field of Renewable Energy. The Indian delegation was led by Dinesh Dayanand Jagdale, Joint Secretary, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy. Abdul Hussain bin Ali Mirza, President of Sustainable Energy Authority led the Bahraini delegation.
- Both sides also agreed to forge deeper engagement in capacity building and focused cooperation between concerned agencies as well as the private sector of the two countries in this sector, particularly in the field of solar, wind and clean hydrogen.

World's First 'Energy Island' to be built by Denmark

- The Government of Denmark has approved a project to build the world's first energy island, in the North Sea that will produce and store enough green energy to meet the electricity needs of three million households in European countries. The hub will strengthen the integration of Europe's power grids and increase renewable electricity production necessary for a climate-neutral Europe.
- The energy hub will serve as an offshore power plant gathering and distributing green electricity from hundreds of wind turbines surrounding the island directly to consumers in countries surrounding the North Sea. It is the long-term ambition to be able to store green electricity on the island, convert it to liquid green fuel, and send it via subsea cables to Denmark and neighbouring countries.

Facts about the energy islands:

- The artificial island will offer the best opportunities to expand the project, for example by building a harbour and facilities for storage and conversion of green electricity from the nearby wind turbines in the sea.
- The first-of-its-kind giant island will be as big as 18 football pitches (120,000sq m).
- A broad coalition of Danish parties have decided to establish two energy hubs and associated offshore windfarms. One as an artificial island in the North Sea and one at the Danish island Bornholm.
- An energy hub serves as a hub that collects electricity from the surrounding offshore windfarms and distributes the electricity between countries connected via the electricity grid.
- Furthermore, the abundance of offshore wind energy can be used to produce climate-friendly fuels for shipping, aviation, heavy industries, or heavy-duty vehicles.
- The two hubs initial capacity will be 5 GW triple the current installed offshore capacity in Denmark. Later they will be expanded to provide a capacity of 12 GW in total.
- The deal also established a final phase-out date of fossil extraction by 2050 and laid out plans for a just transition of impacted workers.
- Denmark is currently the largest oil producer in the EU, and it is the biggest producer worldwide to establish a final phase-out date so far.

Reliance sources world's first 'carbon-neutral' oil from United States

- Billionaire Mukesh Ambani-owned Reliance Industries Ltd has received the world's first consignment of 'carbon-neutral oil' from Oxy Low Carbon Ventures (OLCV), a division of United State oil major Occidental. This feat will further help the oil major to accomplish its target of becoming a net zero-carbon company by 2035.
- The Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) Sea Pearl containing the carbon-neutral oil from Permian basin, unloaded the cargo at Jamnagar on January 28, 2021. It must be noted that Reliance operates the world's largest single-location oil refining complex at Jamnagar in Gujarat with a capacity of 68.2 million tonnes a year.
- This transaction is the first major petroleum shipment of Reliance, for which greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the entire crude lifecycle, including oil extraction, transport, storage,

shipping, refining, subsequent use, and combustion, have been offset.

Andy Jassy set to replace Jeff Bezos as Amazon CEO

- Amazon.com Inc founder and CEO, Jeff Bezos has announced that he would step down as CEO of the company and become Executive Chairman in Q3 of 2021, i.e. with effect from July 01, 2021.
- Andy Jassy, who is currently serving as the chief executive of Amazon Web Services (AWS), will replace Bezos as CEO of Amazon. Bezos started the company 27 years ago, on 5 July 1994, as an internet bookseller.

Pete Buttigieg becomes first openly gay cabinet secretary confirmed by U.S. Senate

- Pete Buttigieg was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on Tuesday on an 86-13 vote to head the U.S. Transportation Department, the first openly gay U.S. Cabinet secretary confirmed by lawmakers.
- Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, who challenged Joe Biden for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, will oversee aviation, highways, vehicles, pipelines and transit, as well as efforts to ensure safe transportation in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. He will take a key role in a White House effort to dramatically ramp up infrastructure spending.

'Atmanirbharta' named Oxford Hindi word of 2020

- Oxford Languages, the world's leading dictionary publisher, has named 'Aatmanirbharta' as the Hindi word of the year 2020. The Oxford Hindi word of the year is a word or expression that is chosen to reflect the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of the passing year, and have lasting potential as a term of cultural significance.
- 'Aatmanirbharta' means self-reliance. The word was chosen as it "validated the day-to-day achievements of the countless Indians who dealt with and survived the perils of a pandemic".

Aung San Suu Kyi detained as army grabs power in Myanmar

- In Myanmar, a military coup was put in place on 1st February 2021, after the country's military detained State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi along with President Win Myint and other members of the ruling party. Myanmar military (also known as the Tatmadaw), took this step because they declared the November 2020 Myanmar general election results fraudulent, in which Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide victory in Parliamentary election 2020 to form next Government.
- The military has handed over the power to military chief Min Aung Hlaing and declared a state of emergency for one year. Apart from this, former general Myint Swe would be acting president for the next year. The 2021 coup d'état is the third in Myanmar's political history. The first two was held in 1962 and 1990.

- A coup (coup d'état) is the removal of an existing government from power, usually through violent means.

UN World Tourism Organization confirms 2020 as 'worst year on record'

- In accordance with the latest United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN-WTO) "World Tourism Barometer", the year 2020 was the "worst year on record" as global tourism suffered adversely due to international travel bans implemented to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. International arrivals dropped by 74% & worldwide destinations welcomed 1 billion fewer international arrivals than in 2019.
- This collapse in travel represents an estimated loss of \$1.3 trillion in export revenues, more than 11 times less during the 2009 crisis. On the regional front, Asia and the Pacific aced sharpest year-on-year contraction of 84% (-84%). It was followed by the Middle East (-75%) and Europe (-70%).

NATIONAL NEWS

Attukal pongala festival held in 2021

- Attukal Pongala 2021 is being celebrated on Saturday, February 27. It is a ten-day-long festival that is celebrated at Kerala's Attukal Bhagavathy Temple situated in Thiruvananthapuram.
- The all-women congregation was declared the largest gathering of women by Guinness World Records in 2009.

39th Agartala International Book Fair begins in Tripura

- In Tripura, the 39th Agartala International Book Fair with the theme "Ek Tripura, Shrestha Tripura" has begun at Agartala.
- State Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb inaugurated the fair yesterday evening in presence of Bangladesh Assistant High Commissioner Md. Jobayed Hossain and other state cabinet ministers and MLAs.
- While addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said a book fair helps in building a positive mindset among people and that ensures a positive approach for overall progress in society.
- Cultural troops coming from Bangladesh, Northeastern States including Sikkim will be performing various cultural events on each day as part of the fair.

Union Cabinet approves President's Rule in Puducherry

- The Union Cabinet has approved to dissolve the Puducherry Assembly and impose President's rule in the Union Territory, following the resignation of the Chief Minister, V Narayanasamy, whose government lost majority power in the assembly. The decision was

taken as no party claimed to form a government, following which, Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan had recommended President's Rule.

- The approval will now be sent to the President, Ramnath Kovind. The legislative assembly of the UT will be dissolved once the President accords his permission. Prior to this, the President's rule was imposed in Puducherry between March and July in 1991 when the JD-DMK coalition government fell.

PM Modi virtually addresses 2nd Khelo India National Winter Games

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has delivered the inaugural address at the 2nd Khelo India National Winter Games through a video conference. The second edition of the Khelo India-Winter Games has been organised at the world-famous ski-resort Gulmarg in the Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The event has been organised by the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council and the Winter Games Association of J&K. The sports activities at the games will include alpine skiing, nordic ski, snowboarding, ski mountaineering, ice hockey, ice skating, ice stock etc.

Chandigarh became the first Union Territory in India to launch Carbon Watch

- Chandigarh became the first state or Union Territory in India to launch Carbon Watch, a mobile application to assess the carbon footprint of an individual. Although the app can be accessed by everyone, it has specific options for the residents of Chandigarh to compile a detailed study. The application can be downloaded through a QR code in Android supported smart cell phones.
- Carbon footprint is the amount of greenhouse gases-especially carbon dioxide-released into the atmosphere by particular human activity.

Carbon Watch Mobile app:-

- As a person downloads the application, they will need to fill details in four parts Water, Energy, Waste Generation and Transport (Vehicular movement).
- In the category of Water, the person will be required to inform about the consumption of water.
- In the Energy category, the details regarding the electricity units consumed every month at the house, monthly bill etc and usage of solar energy will have to be furnished.
- In the Waste category, the individual will need to inform about the waste generated on their part and their family. In the transport section, the individual will have to inform them about the mode of transport used by the- four-wheeler, two-wheeler or bicycle.

Piyush Goyal addresses 6th International Conference on Pharmaceutical & Medical Devices

- The 6th edition of the International Conference on Pharmaceutical & Medical Device sector was inaugurated by Union Minister of Railways, Commerce & Industry, and Consumer Affairs and Food & Public Distribution Piyush Goyal. The conference which includes INDIA

PHARMA 2021 & INDIA MEDICAL DEVICE 2021 is scheduled to take place from February 25-26, 2021 & March 1-2, 2021.

- To encourage and bring forward the best technology solutions and manufacturing, for the overall growth of the Pharma & Medical Device sector.
- The theme of India Pharma 2021: 'Indian Pharma Industry: "Future is Now"'.
The theme of India Medical Device 2021 is "India MedTech Future: Innovate & Make in India through Global Alliance".

Kushinagar Airport Gets International Airport Licence from DGCA

- The under-construction Kushinagar Airport in Uttar Pradesh has received the necessary clearances from aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to operate international flights. Once operational, Kushinagar airport will become the third functional international facility in the state. Currently, the two international airports functional in Uttar Pradesh are Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport at Lucknow and Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport at Varanasi.
- Kushinagar airport will serve as the closest international airport to several Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Lumbini, Shravasti, and Kapilvastu.
- The new airport will boost tourism in the region & facilitate travel on the Buddhist circuit by providing direct aviation connectivity to the city.

Punjab Cabinet approves mission 'Lal Lakir' in all villages

- The Punjab Cabinet has approved the implementation of the mission 'Lal Lakir' aimed at facilitating villagers to monetise property rights and availing benefits provided by government departments, institutions and banks in all villages across the state. As no record of rights is available for such properties within the 'Lal Lakir', the same cannot currently be monetised as per the real value of the property and no mortgages can be created on such properties.
- The right of record of properties within 'Lal Lakir' in the villages of the state will be prepared with the cooperation of the government of India under the SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) scheme.
- This will enable mapping the land, households, habitation and all other areas falling within 'Lal Lakir'. It will go a long way in improving the living standard of villagers and boosting their self-esteem.
- There are households within the 'Lal Lakir', which do not own property other than the areas within the 'Lal Lakir', and are thus at a disadvantage when it comes to monetising or realising the real value of the property, according to a government statement.
- 'Lal Lakir' refers to land that is part of the village 'abaadi' (habitation) and is used for non-agriculture purposes only.

Kerala Governor Inaugurates India's First Digital University

- Governor of Kerala, Arif Mohammed Khan has inaugurated India's first Digital University

named Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Innovation and Technology. A Digital University has been set up in Kerala's Technocity, Mangalapuram. Kerala University is established by upgrading the two-decade-old state government's Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management Kerala (IIITM-K).

University has been started with five schools:

- School of Computer Science and Engineering;
- School of Digital Sciences; School of Electronic Systems and Automation;
- School of Informatics
- School of Digital Humanities
- Liberal Arts, covering science, technology and humanities aspects of the Digital world.

National Urban Digital Mission Launched by Centre

- Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri and Minister of Electronics and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad launched the National Urban Digital Mission' (NUDM) at a virtual event, to create a digital infrastructure for cities in India. The NUDM has been launched jointly by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs along with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- The mission aims to put in place a "citizen-centric" and "ecosystem-driven" approach to 'urban governance and service delivery in cities by 2022, and across all cities and towns by 2024. The mission has three pillars – people, process, and platform.
- The NUDM will create a shared digital infrastructure for Urban India that can consolidate and cross-leverage the various digital initiatives of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, to enable cities and towns across India to benefit from holistic and diverse forms of support, in keeping with their needs and local challenges.
- Apart from this, several other digital initiatives of MoHUA was also launched which includes: India Urban Data Exchange (IUDX), SmartCode platform, Smart Cities 2.0 website, and Geospatial Management Information System (GMIS).

Karnataka to set up a Flower Processing Centre

- The Karnataka State Horticulture Department is setting up a "Flower Processing Centre", in collaboration with the International Flower Auction Bangalore (IFAB), to convert unsold flowers into various useful products. The facility will provide support to the flower farmers who suffer huge losses whenever there is a glut or market disruption. Growers can learn the art of flower processing from the centre.
- The incubation centre will process flowers and convert them to value-added products such as natural dyes, floral papers, incense sticks, flower petal powder for cosmetic usage, floral embedded works, floral arts, and silica-stored flowers.

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat inaugurates ICOLD Symposium

- Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat has inaugurated the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD) Symposium in New Delhi. The theme of the symposium is "Sustainable Development of Dams & River Basins". More than 300 delegates from

across the country and abroad will participate in the Symposium.

- The symposium has been organised by the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD), at New Delhi in Hybrid format from 24 to 27 February 2021, in collaboration with Central Water Commission (CWC), Dam Rehabilitation Improvement Project (DRIP) and National Hydrology Project (NHP).
- Provide an excellent opportunity to Indian Dam Engineering Professionals and Agencies to share their experiences, ideas and latest developments in new materials and construction technologies, advancement in investigation techniques, best engineering practices, dam safety issues etc.
- Offer the opportunity to network with the world-renowned dam experts from different countries and global organizations involved in Dam Construction, management and operation and maintenance for mutual benefits.

Rajnath Singh inaugurates 26th edition of 'Hunar Haat'

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has inaugurated the 26th edition of 'Hunar Haat' in New Delhi. The "Hunar Haat" will be held from February 21 to March 01, 2021, with the theme of "Vocal for Local". More than 600 artisans and craftsmen from more than 31 states and UTs are participating.
- Through Hunar Haat, the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs aims to provide employment and employment opportunities to 7,50,000 artisans by organising 75 Hunar Haats by 2022, when India will celebrate its 75 years of Independence.
- The Hunar Haat is also available online at hunarhaat.org and on the Government e-Marketplace portal. Indians living abroad can buy products online as well.
- Hunar Haat is a beautiful exhibition of India's traditional art and craft and brings together indigenous artisans and craftsmen from across the country for the display and sale of their exquisite indigenous handmade products.

CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan Renames Hoshangabad as Narmadapuram

- Hoshangabad city in the state of Madhya Pradesh will be renamed Narmadapuram. This was announced by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan during the Narmada Jayanti programme held in Hoshangabad. Hoshangabad was earlier named after an attacker Hoshang Shah, the first ruler of Malwa.
- However, the city will now be called Narmadapuram, after the river Narmada, the lifeline of the state. The state government will now send a proposal to the Centre to change the name of Hoshangabad to Narmadapuram. The city is famous for its beautiful ghats along the banks of the Narmada river.

Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards 2021 announced

- The prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival awards 2021 were announced, to honour the best in Indian cinema, television, music, and OTT. Late actor Sushant Singh Rajput was posthumously awarded 'Critics Best Actor' for his performance in Dil Bechara.

Winner of the Award for 2021:-

1. Best Actor (Female): Deepika Padukone, Chhapaak
2. Best Actor (Male): Akshay Kumar, Laxmii
3. Critic's Best Actress: Kiara Advani, Guilty
4. Critic's Best Actor: Late Sushant Singh Rajput, Dil Bechara
5. Best Film: Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior
6. Best International Feature Film: Parasite Most Versatile Actor – Kay Kay Menon
7. Best Director: Anurag Basu, Ludo
8. Best Actor in a Supporting Role: Vikrant Massey, Chhapaak
9. Best Actress in Supporting Role: Radhika Madan, Angrezi Medium
10. Best Actor in Comic Role: Kunal Kemmu, Lootcase
11. Best Actor (Web Series): Bobby Deol, Aashram
12. Best Actress (Web Series): Sushmita Sen, Aarya
13. Best Web Series: Scam (1992)
14. Album of the Year: Titliyaan
15. Best Television Series: Kundali Bhagya
16. Photographer of the Year: Daboo Ratnani
17. Style Diva of the Year: Divya Khosla Kumar
18. Best Actress in Television Series: Surbhi Chandna
19. Best Actor in Television Series: Dheeraj Dhoopar
20. Performer of the Year: Nora Fatehi
21. Outstanding Contribution to Film Industry: Dharmendra
22. Outstanding Contribution to Literature in Indian Cinema: Chetan Bhagat

47th Khajuraho Dance Festival 2021 begins

- The 47th Khajuraho Dance Festival began in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh which is based on the Indian classical dance tradition. Khajuraho Temples come alive with splendour, beams, and the hustle-bustle of art lovers at the Festival. The first-day event is dedicated to Bharatanatyam performance by Geeta Chandran and her troupe and Kathak performance by Deepak Maharaj.
- The festival is being organized by the Culture Department through Ustad Alauddin Khan Music and Arts Academy Bhopal.
- This year festival will give the audience a chance to watch the performance of the dancers amid the aura of the temple as the event is being held once again in the temple complex of the Western Temple Group of Khajuraho after a gap of 44 years.
- The festival was hosted each year at the magnificent city of Khajuraho located in the district of Chhatarpur, the artists perform in the backdrop of historical monuments.

ICGS C-453 Interceptor boat commissioned into services in Chennai

- The Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICG) named C-453 was commissioned into services in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. This was the 17th interceptor boats out of the 18 which are being indigenously built by Larsen & Toubro Ltd.

- It is a 27.80-m-long interceptor boat. The boat has a displacement of 105 tonnes. It can attain a maximum speed of 45 knots (85 kmph).
- It is capable to undertake multifarious tasks such as surveillance, close-coast patrol, interdiction, and search & rescue. It will also provide assistance to the boats and craft in case of distress at sea.
- The ship will be deployed to do surveillance of the Exclusive Economic Zone and other duties in accordance with the Coast Guard Charter. This will help in safeguarding the maritime interests of India.

Rajnath Singh inaugurates DRDO skill centre for fire safety training

- Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh has inaugurated Skill Development Centre (SDC) for Fire Safety Training of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) through virtual mode at Pilkhuwa in Uttar Pradesh. The first of its kind in India facility has been created by Delhi based DRDO laboratory 'Centre for Fire, Explosive and Environment Safety (CFEES)'.
- The SDC DRDO facility will help in developing trained human resources, fire safety technology and products to save precious human lives and valued assets.
- The facility would be utilised for imparting fire prevention and fire-fighting training to the Fire Service personnel of Indian Armed Forces, DRDO, Ordnance Factories, Coast Guard and defence undertakings.

PM Modi inaugurates Oil & Gas projects in Assam

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has dedicated to the nation INDMAX Unit at Indian Oil's Bongaigaon Refinery, Oil India Limited's Secondary Tank Farm at Madhuban, Dibrugarh, and a Gas Compressor Station at Hebeda Village, Makum, Tinsukia remotely from Dhemaji in Assam. He also inaugurated the Dhemaji Engineering College and laid the foundation stone for Sualkuchi Engineering College in Assam.
- INDMAX Unit at Indian Oil's Bongaigaon Refinery
- Oil India Limited's Secondary Tank Farm at Madhuban, Dibrugarh – Rs 490 crore
- Gas Compressor Station at Hebeda Village, Makum, Tinsukia – Rs 132 Crore
- Dhemaji Engineering College – Rs 45 Crore
- Laid the foundation stone for Sualkuchi Engineering College – Rs 55 crore.

Dr Harsh Vardhan launches Mission Indradhanush 3.0

- Union Health and Family Welfare Minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan has launched the Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0, (IMI 3.0), to expand immunization coverage across the country. The focus of IMI 3.0 will be on children and pregnant women who missed their vaccine doses during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The IMI 3.0 will have two rounds, of 15 days each.
- The first round will begin on February 22, 2021, and the second round will begin on March 22, 2021.
- The vaccination drive will be conducted in pre-identified 250 districts and urban areas across 29 States and UTs in the country to reach out to every dropped out and left out the

child and pregnant woman.

L&T delivers 100th K9 Vajra howitzer to Indian Army

- Army Chief Gen Manoj Naravane has flagged off the 100th K9 Vajra tracked self-propelled howitzer built by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) at its armoured system complex at Hazira in Gujarat. L&T had completed the delivery of all the howitzers under the contract awarded in May 2017 ahead of schedule.
- The K9 Vajra programme involved the delivery of 100 howitzers with associated engineering support package covering spares, system documentation and training. It also involves the maintenance transfer of technology to an army base workshop to support the howitzers throughout their operational life cycle.

Assam CM lays foundation of first skill university of eastern India

- The Chief Minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal has laid the foundation of the first skill university of eastern India in Darrang district in Assam. The state-of-the-art skill university would be built with a financial outlay of Rs 1,000 crore.
- It will impart training to over 10,000 students in 12 disciplines. The university is expected to be completed by 2026. It will have “understandings” with countries like Germany, Taiwan, South Korea, Israel, Japan, England.

Prakash Javadekar inaugurates Atal Paryavaran Bhavan in Lakshadweep

- The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Prakash Javadekar, inaugurated the Atal Paryavaran Bhavan at Lakshadweep. Prakash Javadekar is on a four-day official visit to Lakshadweep from February 19 to 22, 2021.
- During the visit, the minister attended high-level meetings with the Secretaries of various departments in the Lakshadweep administration, participated in various official programmes at Suheli, Kadmat and Bangaram islands. The minister will also evaluate the major innovative initiatives of the Union Territory's Forest and Environment Department, so that Lakshadweep undergoes comprehensive development, without compromising its commitment to nature.

Kerala Government sanctions Rs. 9 crore to build 48 'Smart' Anganwadis

- The state government of Kerala has sanctioned Rs. 9 crores to build 'smart anganwadis', by converting the conventional anganwadis into “smart” structures with better amenities. The state Department of Women and Child Development has given permission for 48 anganwadis in the state to construct new buildings under the Smart Anganwadi scheme.
- These smart anganwadis are being designed and constructed as part of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS).
- These 'smart anganwadis' will provide early childhood care by making the facility more child-friendly to nurture the mental and physical development of children.
- It is expected to have various amenities, ranging from study hall, kitchen, dining area, storeroom, creative zone, garden to swimming pool and outdoor play area as per the

availability of land.

UP government to present first paperless budget today

- The fifth budget of the Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government, which is scheduled to be presented in the Assembly session at 11 am today, is going to prove special in many ways.
- The government is likely to present the biggest budget of the state's history so far.
- With CM Yogi increasing the size of the budget in every financial year, the fifth budget is also expected to be huge. Also, he has become the first such Chief Minister of a BJP-ruled state, under whose supervision the budget is being presented for the fifth consecutive time.
- The government presented its first budget of 3.84 lakh crore in the financial year 2017-18, 4.28 lakh crore in 2018-19, 4.79 lakh crore in 2019-20.

PM Modi to inaugurate Kolkata Metro extension to Dakshineswar on 22nd February

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the extension of Kolkata Metro's North-South Line from Noapara to Dakshineswar on Monday.
- The prime minister will flag off a train from Noapara to Dakshineswar from a programme in the Hooghly district, Kolkata Metro spokesperson Indrani Banerjee said.
- The inauguration, scheduled on Monday afternoon, will help connect thousands of people in the 4.1 km stretch between Noapara and Dakshineswar.
- Apart from regular passengers, devotees intending to visit Dakshineswar Kali temple will also be facilitated with a fast and pollution-free travel mode following the extension of the Metro Railway in its north-south axis.

Hyderabad Recognised as '2020 Tree City of the World'

- Telangana's capital, Hyderabad has been recognized as a 2020 Tree City of World, by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Arbor Day Foundation, for its commitment to growing and maintaining urban forests. Hyderabad is the only city from India to have been recognized as a Tree City, to date. With this recognition, it has joined a network of like-minded global cities that recognise the importance of trees in building healthy, resilient and happy cities.
- 2020 Tree Cities of the world recognition is the second year of the programme, which features 120 cities from 63 countries. Most of the cities were from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

India successfully test fires Helina, Dhruvastra anti-tank guided missiles

- Defence Research and Development Organisation has successfully carried out joint user trials of indigenously developed Helina and Dhruvastra Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM) from the Advanced Light Helicopter at the Pokhran deserts in Rajasthan. Helina is the Army version and Dhruvastra is the Air Force version of the ALH. The missile systems have been designed and developed indigenously by the Defence Research and Development

Organisation (DRDO).

- The Helina and Dhruvastra are the third generation, “Lock-on-Before-Launch (LOBL)” fire and forget ATGMs that can engage targets both indirect hit mode as well as top attack mode.
- The missile systems have all-weather day-and-night capability.
- They can defeat battle tanks with conventional armour as well as with explosive reactive armour.
- It is one of the most advanced anti-tank weapons in the world.

Cabinet approves PLI scheme for telecom sector worth Rs 12,195 crore

- The Union Cabinet approved a Rs 12,195-crore Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for domestic manufacturing of telecom and networking products such as switches, routers, radio access network, wireless equipment and other IoT access devices. Through this decision, the government aims to offset the imports of telecom equipment worth more than Rs 50,000 crore and reinforce it with “Made in India” products both for domestic markets and exports.
- The support under the PLI scheme will be provided to companies manufacturers of specified telecom and networking products in India like Gigabit Passive Optical Networks (GPON), base routers, Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM), Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS/ IPMPLS) and 5G/4G radios.
- The government will soon come up with a PLI scheme to encourage the production of laptops and tablet PCs.

Prime Minister launches ‘Mahabahu-Brahmaputra’ initiative in Assam

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has virtually launched ‘Mahabahu-Brahmaputra’ initiative in Assam. He laid the foundation stone for the Dhubri Phulbari bridge. PM also perform the bhumi puja for the construction of Majuli Bridge in Assam. PM has announced the details stated that the landmark day in the development journey for Assam as Mahabahu-Brahmaputra initiative is going to be launched.
- Mahabahu-Brahmaputra initiative is going to be marked with the inauguration of the Ro-Pax vessel operations. The Ro-Pax vessel operations will be launched in between the Neamatighat & Majuli, Dhubri-Hatsingimari and North-South Guwahati. This initiative also includes the inauguration of the Inland Water Transport Terminal at Jogighopa. The initiative will also be marked with the inauguration of various tourist jetties at four locations in order to promote the river tourism and employment across the state.

Odisha Govt announced Development Package for Maa Samaleswari Shrine

- The state government of Odisha, under Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, has launched the development work for the SAMALEI Project (Samaleswari Temple Area Management and Local Economy Initiatives), to offer the divine experience to tourists & devotees. The project involves the development of 108 acres of land in & around the 16th-century shrine of Maa Samaleswari, the presiding deity of western Odisha.

- Odisha Government has announced a package of Rs 200-crore for 2021-22 fiscal for the implementation of the project. The project will be implemented under MoSarkar5T and will focus on the beautification of the temple & economic development of local people. It will include the development of amenities for devotees inside the 12-acre temple premises and development of four tall heritage welcome gates.

‘Snakepedia’ mobile app launched in Kerala

- A team of scientists, doctors and photographers in Kerala have launched a mobile application named “Snakepedia”, that will present all relevant information on snakes, to help the public as well as doctors in treating snake bites.
- The main aim of the app is to help the public identify snakes, avail proper treatment on time for snakebites, bust myths about snakes, and protect snakes as well as snakebite victims. The android mobile application documents information on snakes with the help of pictures, infographics and podcasts and analyses its first aid, treatment, myths and superstitions.

Hyundai Develops Ultimate Mobility Vehicle ‘TIGER X-1’

- Hyundai Motor Company has launched a Transformer-like robocar dubbed as TIGER X-1, that can travel over the most challenging terrains on the Earth as well as on other planets. TIGER stands for Transforming Intelligent Ground Excursion Robot, and the X-1 denotes its experimental status.
- The Ultimate Mobility Vehicle (UMV) TIGER is being developed by Hyundai in partnership with Autodesk and Sundberg-Ferar.
- Tiger is designed as a battery-electric vehicle, comprising of a small pod with four wheels on extendable legs. it will be able to operate as either a four-wheel-drive vehicle or four-legged walking robot.
- The vehicle is unscrewed, meaning that its, main use will be to carry payloads over remote and inaccessible locations, and not the people.
- It will help in search and rescue, scientific research, military, or exploratory missions (even on new planets).

HCL Tech inks pact with IIT Kanpur to build up competence in cybersecurity

- HCL Technologies has inked an agreement with the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK) to collaborate in the area of cybersecurity. As part of the pact, the IT company will work with C3iHub, a specialised cybersecurity research centre at IITK. This collaboration will bring together the country’s brightest minds, advanced research capabilities and global resources to develop advanced solutions in the area of cybersecurity.
- HCL and IITK will bring in real-world industry exposure to carry out joint initiatives and research.
- The teams will develop a security framework and solutions for cybersecurity challenges in current and future operational technologies as one of the first areas of interest.
- They will also work together to discover and manage cyber threats, vulnerabilities, and risks for critical infrastructure.

Mamata Banerjee launches 'Maa' scheme to provide meals at Rs 5

- West Bengal government launched "Maa" canteens for providing subsidised cooked meals for the poor and the destitute at a nominal cost of ₹5. The govt will give a subsidy of ₹15 and people have to pay ₹5. The kitchen will run by Self-Help Groups (SHG). The government allocated ₹ 100 crores for this project
- The canteens will be open from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. every day. People will get a plate of rice, dal, a vegetable and egg curry. This new initiative is for common people. Though we give free rations there is still a huge demand for cooked food. Therefore, we are starting these community kitchens.

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy conferred SKOCH Chief Minister of the Year Award

- The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has been conferred the Skoch Chief Minister of the Year Award. The Award has been presented to the CM by Chairman, Skoch Group, Sameer Kochhar personally at Tadepalli in Andhra Pradesh. The award selection was based on a study of project-level outcomes in various States.
- Similarly, initiatives have been taken across the government to respond to COVID-19 and have shown desirable outcomes. All the above and more is evident in a year-long study of 123 projects from across sectors in Andhra Pradesh. The State has taken several revolutionary measures in the past two years to make governance more efficient and transparent. Innovative measures have been taken across sectors, the credit for which goes to the Chief Minister.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launches Pilot Pey Jal Survekshan

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has launched the Pilot Pey Jal Survekshan under Jal Jeevan Mission- Urban. The Pilot Pey Jal Survekshan has been launched in 10 cities, which are Agra, Badlapur, Bhubaneswar, Churu, Kochi, Madurai, Patiala, Rohtak, Surat and Tumkur. The motive of the Jal Jeevan Mission Urban is to provide universal coverage of water supply to all households through functional taps in all 4,378 statutory towns in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal – 6.
- To ascertain the equitable distribution of water, reuse of wastewater and mapping of water bodies with respect to quantity and quality of water through a challenging process.

IIT Bombay launches fundraising campaign 'Cherish IIT Bombay 2021'

- IIT Bombay has launched its first-ever annual fundraising campaign in India, Cherish IIT Bombay 2021. As per information shared by the IIT, the funds will be used for the creation of world-class laboratory complexes, modernization of lecture halls and continuation of awards to attract and retain faculty.
- The donations made to IIT Bombay by corporate bodies and individuals are 100% tax-deductible under section 80G of the Indian Income Tax Act.

Centre Launches new Instant Messaging platform 'Sandes'

- The National Informatics Centre (NIC), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, has launched an instant messaging platform called "Sandes". Similar to WhatsApp, the new government instant messaging systems (GIMS) platform can be used for all kinds of communications by anyone using a mobile number or email id.
- The need to build a home-grown messaging platform was felt by the government to ensure secure communication between people as they worked from home, following the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19.
- The Sandes app is also a part of the government strategy to encourage the use of India-made software so as to build an ecosystem of indigenously developed products.

IIT Madras-incubated Pi Beam launches PiMo e-bike

- An IIT Madras-Incubated start-up Pi Beam Electric has recently launched a sustainable electric two-wheeler, dubbed as PiMo. The utility e-bike has been developed for personal and commercial use. It does not require a licence or registration.
- The cost of the electric two-wheeler has been fixed at Rs. 30,000.
- It eliminates fuel costs as it runs on battery. The electric vehicle offers 'Battery Swapping', meaning that the drained battery can be exchanged for a fully charged one at designated locations.
- The battery can charge faster than a smartphone and comes with a range of 50 km.
- Pi Beam aims to sell 10,000 vehicles by the end of the financial year 2021-22.

Dharmendra Pradhan Participates in 11th IEA, IEF, OPEC Symposium

- The 11th IEA-IEF-OPEC Symposium on Energy Outlooks was held virtually on February 17, 2021, under the patronage of the Minister of Energy of Saudi Arabia HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud. From India, the Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Steel, Dharmendra Pradhan, participated in the symposium.
- The trilateral symposium discussed the long-term outlooks of key producer and consumer countries, apart from the comparative analysis of short, medium, and long-term energy outlooks that OPEC and the IEA published in 2020.

India joins Iran-Russia's two-day navy exercise

- India joined Iran and Russia in the naval exercise dubbed as "Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt 2021", which kicked-off in the northern part of the Indian Ocean. The Chinese navy will also join the exercise. The purpose of the drill is to enhance the security of international maritime trade, confront maritime piracy and terrorism, and exchange information.
- The drill will cover an area of 17,000 square kilometres (6,500 square miles).
- It will include shooting at sea and air targets and liberating hijacked ships, as well as search and rescue and anti-piracy operations.
- The exercise 'Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt' is so flexible that any country could join if they wish to do so.

Rajnath Singh launches e-Chhawani portal for online civic services to Cantt Boards

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently launched an online portal 'e-Chhawani' and mobile app, to facilitate 'ease of living' and 'ease of doing' for the residents of the Cantonment Boards across the country. The 'e-Chhawani' portal will provide online municipal services to more than 20 lakh citizens across all 62 Cantonment Boards of India while sitting at home.
- The portal can be accessed at <https://echhawani.gov.in/>
- The residents of cantonment areas can register their complaints regarding civic issues and even get their documents like trade licence, sewerage connectivity applications through the portal
- Jointly been developed by eGov Foundation, Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Directorate General Defence Estates (DGDE), and National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- A cantonment board is a civic administration body in India under control of the Ministry of Defence. It takes care of mandatory duties such as the provision of public health, water supply, sanitation, primary education, and street lighting etc.

Kanchoth festival celebrated across J&K's Chenab valley

- The ancient Kanchoth festival, a symbol of ancient Nag culture, was observed with religious fervour and gaiety across Chenab valley region of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday.
- The festival is celebrated by locals, mainly Nag followers who believe that on this day of Gouri Tritiya, Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati got married and the latter insisted on a throne made of snow as her wedding gift.

Odisha CM Lays Foundation of India's Largest Hockey Stadium named

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday laid the foundation stone of India's largest hockey stadium, Birsa Munda International Hockey Stadium, at Rourkela in Sundergarh district.
- Announcing that the Rourkela stadium will be named after freedom fighter Birsa Munda, the proposed stadium is going to be the most modern field hockey facility designed to host the Hockey World Cup 2023 tournament, said Patnaik
- The Stadium will be a new benchmark in global stadium design for hockey, offering one of the finest spectator experiences in the world and, with a chaired seated capacity exceeding 20,000, will become the largest Hockey Stadium in India.

Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren nod to HC bench at Dumka

- Chief Minister Hemant Soren has approved the proposal related to the formation of a bench of Jharkhand High Court in Dumka district. It is to be known that apart from the main bench in Ranchi of Jharkhand High Court, no bench is functioning in any district of the State.
- With regard to the establishment of the bench of Jharkhand High Court in Dumka district, the then Chief Secretary had directed the building construction department to mark the land. Apart from this, a letter was sent by the Law Department to the Supreme Court and Union Ministry of Law and Justice regarding the jurisdiction of the bench.

Army joins hands with Pune-based foundation to provide quality education in J-K

- Through this MoU, Army will get financial assistance for Army Goodwill Schools and Pariwar School Society.
- Indian Army's Chinari Corps on Monday entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (Mou) with a Pune-based Indrani Balan Foundation to provide better education facilities to the youths of Kashmir valley.

Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurates Gender Park campus in Kozhikode

- Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the Gender Park campus in Kozhikode on Sunday. It is an initiative to work towards gender equality and empowerment in the state.
- The Gender Park campus is a 24-acre space that will act as a convergence centre for various projects, cultural and academic engagements.
- Headquartered in the state capital Thiruvananthapuram, with its main campus at Kozhikode, the Gender Park drives policy, research, economic and social initiatives that work for a just and equal society.
- It found standing under the Department of Social Justice and is the first space of its kind in the world. Currently working under the Department of Women and Child Development, it aims to become a premier convergence point for gender-related activities.
- The Gender Park campus is a 24-acre space that will act as a convergence centre for various projects, cultural and academic engagements. The park includes a gender museum, library, convention centre and amphitheater.

Delhi Police receives Best Marching Contingent Trophy-2021

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh presented the trophies of best marching contingents of the Republic Day Parade 2021 in New Delhi on February 15, 2021. Jat Regimental Centre bagged the trophy of best marching contingent among the Tri-Services while Delhi Police was adjudged as the best marching contingent among the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and other auxiliary services.
- Brigadier Adarsh K Butail and Subedar Major (Honorary Captain) Virendra received the trophy on behalf of the Jat Regimental Centre and Special Commissioner of Police Robin Hibu and Assistant Commissioner of Police Vivek Bhagat, Commander received the trophy on behalf of Delhi Police. The two contingents were adjudged on the basis of assessment by two panels of judges.

Prime Minister hands over indigenous Arjun Mk-1A tank to Army

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has handed over the indigenous main battle tank Arjun Mk-1A to the Army in a function at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Chennai. Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Mukund Naravane received the model of the tank, designed and developed by Chennai-based Combat Vehicles Research & Development Establishment (CVRDE), a unit of the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO).
- A tank made in Tamil Nadu will be used in our northern borders to keep the nation safe.

This showcases India's united spirit — Bharat's Ekta Darshan,". The indent for 118 of these tanks would be placed shortly with the Heavy Vehicle Factory (HVF) at Avadi near Chennai.

Gadkari launches India's first CNG Tractor

- Union road transport and highways minister, Nitin Gadkari has launched India's first-ever diesel tractor, converted to a much cleaner (compressed natural gas) CNG variant. With this, farmers will be able to save more than ₹1 trillion annually on fuel cost, which will help them to improve their livelihood.
- This conversion is jointly done by Rawmatt Techno Solutions and Tomasetto Achille India. The CNG tractor will help farmers to increase their income, by lowering costs and help to create job opportunities in rural India.
- The farmers can save up to 50 per cent on the fuel cost as the current Diesel prices are around 77 rupees per litre whereas CNG is only 42 rupees per kilogram.
- The conversion from diesel to CNG will be beneficial as it is a clean fuel with the lowest carbon and pollutant content. It is also economical as it has zero lead and is non-corrosive, non-dilutive and non-contaminating which helps in increasing the life of the engine.

Puducherry launches campaign to become Covid-free by February 28

- In Puducherry, a campaign has been launched titled "Zero Covid by Feb28" to ensure that there are no COVID-19 cases by the end of February 2021, in the union territory. The overall caseload in Puducherry was 39,448 while 38,533 had recovered so far, leaving 258 active cases.
- Under the campaign, all those who had come into contact with people infected with coronavirus would be identified and provided treatment, so that the further spread of the pathogen could be prevented.

Famous Mandu Festival Begins in Madhya Pradesh

- The three-day famous "Mandu Festival" began at the historic town of Mandu in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh on February 13, 2021. The festival will culminate on February 15, 2021. The festival is organised by the state government of Madhya Pradesh to showcase each and every aspect of the ancient Mandu city, ranging from food, music, history & heritage, art & craft etc.
- During the festival, the state culture and tourism minister Usha Thakur inaugurated the newly constructed Dino Adventure Park and Fossils Museum in Mandu and construction of Astro Park building at a cost of Rs 59 lakh. The Dinosaur Park is the first modern fossil park in India which has 24 eggs and other fossils of dinosaurs on display.

11th edition of 'Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav to be inaugurated at Cooch Behar

- The Governor of West Bengal Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar in the presence of Minister of State (I/C) for Culture and Tourism, Shri Prahlad Singh Patel will inaugurate the 11th Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav on 14th February, 2021 at Cooch Behar Palace at Cooch Behar in West Bengal.

- The Ministry of Culture is mandated with the task of preservation, promotion and propagation of Indian Culture, both tangible and intangible which inter-alia includes traditional folk dances and art forms, performing arts and rich tribal heritage. It organizes cultural programs, festivals and theatrical performances to fulfill this mandate.

PM launches five developmental projects in Kerala, several crores worth projects in Tamil Nadu

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Sunday and inaugurated a slew of projects including the extension of Chennai Metro Rail Phase 1 and a Discovery Campus for IIT Madras. Mr. Modi also launched five projects in Kerala that would energise the growth projectory of the country.
- In Kerala, the Prime Minister dedicated to nation, the Propylene Derivative Petrochemical Project of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), launched the Ro-Ro vessels to be operated between Bolghatty and Willingdon Island and inaugurated the Sagarika International Cruise Terminal.

Skill ministry launches fellowship programme in partnership with IIMs

- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has launched the Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF) programme in partnership with nine Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) across India. Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Minister Mahendra Nath Pandey chaired the event on 'Transforming skilling through strategic partnerships under SANKALP' and rolled out the MGNF and other initiatives.
- The two-year government-funded programme has been launched under the World Bank loan assisted programme SANKALP (Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion).
- The selected fellows under the programme will be given a stipend of about Rs 50,000 per month during the first year and Rs 60,000 per month during the second year.
- Initially, the fellows will be imparted training by the nine top IIMs of the country and after that, the fellows will work on strengthening the District Skill Committees and the District Skill administration.

35 children's books in Parag Honour List for 2021

- Thirty-five books for children and young adults across fiction, non-fiction and poetry genres by authors like Vinod Kumar Shukl, Jerry Pinto, Nandini Nayar and Nandita Da Cunha in English and Hindi feature in the Parag Honour List 2021. Currently in its second edition, this annual list by the Parag Initiative of Tata Trusts features best of children's books published in the past one year.
- The list was launched Saturday by actor Soha Ali Khan, who said such curated reading lists can support educators, librarians and parents to know about the best Indian children's books being published each year. For this edition, Parag received books from 26 Indian publishers, published between October 2019 and September 2020. The PHL jury members were Arundhati Deosthale, Gurbachan Singh and Suneeta Mishra (Hindi) and Arvind Gupta, Prachi Kalra and Samina Mishra (English).

India's first dolphin research centre to start soon in Patna

- The society for the long-awaited National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC) is likely to be formed within a month, officials said.
- Last year, chief minister Nitish Kumar had laid the foundation stone of the centre and the fund for the building was also sanctioned to the building construction department (BCD), but things could not move beyond that.
- Principal secretary, department of forest and environment, Dipak Kumar Singh said that there were some issues with Patna University on the society formation, but that has now been sorted out. "The society will be formed within a month. The construction of the building in Patna University will also get underway soon. Fund has already been sanctioned," he added.
- With Prime Minister Narendra Modi also announcing Project Dolphin last year on the lines of Project Tiger to focus on both river and sea dolphins, the centre has acquired more importance. The project also got in-principle approval at the first meeting of the National Ganga Council (NGC), headed by the PM.

Muskan becomes the youngest zila parishad chairman in himachal pradesh

- While the pandemic-induced lockdown left many graduates in a rough patch with lack of employment opportunities, a 21-year-old woman in Himachal's Bilaspur district has made it to the limelight by becoming one of the youngest candidates to get elected to a Zila Parishad Chairperson's post.
- Like most colleges, Muskan's college located in Kala Amb in Sirmaur district shut when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out last year. When Muskan returned home to Barmana in Bilaspur she decided to contest the local polls and to everyone's astonishment she emerged victorious.

Odisha To Construct 'COVID Warrior Memorial' in Bhubaneswar

- In order to recognize the sacrifice and services rendered by the Covid warriors who lost their lives fighting the pandemic, the government has decided to construct a Covid Warrior Memorial in Odisha. The Biju Patnaik Park in Bhubaneswar has been selected for this purpose.
- Odisha Health and Family Welfare Department to the Works Department it was also said that the Works Department has been declared as the Nodal Department for construction of the Covid Warrior Memorial. They will engage an architect to finalise the design and structure of the said memorial and take approval from the competent authority.

Rajnath Singh inaugurates 'Jalabhishekam' campaign in Madhya Pradesh

- The state government of Madhya Pradesh has launched a water conservation campaign called 'Jalabhishekam', under which more than 57,000 water structures has been constructed. The campaign was inaugurated by the Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh virtually.

- Water conservation work is being undertaken with public participation and will be helpful in achieving the goal of building self-reliant Madhya Pradesh.
- The Campaign will also fulfil the intention of 'water for every farm and work for every hand'.
- The water structures were created during COVID era by linking the work with the MNREGA scheme.
- These water structures cost over Rs. 2,000 crore and will irrigate 2.50 lakh hectares of land without submerging an inch of land.

ISRO opens satellite testing centre for private sector

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has opened its UR Rao Satellite Centre for testing satellites developed by the private sector for the first time in its history. Two satellites, developed by the Indian startups SpaceKidz India and Pixxel (incorporated as Sygzy) were tested at the UR Rao Satellite Centre.
- ISRO also helped these two companies in fixing problems with the solar panels on their respective satellites. So far in its history, the space agency has only taken help in manufacturing and fabrication of various parts of satellites and rockets from the Indian industry. Both these two companies will also test their engines at the Sriharikota spaceport and Thiruvananthapuram rocket centre in coming days.

Manasa Varanasi crowned VLCC Femina Miss India World 2020

- Telangana-based Manasa Varanasi has been crowned as the winner of VLCC Femina Miss India World 2020. Manasa Varanasi was crowned by the winner of Miss India 2019, Suman Ratan Singh Rao from Rajasthan.
- The 23-year-old will now represent India at the 70th Miss World pageant in December 2021. Born in Hyderabad, Manasa Varanasi is an engineer by profession and works as a financial information exchange analyst.

PM Modi inaugurates World Sustainable Development Summit 2021

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the World Sustainable Development Summit 2021 through video conferencing. The theme of the Summit is 'Redefining our common future: Safe and secure environment for all'. 2021 WSD Summit is the 20th edition of the flagship event organised by 'The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)'.
- The Summit will bring together a wide number of governments, business leaders, academicians, climate scientists, youth, and the civil society in the fight against climate change. The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Ministry of Earth Sciences are key partners of the Summit.

Vijayanagara officially declared as 31st District of Karnataka

- The Karnataka government issued an official gazette notification to declare Vijayanagara as the 31st district of the state. The new district has been carved out of Ballari and named after the Vijayanagara empire that ruled from this region.
- The Vijayanagara district will have six taluks and its headquarter will be at Hosapete. The

other taluks in the new district are Kudligi, Hagaribommana Halli, Kotturu, Hoovina Hadagali, and Harapanahalli. The iconic cluster of monuments at Hampi or Hampe, a UNESCO world heritage site, will be part of the Vijaynagara.

Indian Army lays foundation of 100-foot-high national flag in Gulmarg

- The Indian Army has laid the foundation stone of the tallest 'Iconic National Flag' at the famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in Jammu and Kashmir. The flag will be on a 100 feet-high pole, the highest Tricolour in the Valley. The Indian Army in collaboration with the Solar Industry India will install the 'Iconic National Flag' at Gulmarg.
- The foundation stone for the iconic national flag was laid by Dagger Division General Officer Commanding (GoC) Major General Virendra Vats along with Bollywood actor-producer Arbaaz Khan and actress Vidya Balan. This iconic Indian national flag will be a first in many ways. The site is expected to become another tourist attraction, among the snow-clad mountains of Kashmir.

Delhi Cabinet Approves 'Mukhyamantri Vigyan Pratibha Pariksha' Scheme

- The Delhi cabinet has approved "Mukhyamantri Vigyan Pratibha Pariksha" in which Rs 5,000 will be provided to 1,000 meritorious students of Class 9 in schools of Delhi as a science scholarship. The scholarship will provide a boost to science education in secondary classes at the school level.
- Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal termed this as a crucial step for our government to promote excellent and talented students. Delhi government seeks to promote the pursuit of excellence and scientific temper among the children.
- According to the release, the students studying in Delhi schools who have secured more than 60 per cent in Class 8 are eligible for the examination. Students belonging to SC, ST, PH, or OBC category will be given a relaxation of up to 5 per cent of marks.

Tamil Nadu set to create state's 5th tiger reserve

- The Central government has given its approval for the creation of a fifth tiger reserve in Tamil Nadu that will encompass the Meghamalai and Srivilliputhur Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuaries. It will be the 51st Tiger Sanctuary of India.
- The Srivilliputhur Megamalai Tiger Reserve will span the forests of Megamalai wildlife sanctuary and Srivilliputhur grizzled squirrel wildlife sanctuary spread across the districts of Theni, Virudhunagar and Madurai. The 100,000-hectare area is home to a range of mammals and bird species and more than a dozen tigers. Forest officials have noticed 14 tigers regularly in both the wildlife sanctuaries.

India's 1st Thunderstorm Research Testbed to be established in Odisha

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has announced to set up the first 'Thunderstorm Research Testbed' of the country at Odisha's Balasore district. The main objective of the "Thunderstorm Research Testbed" is to minimise human fatalities and loss of property due to lightning strikes.

- The facility will be established in a collaboration between the Ministry of Earth Sciences, IMD, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). Besides this, the IMD has also planned to set up a first-of-its-kind monsoon testbed near Bhopal. Currently, both the projects are in the planning stage and detailed project reports are being made.

National Horticulture Fair 2021 begins

- The Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmer Welfare, Kailash Choudhry has inaugurated the National Horticulture Fair (NHF) 2021 on February 08, 2021, in Bengaluru via virtual mode. The five-day-long event has been organised by the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), from February 8 to February 12 at its IIHR campus situated in Hesaraghatta, Bengaluru.
- The theme of NHF 2021 is 'Horticulture for Start-Up and Stand-Up India'.
- For the first time, the event is being held in hybrid mode, i.e., the participants are allowed to attend the event online as well as offline. The NHF will showcase cutting edge technologies, crop varieties, pest and disease management practices and processing methods among others. The IIHR is a subsidiary of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR).

First Women Team Inducted in CRPF's CoBRA Commando Unit

- A maiden contingent of 34 CRPF women personnel has been inducted into its specialized jungle warfare commando force CoBRA. The contingent will soon be deployed in the anti-Naxal operations grid of the country. This women's contingent will undergo pre-induction training for 3 months and then deployed with the units in Naxal violence-affected districts of Chhattisgarh like Dantewada, Sukma, and Bijapur. The members of the 34 CRPF women personnel contingent have been chosen from the 6 all-women battalions of CRPF.
- The first battalion of CRPF numbered 88, was raised this day in 1986 at a CRPF base in Delhi. An all-women brass band of CRPF was also commissioned during the ceremony that was held to mark the 35th Raising Day anniversary of the first women's battalion of CRPF.

14th International Children's Film festival concludes in Bangladesh

- The 14th International Children's Film Festival of Bangladesh (ICFFB) came to an end in Dhaka. A total of 12 awards were presented to the winners at the concluding ceremony. 179 films from 37 countries were shown at various venues during the 7-day long festival organised by the Children's Film Society (CFS) of Bangladesh.
- Apart from Bangladesh, films from India, Armenia, US, UK, Ireland, Japan and China among others were shown in the course of the festival. Dutch Film Jackie and Oopjen were awarded the Best International Feature Film Award. Bangladeshi film Maati got The Young Talent Award while Lottery won the Special mention under the Young Talent Award.

Madhya Pradesh launches 'SAANS' campaign to reduce infant mortality

- The health department in Madhya Pradesh has launched the Social Awareness and Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully ('SAANS') campaign. The main purpose of the campaign

is to reduce the death rate due to pneumonia among infants a strategy is being chalked out under the Social awareness campaign in which medical staff is being trained.

- Training will be imparted at the community and primary health centres.
- Around 4,000 Health and Wellness Centres have been set up in Madhya Pradesh for this purpose.
- The State government has also developed training modules in partnership with PGIMER, Chandigarh, and UNICEF, which will be used to enhance the skills of health workers, including doctors and paramedical staff.

ONGC to establish India's first geothermal field development project in Ladakh

- India's first-ever geothermal power project will be implemented by state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) at Puga village of eastern Ladakh. The project, known as Geothermal Field Development Project, will be implemented in three phases and is planned to commission by the end of 2022.
- A tripartite agreement for this historic geothermal project was signed between Union Territory Administration Ladakh, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC)-Leh and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Energy Centre on February 08, 2021.
- Energy from the project will be used for giving round-the-clock power supplies to neighbouring villages.
- Hot Water from the springs will be used for space-heating
- Constructing hot swimming pools to attract tourists
- The development of geothermal potential will be useful during winter months, as Ladakh's hydropower stations are shut or work at lower efficiencies due to low flow rates.

Ramnath Kovind Inaugurates Museum Dedicated to General KS Thimayya

- President Ram Nath Kovind has inaugurated a museum, dedicated to the life of former Army Chief General Kodandera Subayya Thimayya, in Karnataka. General Thimayya served as the Chief of Army Staff from 1957 to 1961. The ancestral house of General Thimayya called "Sunny Side" at Madikeri in Kodagu district of Karnataka has been renovated and converted into a museum.
- A museum celebrating the life of former Army Chief General Kodandera Subayya Thimayya, housing a variety of antique weaponry and war relics.
- A statue of the General from Kodagu in uniform greets as one enters the museum, which also showcases a slice of Indian military history.
- The museum also acknowledges the contribution of General Thimayya's siblings, including two of his brothers, who too were Army officers, and his wife Nina, who was bestowed with "Kaiser-e-Hind" award in recognition of her work in public service.
- Key attractions on the premises of this war memorial include a battle tank, one of those used by the Army during the war with Pakistan in 1971.

Defence Ministry inks pact with BEL to procure ship-borne modern radio system

- The defence ministry has signed a contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) to procure a software-defined radio tactical (SDR-Tac) ship-borne system worth over Rs 1,000 crore. The procurement of SDR-Tac (software-defined radio tactical) “will bring strategic depth to the armed forces.
- The SDR-Tac is a four-channel multi-mode, multi-band, 19-inch rack-mountable, ship-borne software-defined radio system to serve ship-to-ship, ship-to-shore and ship-to-air voice and data communication for network-centric operations.

Film Karavan 'Bandra Film Festival'

- Online content distribution company FilmKaravan has collaborated with YouTube to launch 'Bandra Film Festival', a digital film festival, later this month with a slate of over 50 films from filmmakers across the country and across multiple genres, languages and formats.
- The festival is aimed at helping filmmakers reach large audiences virtually, while providing film aficionados with access to these films. The Bandra Film Festival will also allow viewers to donate funds to support the films and filmmakers of their choice.
- All donations will go towards supporting the chosen film and filmmakers, who are going through these challenging times.

Four more states complete 'Ease of Doing Business' Reforms

- As per the recent data by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), four more states have completed the reforms in the 'Ease of Doing Business', as stipulated by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance. The four states are- Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. These states have become eligible to mobilise additional financial resources to the tune of Rs 5,034 crore through open market borrowings.
- Now the total number of state that has undertaken the reforms to promote Ease of Doing Business till now has gone up to 12. The other states are Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

Reforms of 'Ease of Doing Business'

- Altogether, these twelve states have been granted additional borrowing permission of Rs 28,183 crore.
- In May 2020, the central government had announced to link grant of additional borrowing permissions to states who undertake the reforms in four citizen-centric sectors to facilitate ease of doing business.
- The four citizen-centric areas for reforms identified were -implementation of one nation one ration card system, ease of doing business reform, urban local body/ utility reforms and power sector reforms.

16th India-US joint military exercise 'Yudh Abhyas 20' commenced

- The India-US joint military exercise “Yudh Abhyas 20” commenced in Mahajan Field Firing Range of Bikaner district in Rajasthan. This is the 16th edition of an annual bilateral joint exercise of both the armies. It will continue till the 21st of this month.
- The previous version of the joint exercise was held at Seattle in the United States. This exercise is another step in the growing military cooperation between the two countries, which shows the growth in Indo-US relations. It is also a sign that both India and the US understand the threat of terrorism and are standing shoulder to shoulder in combating the same.
- About 250 US and 250 Indian army soldiers are participating in the exercise. Both the armies will share their war-related techniques, skills and experience with each other during this exercise. The exercise is one of the largest military training and defence cooperation efforts between India and the United States.

PM Modi launches Asom Mala in Assam's Sonitpur district

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is scheduled to visit Assam and West Bengal today, launched the ‘Asom Mala’ programme in Dhekiajuli of Sonitpur district. As per the PMO, this initiative will boost the state’s road infrastructure and contribute to Assam’s economic progress and improve connectivity.
- Taking to Twitter, PM Modi wrote earlier, "I will be among the people of Assam tomorrow. At a programme in Dhekiajuli, Sonitpur district, the 'Asom Mala' programme will be launched, which will boost the state's road infrastructure. This initiative will contribute to Assam's economic progress and improve connectivity."

Aakashvani Sangeet Sammelan renamed

- All India Radio, besides its regular music broadcasts, has endeared itself to its classical music listeners by organizing the Akashvani Sangeet Sammelan, in which prominent artistes from across the country perform.
- Speaking on the occasion, Shri Javadekar said "Doordarshan and All India Radio have opened the doors of huge musical treasure of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi to the general public. These recordings are now available on YouTube and the Ministry of I&B is making efforts to reach them to larger audience across the country.
- "Music has many forms and it has power to motivate us. Arya Sangeet Prasarak Mandal could function for 67 years without break because of the blessings of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi. Pandit ji was dear to one and all. The way he performed for shows in foreign countries similarly he performed for people of all the strata of life", reminisced Shri Javadekar on this occasion.
- Pandit Bhimsen Joshi was conferred the Bharat Ratna award in 2009.

Govt allocates ₹16000 crore for Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana for 2021-22

- Union government has allocated ₹16,000 crores for Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) for the fiscal year 2021-22 to boost the safety of farmers' crops and to ensure that

maximum benefit of crop insurance reaches farmers.

- "This is a budgetary increase of around ₹305 crore as against the previous fiscal year 2020-21, which reiterates the government's commitment towards the growth of agriculture sector in the country," the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare said in a press statement.

UP govt announces 16-digit Unicode to identify landholdings

- The Uttar Pradesh government has introduced a system of issuing a unique 16-digit Unicode to mark all kinds of landholdings in the state, an official said on Sunday. Every piece of land in the state will have its own unique identity from now onwards that would check cases of land disputes and save people from falling into the trap of fraudsters.
- The revenue department will be issuing the Unicode for marking all kinds of agricultural, residential and commercial land and a person will now be able to know the details of the land with a single click.
- The Unicode number of the land will be 16 digits with the first six digits based on the population of the land, the next 4 digits determining the unique identity of the land. The digits from 11 to 14 will be the number of the division of the land. The last 2 digits will have the details of the category, through which, the agricultural, residential and commercial land will be identified.

Uttarakhand Chamoli glacier burst

- The glacier burst took place at the Rishiganga power project after a portion of Nanda Devi glacier broke off in Tapovan area of Joshimath in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district on 7th February morning and damaged the Rishiganga dam on Alaknanda river.
- National Thermal Power Corporation's (NTPC) Tapovan Vishnugad project on Dhauliganga river and Rishi Ganga Power Corporation Ltd's project, with a planned capacity of 520 MW and 13.2 MW, respectively, have been nearly washed away.
- Many villages were evacuated as floods swept away five bridges, damaged homes and the nearby NTPC power plant, and washed away a small hydropower project near Rishiganga. National and state disaster response teams have been deployed, as have teams from the ITBP. The Army has sent six columns and the Navy seven diving teams.

Railways to run Kisan Special trains from Agartala to Howrah

- The North East Frontier Railway (NFR) has decided to run Kisan Special trains from Agartala to Howrah and Sealdah from February 11, for the benefit of the farmers and transporters of NE Region. Kisan Special Train will leave from Agartala at 1915 hours once a week on Thursday and will reach Sealdah on Saturday.
- The train will have stoppages at Dharmanagar, Badarpur, Lumding, Guwahati, Kamakhya, Goalpara, New Bongaigaon, New Alipurduar, New Coochbehar, New Jalpaiguri, Malda Town, Khaltipur, Bardhaman and Bandel for loading/unloading, a statement issued by NF Railway.

IRCTC launches its online bus booking services

- The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC) has launched its online bus booking services that went live for the service of the nation on January 29, informed IRCTC on Friday.
- "IRCTC under the leadership of Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution is gradually moving towards firmly positioning itself as the first government 'One Stop Shop Travel Portal' of the country," read a statement issued by IRCTC.

Modi to launch infra project in west Bengal

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit West Bengal tomorrow to launch key infra projects ahead of the state elections. This is Modi's second visit to the state in a matter of two weeks. He visited the state capital on January 23 to celebrate Parikrama Diwas commemorate Netaji's birthday.
- "These projects are in line with Prime Minister's vision of Purvodaya, of driving growth of the eastern India," the PMO said.
- On Sunday, Modi will inaugurate an LPG import terminal built by the state-run BPCL. "It will cater to the growing requirement of LPG in West Bengal and other states in eastern and north-eastern India."

Arvind Kejriwal launches 'Switch Delhi' campaign to promote electric vehicles

- Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal has launched the 'Switch Delhi' campaign to promote electric vehicles and appealed to people to buy such vehicles to combat pollution in the city. Kejriwal said his government will hire only electric vehicles for various purposes in the next six weeks.
- In the 'Switch Delhi' campaign, awareness will be created about the benefits of electric vehicles and how it can contribute to making Delhi clean and pollution-free.
- Under its electric vehicle policy, the Delhi government has planned extensive subsidies on purchase of electric two-wheelers and four-wheelers, besides waiving road tax and registration charges.
- More than 6,000 electric vehicles have been purchased since the policy launch in August 2020. The government has also issued tenders for setting up 100 charging stations across the city.
- The government has fixed an ambitious target of 25 per cent electric vehicles among total vehicle registrations in Delhi by 2024.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands becomes first Union Territory to be corona free

- Andaman and Nicobar Islands has become the first state or Union territory in the country to become Covid-19 free with active cases falling to zero in the islands. Health ministry's website reported that the last four infected persons in Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been declared cured. The UT had reported a total of 4,932 cases and 62 deaths from the

virus.

- The share of Kerala in India's daily cases crossed 50 per cent for the first time. There were 11,024 fresh cases in the country out of which Kerala alone reported 5,716, 51.8 per cent of the total. The state also has the highest count of active cases at 69,157, out of around 1 lakh 61 thousand in the country.

India hosts Indian Ocean Region Defence Ministers' Conclave

- India hosted Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Defence Ministers' Conclave on the sidelines of Aero India 2021. The conclave is an initiative to promote dialogue in an institutional, economic and cooperative environment that can foster the development of peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean region.
- The broad theme of the conclave is 'Enhanced Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Indian Ocean'. The conclave is also taking place at a time Indian and Chinese troops are locked in a bitter standoff in eastern Ladakh for the last eight months.

Kerala to Open its First Human Milk Bank

- Kerala will open its first Human Milk Bank (HMB) on February 5, 2021. This is a state-of-the-art facility, and Kerala Health Minister KK Shailaja will open at Ernakulam General Hospital. A milk bank was established with the support of the Rotary Club of Cochin Global.
- After the State Health Department signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Rotary Club of Cochin Global in 2020, its cost was 3.5 million rupees. The Association of Pediatricians (IAP) will provide trained nursing staff to operate the milk bank.

PM Modi Inaugurates Chauri Chaura Centenary Celebrations

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the Chauri Chaura incident on February 4 via videoconferencing. February 4, 2021 marks 100 years of the 'Chauri Chaura' incident, a landmark event in the country's fight for independence.
- PM Modi also released a postal stamp dedicated to the Chauri Chaura incident, to mark the beginning of the event. The state government of Uttar Pradesh has planned a year of celebrations in all 75 districts of the state in the memory of the martyrs.

HAL to develop world's first high-altitude pseudo satellite

- The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is developing a futuristic high altitude pseudo satellite with a start-up company, to strengthen the country's military strike capabilities. It is a first of its kind project in the world, where a manned aircraft will operate within the boundary and the unmanned aircraft will enter the enemy zone and can carry out strikes deep inside the enemy territory.
- Capable of autonomous functions, these unmanned aerial vehicles will also have all the manoeuvring capabilities. "It can straightway hit the target at a distance of 700 kilometres or can go to 350 kilometres and come back. It carries ammunition, missiles if needed CATS Alpha.
- The technology has been named Combined Air Teaming System (CATS). It will have a

manned aircraft (will be known as mother ship), operating from far away, and four autonomous unmanned aerial vehicles known as CATS Warrior.

- The satellite will be solar energised and become a big asset flying unmanned around 70,000 ft for 2-3 months and taking information.

Ayesha Aziz becomes India's Youngest Female Pilot at 25

- A 25-year-old Kashmiri woman, Ayesha Aziz, has become the youngest female pilot in the country. She became the youngest student pilot to get a license at the age of 15 in 2011. The 25-year-old from Kashmir who is the youngest female pilot in the country acts as a source of inspiration and a beacon of empowerment for numerous Kashmiri women.
- In the year 2011, Aziz became the youngest student pilot to get a license at the age of 15 and underwent training to fly a MIG-29 jet at Russia's Sokol airbase the following year. She later graduated in aviation from the Bombay Flying Club (BFC) and obtained a commercial license in 2017.

Gol launches unified web portal for monitoring progress of GOBARDHAN activities

- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Animal Husbandry Minister Giriraj Singh, Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Minister of State for Jal Shakti Rattan Lal Kataria jointly launched a unified web portal for monitoring the progress of GOBARDHAN activities across the nation.
- Gobardhan aims to positively impact village cleanliness and generate wealth and energy from cattle and organic waste.
- It focuses on managing and converting cattle dung and solid waste in farms to useful compost, biogas and bio-CNG.
- It will also help in keeping the village clean while increasing the income of farmers and cattle herders.
- It will be hugely beneficial for the country as India is home to the highest cattle population in the world (around 300 million in number) which produces around 3 million tonnes of dung.
- It will encourage farmers to consider dung and other waste not just as waste but as a source of income.
- It will provide many benefits to rural people by keeping villages clean and sanitized, improving livestock health and increasing farm yields.

Punjab CM launches 'Har Ghar Pani, Har Ghar Safai' mission

- Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh has virtually launched the 'Har Ghar Pani, Har Ghar Safai' mission as part of the government's campaign to accomplish the goal of 100 per cent potable piped water supply in all rural households. The scheme is being funded by the World Bank, Jal Jeevan Mission of Gol, NABARD, and State Budget.
- The scheme will benefit more than 1.6 lakh residents from 155 villages in Amritsar, Tarn Taran, and Gurdaspur districts by helping replace groundwater with surface water supply for drinking, besides resolving the problem of arsenic affected habitations.

- The Chief Minister also inaugurated one Mega Surface Water Supply Scheme covering 85 villages in the Moga district, 144 new water supply schemes for 172 villages, 121 Arsenic, and Iron removal plants.

Aero India 2021 Begins in Bengaluru

- The Aero India 2021 event, country's premier aerospace and defence exhibition, kick-started at Air Force Station Yelahanka in Bengaluru. The 13th edition of the international event touted as the world's first-ever hybrid aero and defence show will see several aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF), Army, Navy, Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL), and the Coast Guard participating in the show.
- The three-day event will focus on India's indigenous defence sector capabilities amid buzz around Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India campaigns.
- This 13th edition will see a combination of both physical and virtual exhibition with 601 exhibitors, including 523 from India and 78 from 14 foreign countries.
- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited would exhibit its Aatmanirbhar Formation Flight.

India's First Amputee Clinic Launched In Chandigarh

- The first of its kind 'amputee clinic' in India, has been launched by the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), a premier medical and research institution in Chandigarh. The basic intent of this initiative is to bring an Amputee as a near-normal functional human being in society. This initiative will attempt to provide appropriate management to amputees to guide them in their path to rehabilitation in society and will support patients with counselling and medical facilities during their treatment and recovery.
- 'PGI Amputee Clinic' in Chandigarh has been set up with the aim of improving amputation patient care by providing a collection of services under one roof with significant coordination. The clinic will provide social, mental and physical support to its patients.

Chiefs of Air Staff (CAS) Conclave Organised at Bengaluru

- Raksha Mantri, Rajnath Singh has inaugurated the 'Chiefs of Air Staff (CAS) Conclave' at Air Force Station Yelahanka in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The two-day conclave has been organised by Indian Air Force, from 3 to 04 February 2021, in a Hybrid Form with extensive use of digital media.
- The Chiefs of Air Staff from about 75 countries would come together on a single platform to exchange their thoughts on current issues related to aerospace power strategy and technological developments.
- The Conclave is a perfect example of India's Defence Cooperation with other countries working as a diplomatic instrument, giving an opportunity for building bridges of friendship, mutual trust and capacities on a global basis. Promoting transparency in defence cooperation and building areas of common interests in military aviation will be focus areas of the CAS Conclave.

Rajnath Singh inaugurates HAL's second Tejas Light Combat Aircraft's

- Defence minister Rajnath Singh has inaugurated Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's (HAL) second Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-Tejas production line in Bengaluru, ahead of the upcoming Aero India 2021. The deal to be signed in the next few days with HAL would strengthen the Indian Air Force's fleet of homegrown fighter jet 'LCA-Tejas' and overall combat capability.
- Last month, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had approved the largest indigenous defence procurement deal worth about Rs 48,000 crores to buy 83 LCA Tejas Mark1A fighter jets. The Aero India, which provides a platform for aerospace companies to showcase their products and services is scheduled to be held from February 3 to 5 at the Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru. During the inaugural day, 41 aircraft including Dakota, Su-30 MKI would participate in the flight display while there would be 63 aircraft on static display.

Ministry of Education launched ASEAN India Hackathon 2021

- The Union Education Minister, Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' has addressed the inaugural ceremony of the ASEAN India Hackathon 2021 on February 1. The Ministry of Education has launched the ASEAN India Hackathon 2021.
- The ASEAN India Hackathon 2021 is being conducted virtually from February 1 to 3, 2021. The 10 ASEAN countries are- Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, Brunei, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.
- The ASEAN-INDIA Hackathon is an initiative by PM Modi and is launched by the Ministry of Education.
- This unique hackathon presents opportunities for India and all the 10 ASEAN countries to improve and strengthen their economic and cultural ties through cooperation in science and technology and education.

Smriti Irani inaugurates 8th India International Silk Fair

- The Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani inaugurated the 8th India International Silk Fair on Virtual Portal on 31st January 2021. The five days event is being held on the Indian Silk Export Promotion Council's virtual platform due to COVID-19 pandemic. The fair is considered to be India's biggest silk fair.
- More than 200 overseas buyers and an equal number of their representatives in India are participating to interact with more than 100 renowned and big Indian companies manufacturing and trading silk and silk blended products.
- India is the only country in the world which produces all the four major varieties of silk, which are Mulberry, Eri, Tassar, and Muga.

Uttarakhand sets up Botanical Garden to conserve species of Shivalik range

- In Nainital district of Uttarakhand, a first of its kind botanical garden named 'Shivalik Arboretum' has been inaugurated, for conserving over 210 species of trees found in the

Shivalik range of Himalayas. Shivalik Arboretum aims to spread nature education among people so that they are able to feel an emotional connect with the trees, and make them more active towards conservation.

- The facility will showcase information like scientific information about particular species, cultural significance, medicinal use, country of origin, type of habitat in which it is found and all possible uses including as timber, dyes or any other peculiar use.
- Some of the trees preserved include Kafal (*Myrica esculenta*), Buransh, (*Rhododendron arboretum*), Tejpat (*Cinnamomum Tamala*) and Sanjeevani (*Sellaginella bryopteris*).

Venkaiah Naidu Inaugurates National Tribal Festival “Aadi Mahotsav”

- The Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the National Tribal Festival “Aadi Mahotsav” at Dilli Haat, INA, New Delhi. The Aadi Mahotsav 2021 is being organized from February 1-15, 2021. The festival aims to familiarise the people with the rich and diverse craft, the culture of the tribal communities across the country, in one place.
- The Aadi Mahotsav – A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Crafts, Cuisine and Commerce – is an annual initiative being organized by TRIFED, Ministry of Tribal Affairs since 2017.
- The festival will comprise of display and sale of tribal art and craft, medicine & healers, cuisine and folk performances, in which around 1000 tribal artisans, artists and chefs from more than 20 States of the country shall participate and provide a glimpse of their rich traditional culture.

India gets its first Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management

- A dedicated Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM) has been established at the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), Chennai, an institution under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. This was announced by Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Babul Supriyo on the occasion of the World Wetland Day on 2nd February 2021.
- The dedicated CWCM Centre would address specific research needs and knowledge gaps, give a fillip to capacity development and cutting-edge research on wetlands of India, as well as aid in the application of integrated approaches for conservation, management and wise use of the wetlands.

Lucknow metro becomes first to sanitise coaches using UV rays

- Lucknow Metro has become the 1st metro in the country to use ultraviolet rays to sanitise train coaches. For this, the LMRC has procured UV sanitization apparatus from M/s FB TECH, an Indian firm in Jaipur, Rajasthan. The Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation (UPMRC) has taken inspiration from the New York Metro’s experiment to sanitise trains with UV lamp rays.
- The apparatus, which was certified by the Defence Research and Development

Organisation (DRDO) in October 2020, sanitizes the entire coach in just seven minutes. However, in order to keep the train bacteria-free, the LMRC is sanitising each coach for 15 minutes.

- This is the same apparatus which was also used by the medical industry to sanitise cinema halls and medical equipment at the peak of the coronavirus pandemic in India.
- This apparatus is operated through a remote and has a switch on/off button.
- The radiation starts after a minute of pressing the on button. In addition, the initiative is economically cheaper than sanitization through manual mode.

Maharashtra tops justice delivery in India Justice Report 2020

- The second edition of the India Justice Report, India's only ranking of states on delivery of Justice to people, announced. Maharashtra once again at the top of the 18 Large and Mid-sized states (with a population of over one crore each) in the 2nd Edition of the India Justice Report, an initiative of Tata Trusts, followed by Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Punjab, and Kerala.
- Through a rigorous 14-month quantitative research, the India Justice Report 2020 once again tracks the progress states have made in capacitating their justice delivery structures to effectively deliver services to all. It takes account of latest statistics and situations as they existed prior to March 2020. It brings together otherwise siloed statistics from authoritative government sources, on the four pillars of Justice delivery—Police, Judiciary, Prisons and Legal Aid.

Sports Minister Riju launches anti-doping reference material

- Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports, Kiren Rijju has launched a breakthrough Reference Material for use in chemical testing in the field of anti-doping. A reference material jointly synthesised by the National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) and National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Guwahati.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between NDTL and NIPER Guwahati was signed in August 2020 which proposes to synthesize 20 rarely available Reference Materials (RMs) during a period of 3 years.
- This Reference Material (RM), has been identified by NDTL as one of the rarely available RMs globally and would be used to strengthen anti-doping measures in all World Anti Doping Agency (WADA)-accredited laboratories.

Smriti Irani inaugurates 8th India International Silk Fair

- Textiles Minister Smriti Irani today inaugurated the 8th India International Silk Fair on Virtual Portal. The fair is considered to be India's biggest silk fair, being held under one roof on Indian Silk Export Promotion Council's virtual platform. The five days event is being held virtually due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- Speaking on the occasion, Mrs Irani said that more than 200 overseas buyers have already registered and equal number of their representatives in India will be interacting with more than 100 renowned and big Indian companies manufacturing and trading silk and silk

blended products. She called upon the exhibitors and overseas buyers to take part in this initiative to celebrate the beauty and vibrancy of Indian silk.

- India has long history of silk production and is the 2nd largest producer of Silk. India is the only country in the world which produces all the four major varieties of silk - Mulberry, Eri, Tassar, and Muga.

India's First 'Gender Park' in Kerala's Kozhikode

- The Kerala government is all set to launch Rs 300 crore three-tower 'Gender Park' in Kozhikode. The park will become functional on the occasion of the second edition of the International Conference on Gender Equality (ICGE-II). The park will be inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Kerala, Pinarayi Vijayan, in between February 11-13 that will also mark the inauguration of the second edition of ICGE-II.
- The gender park was established with the aim of creating relevant interventions so as to address a range of gender-based issues. It includes both off-campus and on-campus activities and other projects that work to empower the individuals and communities.
- The gender park was established by the government of Kerala in 2013. It is an initiative that works towards gender equality and empowerment in Kerala. The headquarter for the initiative is in the capital of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.
- However, the main campus is at Silver Hills, Kozhikode. The campus has an area of 24-acre. The park has been set with its main focus on gender justice.
- The platform will provide an environment for policy analysis, research, capacity development, advocacy, economic and social initiative. The park will be operational under the Department of Social Justice. This space is first of its kind across the world.

SPORTS

R. Vinay Kumar announces retirement from all forms of cricket

- Former India international and Karnataka captain, R Vinay Kumar has announced retirement from all forms of cricket. The "Davangere Express" after running for 25 years and passing so many stations of cricketing life, has finally arrived at the station called retirement.
- Vinay, a medium-pacer, represented India in one Test, 31 ODIs and 9 T20Is between 2010 and 2013. Vinay retires as a domestic giant of Indian cricket having taken 504 first-class wickets in 139 matches that included 26 five-wicket hauls and five 10-wicket hauls in a match. With the bat, he scored 3311 runs including two centuries and 17 half-centuries. In 141 List A matches, the 37-year-old took 225 wickets at 24.39 and scored 1198 runs including four half-centuries.

Yusuf Pathan announces retirement from all forms of cricket

- Former India all-rounder, Yusuf Pathan has announced his retirement from all formats of cricket. He played 57 ODIs and 22 T20Is for India since making his international debut in 2007. He was part of the Indian team that won the ICC T20 World Cup 2007 and ICC Cricket World Cup 2011. He scored 810 ODI runs and 236 T20I runs for India. He also picked up 46 wickets in limited-overs international cricket.

- Yusuf played 100 first-class matches, scoring 4825 runs and picking up 201 wickets. In List A cricket, the right-handed batsman accumulated 4797 runs and got 124 wickets from 199 matches. He last played for India in an ODI against South Africa at Johannesburg in March 2012.

Karnataka to Host 2nd Khelo India University Games 2021

- The second edition of the Khelo India University Games (KIUG) 2021, is scheduled to be held in Karnataka. This announcement was made by the Karnataka Chief Minister, Shri BS Yediyurappa and Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Kiren Rijiju. The KIUG-2021 will be hosted by JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru, in partnership with the Association of Indian Universities (AIU). In 2021, Yogasana and Mallakhamb have been added to the University Games, in an effort to preserve and promote the century-old sporting disciplines of the country.
- The games will be conducted in the U-25 age category in accordance with the World University Games norms.
- KIUG is the largest University Games in India and is aimed at tapping sporting talent who can represent India in international events, including the Olympics.
- The first edition of KIUG was held in Bhubaneswar in February 2020, and saw a total participation of 3182 athletes in the U-25 age group, across 158 universities and colleges from all states.

World's biggest cricket stadium set for first match

- The biggest cricket stadium in the world will hold its first international match, with the newly renovated Sardar Patel Stadium to host the third Test between India and England. Both India and England had a forgettable outing in their last pink-ball outings.
- The stadium is also known as Motera Stadium, the venue in Ahmedabad was first opened in the early 1980s but has recently been rebuilt and now has a seating capacity of 110,000.
- Motera currently is the biggest cricket stadium in the world in terms of capacity.
- The last time when India played a cricket match at Motera was way back in 2014.

Novak Djokovic and Naomi Osaka wins Australian Open 2021

- In tennis, Japan's Naomi Osaka won her fourth Grand Slam title on February 20, 2021, after she beat American Jennifer Brady in the women's singles game of the Australian Open final 2021. The four Grand Slam title for Osaka comes two Australian Open titles (2021 and 2019) and two US Open title (2018 and 2020). In Men's singles final, Novak Djokovic claimed his ninth Australian Open crown and the 18th Major Grand Slam overall, as he defeated Daniil Medvedev.
- Men's Singles: Novak Djokovic (Serbia) defeated Daniil Medvedev (Russia)
- Women's Singles: Naomi Osaka (Japan) defeated Jennifer Brady (US)
- Men's Doubles: Ivan Dodig of Croatia and Filip Polášek (Slovakia) defeated Rajeev Ram (US) and Joe Salisbury (UK)
- Women's Doubles: Elise Mertens (Belgium) and Aryna Sabalenka (Belarus) defeated

- Barbora Krejčíková (Czech Republic) and Kateřina Siniaková (Czech Republic)
- Mixed Doubles: Barbora Krejčíková (Czech Republic) and Rajeev Ram of the US defeated the Australian pair of Samantha Stosur and Matthew Ebden.

Sri Lanka pacer Dhammika Prasad quits international cricket

- Sri Lanka fast bowler Dhammika Prasad has announced his retirement from international cricket. He represented Sri Lanka in 25 Tests and 24 ODIs, bagging 75 and 32 wickets respectively.
- He also played alone T20 International against Australia in 2011. Prasad last played a Test match in October 2015 against the West Indies.

Manika Batra Wins Singles Title at 82nd National Table Tennis Championship

- India's top-ranked table tennis player Manika Batra beat Reeth Rishya, 4-2, in the women's singles final, to win the 82nd Senior National Table Tennis Championship, at the Tau Devi Lal Sports Complex in Panchkula, Haryana.
- It was Manika's second Nationals title. She won her maiden national title in 2015 in Hyderabad.

Chris Morris becomes IPL's most expensive player

- Former Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) superstar and South African all-rounder Chris Morris shattered all records at the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2021 auction in Chennai. Rajasthan Royals went all-out for the South African all-rounder Morris, buying him for a whopping INR 16.25 crore.
- Morris, who was declared surplus to requirement by the Virat Kohli-led side after the conclusion of the IPL 2020 last year, turned out to be the most expensive player bought in the history of the cash-rich tournament.

Kings XI Punjab renamed as Punjab Kings ahead of IPL auction

- The IPL Franchise, Kings XI Punjab has formally been renamed as Punjab Kings ahead of the Indian Premier League auction. The new brand name and logo of the team was officially released by the management.
- The Punjab-based IPL franchise 'Punjab Kings' is co-owned by Bollywood actress Preity Zinta, along with businessman Ness Wadia, Mohit Burman and Karn Paul. The side is currently led by batsman KL Rahul, with former Indian captain Anil Kumble as its head coach.

South Africa's Faf du Plessis retires from Test cricket

- Former captain of South Africa, Faf du Plessis has announced his retirement from Test cricket. The 36-year-old made his Test debut in November 2012 and played a total of 69 games in the longest format.
- He scored 4163 runs in his Test career, at an average of 40.02, with 10 centuries and 21 fifties.

Naman Ojha announces retirement from all forms of cricket

- Former India wicketkeeper-batsman Naman Ojha has announced his retirement, from all formats of cricket. He made his first-class debut for Madhya Pradesh in 2000-01. The 37-year-old from Madhya Pradesh holds the record for the most dismissals by a wicketkeeper in the Ranji Trophy.
- He has also represented India in all three formats, featuring in one Test, one ODI and two T20 Internationals.

Ishant Sharma becomes third Indian pacer to take 300 Test wickets

- Indian fast bowler Ishant Sharma became the sixth Indian and third pacer from the country to take 300 wickets in Test cricket. The 32-year-old Ishant reached the milestone in 98 matches, more than the other Indian bowlers in the club. Ishant reached the landmark when he trapped Dan Lawrence with a delivery that swung back sharply before hitting his pads in England's second innings on the fourth day of the opening Test.
- Besides Anil Kumble (619) and Kapil Dev (434), Ravichandran Ashwin (377 before this game), Harbhajan Singh (417), and Zaheer Khan (311) are the other bowlers from the country who have reached the landmark.

Rishabh Pant wins inaugural ICC Player of the Month January 2021

- The Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant has won the inaugural ICC Player of the Month award 2021. Pant has been honoured for his superlative performances in the two Tests against Australia in January 2021, wherein he scored a 97 at Sydney and an unbeaten 89 at Brisbane, leading India to an incredible series win.
- Apart from this, Shabnim Ismail of South Africa has been named the ICC Women's Player of the Month following her performances across three ODIs and two T20Is in January 2021. A fast bowler, Ismail took seven wickets in ODI series against Pakistan to gain victory and five wickets in the second T20 International against the same opposition.

Steve Smith claims Allan Border Medal for third time in his career

- Former Australian captain Steve Smith won the third Allan Border Medal of his career at the Australian Cricket Awards for the period 2020-21. The Allan Border Medal recognises the most outstanding male Australian cricketer of the past season as voted by his peers, the media and umpires.
- Apart from this, Beth Mooney bagged Belinda Clarke Award, the top honour for a female player at the Australian Cricket Awards. This is the maiden Belinda Clarke Award for Mooney.

Joe Root becomes first batsman to score 200 in 100th Test

- Joe Root, the England captain, sent India on a leather hunt, becoming the first player in history to score a double century in his 100th Test match. In the process, Root also surpassed former Pakistan captain Inzamam-Ul-Haq as the player with the highest individual score playing the 100th Test match of his career.
- Inzamam had hit 184 against India in a Test match in Bengaluru in 2005, which Pakistan had won by 168 runs.

Ashok Dinda announces retirement from all forms of cricket

- Fast bowler Ashok Dinda, has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. The 36-year-old right-handed pacer made his first-class debut for Bengal in 2005 and played for 15 years in Bengal cricket.
- He made his international debut in 2009, in a T20I against Sri Lanka, followed by making his ODI debut in Zimbabwe in 2010. He played 13 ODIs and 9 T20I matches for India. He played 116 first-class matches for Bengal, taking 420 wickets at a bowling average of 28.28.

Former pacer Merv Hughes inducted into Australian Cricket Hall of Fame

- Former right-arm fast bowler Merv Hughes has been inducted into the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame. The 59-year-old played 53 Tests and 33 ODIs for Australia in a career spanning from 1985 to 1994, during which he captured 212 Test wickets and 38 ODI wickets.
- His career-best figures of 8-87 against the West Indies at the WACA in 1988 included the final wicket of a hat-trick spread across three separate overs, two innings and two different days. In 2005, Hughes became a selector for the Australian cricket team, a role he would hold through until 2010.

Tamil Nadu Beat Baroda to claim Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy

- Tamil Nadu beat Baroda in the final to win the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy 2020-21. The tournament was the twelfth edition of Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and was played at Sardar Patel Stadium (Motera Stadium), Ahmedabad. The Player of the match title was won by Manimaran Siddharth (Tamil Nadu) who picked 4 wickets, conceding 20 runs. They needed 121 runs to win, which they achieved in 18 overs with 7 wickets.
- Tamil Nadu team was lead by Dinesh Karthik (captain). This is the second Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) title for Tamil Nadu and their first title in 13 years. The team claimed their first SMAT title in 2006-07, that too under Karthik's captaincy.

India top medals tally at first Asian Online Shooting Championship

- The Indian shooting contingent has topped the medals tally in the first-ever Asian Online Shooting Championship, organised by Kuwait Shooting Federation. The 24-member Indian shooting contingent won total 11 medals, which included four gold medals, two silver and five bronze medals. 274 shooters from 22 Asian countries took part in the competition.
- List of Indian Medalist:

Gold

- Saurabh Chaudhary – men's 10m air pistol
- Divyansh Singh Panwar- men's 10m air rifle
- Kynan Chenai – men's trap
- Rajeshwari Kumari – women's trap

Silver

- Arjun Babuta – men's 10m air rifle
- Shreyasi Singh – women's trap

Bronze

- Manu Bhaker – women's 10m air pistol
- Sarabjot Singh – men's 10m air pistol
- Deepak Kumar – men's 10m air rifle
- Prithviraj Tondaiman – men's trap
- Manish Keer – women's trap

BCCI cancels Ranji Trophy 2020-21 for first time

- The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has decided not to conduct the Ranji Trophy in 2020-21. This will be the first time in 87 years since its inception in 1934-35, that India's premier first-class cricket national championship will not be held in 2020-21 domestic season.
- Instead on Ranji Trophy, BCCI has decided to conduct the Vijay Hazare Trophy 50-over tournament and Senior Women's One Day tournament after the completion of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DRDO Conducts Two Successful Launches of VL-SRSAM Missile System

- Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) has conducted two successful launches of Vertical Launch Short Range Surface to Air Missile (VL-SRSAM). DRDO carried out the launch from a static vertical launcher from Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the coast of Odisha. The launches were monitored by senior scientists from various DRDO labs involved in the design and development of the system. During the test launches, flight path and vehicle performance parameters were monitored using flight data, captured by various Range instruments.
- The VL-SRSAM is indigenously designed and developed by DRDO for the Indian Navy, VL-SRSAM aims to neutralize various aerial threats at close ranges including sea-skimming targets.
- The missiles intercepted the simulated targets with pinpoint accuracy. The missiles were tested for minimum and maximum range. VL-SRSAM with Weapon Control System was deployed during the trials.

Perseverance rover has successfully landed on Mars

- The NASA Perseverance rover safely landed on Mars after its 292.5 million-mile journey

from Earth. The rover has been on a nearly 300 million-mile journey since it left Earth more than 6 months ago. Perseverance and her teams lived up to the namesake, overcoming the challenges of preparing for the journey's final stages during a pandemic. The attitude control system is responsible for pointing the rover in the direction it needs to be and also helps figure out where the spacecraft is oriented in space.

- Indian-American named Dr Swati Mohan, who first confirmed that the rover had survived a particularly tricky plunge into the Martian atmosphere. Mohan, who successfully spearheaded the development of attitude control and the landing system for the rover, was among the team of scientists behind the historic mission.

Indian Navy Ship Pralaya Participates in NAVDEX 21 and IDEX 21

- Indian Naval Ship Pralaya reached Abu Dhabi in UAE to participate in the Naval Defence Exhibition (NAVDEX 21) and International Defence Exhibition (IDEX 21) from February 20 to 25, 2021. NAVDEX 21 and IDEX 21 is one of the leading international naval and defence exhibitions of the region. Participation of INS Pralaya will showcase the strengths of India's indigenous shipbuilding, in line with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of 'AtmaNirbhar Bharat'.
- It is the second ship of the indigenously built Prabal Class Missile Vessels, built indigenously at Goa Shipyard Limited.
- The ship was commissioned in the Indian Navy on 18 December 2002 to perform a wide variety of surface warfare missions.
- The 56 m longship, displacing about 560 T is capable of speeds in excess of 35 knots.
- It is fitted with an impressive array of weapons and sensors, like 76.2 mm medium range gun, 30 mm close-range guns, chaff launchers and long-range surface to surface missiles.

SpaceX launches 19th Starlink mission, misses booster landing

- SpaceX successfully launched 60 more Starlink satellites on February 15 as part of 19th Starlink mission but failed to land Falcon 9 rocket's reusable first-stage booster.
- SpaceX did not immediately disclose what occurred during the failed landing. Earlier, SpaceX had disclosed that its Starlink satellite internet service has "over 10,000 users in the US and abroad".

Indian astronomers detect huge optical flare in black hole 'BL Lacertae'

- Indian astronomers have reported one of the strongest flares from a feeding supermassive black hole or blazar called BL Lacertae, analysis of which can help trace the mass of the black hole and the source of this emission, the Department of Science and Technology said.
- Blazars or feeding supermassive black holes in the heart of distant galaxies receive a lot of attention from the astronomical community because of their complicated emission mechanism.

India's Homegrown App MapMyIndia Ties Up With ISRO

- India's homegrown app MapMyIndia ties up with ISRO to build an alternative to Google

Maps. The agreement between ISRO and MapmyIndia is suggested to become an alternative to Google maps and similar platforms. The collaboration with MapMyIndia will turn out to be a benefit for users because it will use digital maps of MapmyIndia and satellite imagery and earth observation data of ISRO.

- According to this collaboration the mapping data along with the information regarding pollution, agricultural output, weather, land-use changes, flood and several disasters will be visible to the users. Rohan Verma, CEO of MapmyIndia, called the agreement a path-breaking milestone with the aim of fulfilling the objective of Atamanirbhar Bharat.
- About the app:
 - The app will benefit the Indians because it will ensure the maps according to the true sovereignty of India while depicting the Indian borders as per the Indian government. The Department of Space signed an MoU with CE Info Systems Private Limited, a geospatial technology company owned by MapmyIndia.
 - The most exhaustive digital map database of the country was created indigenously over the last 25 years by MapmyIndia covers 7.5 lakh Indian villages, 7500+ cities at the building and the street level which are connected through a road network of almost 63 lakh kilometres.
 - ISRO generates earth observations and satellite imagery through its satellite constellation. ISRO will be more responsive in terms of satellite imagery needed by the Indians, required especially during crises and disasters.

UAE Hope Probe successfully enters Mars' orbit

- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has put a probe called Hope in the orbit around the MARS. UAE has become the fifth country to launch the spacecraft into the orbit of MARS after United States, Soviet Union, Europe and India. With the successful launch of spacecraft in orbit, UAE scientists can now study the planet's atmosphere.
- The space mission will carry the study on daily and seasonal weather cycles and weather events such as dust storm in the lower atmosphere. It will study how the weather varies in different regions on the MARS.
- The spacecraft had left the Earth seven months ago.
- The spacecraft carries three instruments with it to observe how neutral atoms of Oxygen and Hydrogen leak into space. The hydrogen and oxygen came into the MARS' atmosphere are the remnants from Mars' once abundant water.
- The Hope spacecraft will bring the spectacular, high-resolution, full-disk images of MARS.
- The spacecraft also seeks to study why the planet is losing the hydrogen and oxygen into space.

NASA Selects SpaceX to launch its SPHEREx Mission

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has selected spaceflight company, SpaceX to launch its SPHEREx Mission. Through this mission, NASA aims to perform an all-sky survey to measure the near-infrared spectra of approximately 450 million galaxies across the universe and 100 million stars inside our Milky Way galaxy.
- The SPHEREx or the Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of

Reionization, and Ices Explorer (SPHEREx) spacecraft.

- The small astrophysics spacecraft, SPHEREx, weighs 329-lb. (178 kilograms).
- It will be launched to space aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket, in June 2024, from Space Launch Complex 4E at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

Square Kilometre Array Observatory launched

- The newly constituted Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) Council has approved for the establishment of the world's largest radio telescope. The telescope will enable astronomers to monitor the sky in unprecedented detail and survey the entire sky much faster than any system currently in existence. To look into some of the unexplored areas of the universe and seek answers about its history and evolution, study fundamental physics in extreme environments and know about galaxies over cosmic time.

Radio telescopes

- Radio telescopes, unlike optical telescopes, can detect invisible gas and can reveal areas of space that may be obscured by cosmic dust.
- The SKAO telescope will be an array of antennas located in two continents, i.e. Africa and Australia.
- The operation, maintenance and construction of the telescope will be overseen by SKAO.
- The development of the telescope is expected to take nearly a decade at a cost of over £1.8 billion.

SKAO

- SKAO is a new intergovernmental organisation dedicated to radio astronomy.
- The headquartered of SKAO is based in the United Kingdom
- Currently organisations from ten countries are a part of the SKAO, which include Australia, Canada, China, India, Italy, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, the Netherlands and the UK.
- French-born Dr Catherine Cesarsky has been appointed as the first Chair of the SKAO Council.
- The Indian contingent of over 20 institutions will be lead by Pune-based National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA) of TIFR.

OBITUARY

Padma Shri Malayalam Poet Vishnunarayanan Namboothiri passes away

- Renowned Malayalam poet, the priest and academician Vishnu Narayanan Namboothiri, has passed away.
- He was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2014, for his contribution to the world of Malayalam literature for decades. He also won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award, Kendra Sahitya Akademi Fellowship, Vallathol Award, Odakkuzhal Award and the Mathrubhumi Literary Award, among others. He was also a noted scholar of language and the Vedas, as well as an orator.

Papua New Guinea's first Prime Minister, Michael Somare, passes away

- The first prime minister of Papua New Guinea, Michael Somare has passed away. He was known as the "father of the nation" because he led the Pacific archipelago to independence from Australia in 1975.
- He had served as the prime minister of the country four times, between 1975 to 2011, and has been the longest-serving prime minister (17 years).

Former TRAI Chairman Rahul Khullar passes away

- Rahul Khullar, the former chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has passed away. He was a 1975-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, who was appointed as TRAI chief in May 2012.
- He served at TRAI for three years. Prior to being appointed as TRAI chief, he was a secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Trade.

Former Union Minister Captain Satish Sharma passes away

- Veteran Congress leader and former Union Minister Captain Satish Sharma passed away. He served as the Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas from 1993 to 1996 in the Narasimha Rao government.
- Captain Satish Sharma was a close aide of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. He was a three-time Lok Sabha MP, representing Rae Bareilly and Amethi constituencies and Rajya Sabha member for three terms representing the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

Indo-Pak War Veteran retired Major General BK Mahapatra passes away

- War veteran Major General (retired) Basant Kumar Mahapatra, who had participated in major battles including the 1962 Indo-China war, and 1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan war, has passed away.
- Hailing from Bhubaneswar in Odisha, Mahapatra was commissioned into armoured corps (Tanks) of the Indian Army as a Combat Officer and was popularly known as 'Tank Man'. He was conferred with the prestigious Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM).

Former Bihar-Jharkhand Governor & Jurist M Rama Jois, passes away

- Noted jurist and a former Governor of Bihar and Jharkhand, Justice (Retd.) M. Rama Jois has passed away.
- The former Rajya Sabha MP, had also served as the Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court. He was also a senior advocate in the Supreme Court of India.

Bollywood actor Rajiv Kapoor passes away

- Bollywood actor and Raj Kapoor's son Rajiv Kapoor passed away. He made his acting debut with 1983 movie Ek Jaan Hain Hum. He gained recognition with his father's last directorial Ram Teri Ganga Maili (1985). Some of his other memorable films include Aasmaan (1984),

Lover Boy (1985), Zabardast (1985) and Hum To Chale Pardes (1988). But soon Rajiv also addressed as Chimpu, moved to film direction and production.

- In 1996, Rajiv directed Prem Granth which featured his elder brother Rishi Kapoor in the lead role along with Madhuri Dixit. He ventured into production with brother Randhir Kapoor's directorial Henna in 1991 and also produced Aa Ab Laut Chalen (1999).

Founder of Rang Vidushak, Padma Shri Bansi Kaul Passed away

- Founder of Rang Vidushak and theatre director Padma Shri Bansi Kaul passed away. He was born in 1949 in a Kashmiri Pandit family, Bansi Kaul was a Hindi theatre director and the founder of Rang Vidushak, a theatre group and theatre institute in Bhopal.
- He was awarded Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1995 and Padma Shri in 2014. He received Rashtriya Kalidas Samman for the year 2016–17.

Indian tennis great Akhtar Ali passes away

- Tennis legend Akhtar Ali, a father figure in Indian tennis, passed away. He represented India in eight Davis Cup ties against Pakistan, Malaysia, Iran, Mexico, Japan and Monaco between 1958 and 1964.
- Born on July 5, 1939, Akhtar made his mark in 1955 when he became the National junior champion and reached the junior Wimbledon semifinals. He played alongside stalwarts like Ramanathan Krishnan, Naresh Kumar, Premjit Lall and Jaidip Mukerjee. Akhtar, who was groomed by former Australian Davis Cup coach Harry Hopman, also played in the Wimbledon and French Open grand slam events. He was the winner of the Asian mixed doubles championship. His last ATP tour outing was against Vijay Amritraj in a clay court match in Bombay on November 11, 1974.

Oscar-winning Canadian actor Christopher Plummer passes away

- Oscar-winning actor Christopher Plummer, who rose to prominence for his critically-acclaimed film 'Sound of Music', has passed away. He won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor at the age of 82 for Beginners (2010), becoming the oldest person to win an acting award.
- The prolific and versatile Canadian-born actor has received various awards for his work, which includes Academy Award, two Primetime Emmy Awards, two Tony Awards, a Golden Globe Award, a Screen Actors Guild Award, and a British Academy Film Award.

Pioneering US actress Cicely Tyson passes away

- Pioneering US actress Cicely Tyson has passed away. Cicely Tyson, the pioneering Black actor who gained an Oscar nomination for her role as the sharecropper's wife in 'Sounder' & won a Tony Award in 2013 at age 88.
- She touched TV viewers' hearts in "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman" & won 2

Emmys for playing the 110-year-old former slave.

Nobel Prize Winner Paul Crutzen passes away

- The Nobel Prize-winning chemist Paul J. Crutzen, has passed away. He won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1995, jointly with Mario J. Molina and F.
- Sherwood Rowland, for their work in atmospheric chemistry, particularly concerning the formation and decomposition of ozone. He was known for his work on the ozone layer and climate change and for popularizing the term 'Anthropocene' to describe a proposed new era when human actions have a drastic effect on the Earth.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

Gautam Thakar made global CEO of OLX Autos

- OLXGroup appoints Gautam Thakar as global CEO of OLX Autos. He will lead a worldwide organisation with a workforce of more than 4,000 employees across Asia, Africa, Latam, and the United States.
- OLXGroup announced the appointment of Gautam Thakar as global CEO of OLX Autos effective March 15, 2021.

Fullerton India Credit Company appointed Shantanu Mitra as CEO and MD

- Fullerton India Credit Company has appointed Shantanu Mitra as the new CEO and Managing Director.
- He has over 40 years of experience in financial services, with over 20 years at Standard Chartered and Citibank, where he had stints in India, Singapore and Thailand. His last role in Standard Chartered was Senior Regional Risk Officer, India, Middle East and Africa. His previous experience with Fullerton included a stint from 2010 to 2017.

Dushyant Chautala re-elected as President of TTFI

- Dushyant Chautala has been re-elected as the President of Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) for a period of four years. He was elected unanimously during the 84th annual meeting of the TTFI, on February 24, 2021.
- He is also the current Deputy Chief Minister of Haryana. The 32-year-old was first elected as President of the TTFI in January 2017, becoming the youngest President in the history of TTFI.

Vijay Sampla takes charge as Chairman of National Commission for SC

- Former Union Minister Vijay Sampla has assumed the charge of Chairman National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC). He has been the former Union Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment from 2014 to 2019.
- NCSC is an Indian constitutional body under the Ministry of Social Justice and

Empowerment, that works for the socio-economic development of the scheduled castes and to prevent atrocities against them.

Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy Resigns

- The Chief Minister of the Union Territory of Puducherry, V Narayanasamy has submitted the letter of his resignation and his council of ministers on February 22, 2021, to Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan. The decision was taken as the Congress-led Government in the UT lost its majority in the House, which is 14.
- Following a series of resignations, the ruling government was reduced to a strength of 12. Two MLA resigned in January 2021 while 2 resigned in February 2021.

Air Vice-Marshall Rajesh Vaidya assumes role of Dean, Dy Commandant of AFMC

- Air Vice-Marshall Rajesh Vaidya, VSM, assumed the appointment of Dean and Deputy Commandant of the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune.
- He is an alumnus of Armed Forces Medical College from the 1981 batch and was commissioned in the Indian Air Force in 1985. Having initially served as Squadron Medical Officer in both fighter and transport squadrons, he specialized in Community Medicine from AFMC and qualified his DNB from the National Board of examinations.
- He has been on the faculty at the Armed Forces Medical College earlier and has held pivotal public health appointments including Director (Health) and Director (Medical Research) of the Armed Forces Medical Services.

Ajai Malhotra becomes first Indian chairperson at UNHRC advisory

- Ajai Malhotra became the first Indian to be elected as the Chairperson of the United Nations Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council. He has been on the Indian team negotiating issues such as biological diversity, climate change, desertification, education, energy, forestry, health, human rights, human settlements, intellectual property, international law, labour, ozone depletion, sustainable development and trade.
- Malhotra first joined the Indian Foreign Services in 1977. Malhotra has previously served as ambassador to Russia, Kuwait, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, New York and Romania.

Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia resigns

- The Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia has announced his resignation. The 45-year-old Gakharia served as the Prime Minister from 8 September 2019 to 18 February 2021.
- He was stepping down because of disagreements within his own team over the decision to arrest Nika Melia, chairman of the United National Movement opposition party.

Kiran Bedi Removed As Puducherry Lt Governor

- Kiran Bedi, the Lieutenant-Governor of Puducherry, has been removed from the top position. Tamilisai Soundararajan, the Governor of Telangana, has been given additional

charge as the Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry till a permanent replacement will be announced.

- The development comes in the backdrop of a major shake-up in the Puducherry Assembly after several Congress legislators resigned ahead of the Assembly elections due this year.

Assam government appoints Hima Das as DSP

- Star sprinter Hima Das has been appointed as a Deputy Superintendent of Police by the Assam government. The 21-year-old from Assam, known as 'Dhing Express' referring to the town near her native village, is currently training at the NIS-Patiala and will be aiming to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics as the athletics calendar starts in a few days.
- The reigning world junior 400m champion, who won a silver in women's 400m in the 2018 Asian Games, was also part of the gold-winning women's 400m relay and mixed 400m relay quartets in the quadrennial event in Jakarta.

Ajay Mathur elected new DG at special assembly of ISA

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) has announced Dr Ajay Mathur as its new Director-General following his election at the first special assembly of ISA members. Dr Mathur replaces Mr Upendra Tripathy, who has served as Director-General since the ISA was founded in 2015.
- ISA accelerate the demand for and use of safe, sustainable, and affordable solar energy for all. It aims to mobilize over \$1 trillion USD of investment into solar projects by 2030 through focused advocacy, policy and regulatory support, capacity building, and overcoming perceived investment barriers.

Justice Puligoru Venkata Sanjay Kumar sworn-in as Chief Justice of Manipur HC

- Justice Puligoru Venkata Sanjay Kumar has been sworn-in as the Chief Justice of Manipur High Court at Raj Bhavan, Imphal.
- He was appointed as Chief Justice of the High Court of Manipur by the President of India. Prior to this, he served as a Judge in the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Tata Motors appoints Marc Llistosella as new CEO & MD

- Tata Motors Limited has appointed Marc Llistosella as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director (MD). The appointment of Llistosella will be effective from July 1, 2021.
- He will replace current CEO & MD of Tata Motors, Guenter Butschek, who had expressed his desire to relocate to Germany at the end of the contract for personal reasons. Llistosella is the former president and CEO of Fuso Truck and Bus Corp. and head of Daimler Trucks in Asia.

Maersk appoints vikash Agarwal as new MD for South Asia,

- Integrated container logistics firm Maersk has appointed Vikash Agarwal as its new Managing Director for South Asia, according to a company release on Monday.

- Agarwal, who moves to Maersk from CEVA Logistics, will join the company on March 1 and work closely with Steve Felder who will step down at the end of March to explore new opportunities within AP Moller – Maersk, it said.
- He will take full charge of the business for the company in South Asia, covering India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives, from April 1.

Michael Bloomberg Re-Appointed as United Nations Climate Envoy

- The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres re-appointed Michael Bloomberg as his Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions. Bloomberg is the founder and owner of Bloomberg LP, the parent company of Bloomberg News. He was previously appointed as the U.N. special envoy for climate action between March 2018 and November 2019.
- Bloomberg will work to strengthen the group of governments, companies, cities and financial institutions that are working to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement. He would also work to mobilise stronger and more ambitious climate action in the lead-up to 2021 United Nations Climate Change conference in Scotland in November 2021.

Google Cloud appoints Bikram Singh Bedi as MD for India

- Google Cloud has appointed Bikram Singh Bedi as the new Managing Director for its India Business. He will succeed Karan Bajwa, who has been elevated as Vice president for the Asia Pacific (APAC) region cloud operations at Google Cloud. At Google, Bikram Bedi will be responsible for leading Google Cloud's sales and operations teams in this dynamic market.
- Google Cloud is also on track to launch its Delhi cloud region in India this year – its second after Mumbai that was launched in 2017.
- Bedi, a senior leader with more than 26 years of leadership experience, will be responsible for leading Google Cloud's sales and operations teams in this dynamic market. He joined Google Cloud from Indian online grocery delivery startup, Grofers where he served as President Strategy and New Initiatives. Prior to that, he set up the AWS business in India and was the head of India and South Asia for six years. He also held various leadership positions at IBM and Oracle.

S.N. Subrahmanyan appointed as Chairman of the National Safety Council

- The Ministry of Labour & Employment has appointed S.N. Subrahmanyan as the new Chairman of the National Safety Council (NSC) of India for a period of three years. Subrahmanyan is the CEO and Managing Director of L&T Ltd., India's largest construction company.
- National Safety Council plays a major role to ensure safety in workplaces under new Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions code, 2020 (OSH Code, 2020).

Centre Appoints Praveen Sinha as interim Director of CBI

- Department of Personnel and Training, under Personnel Ministry, has appointed Praveen Sinha, as the interim director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), with immediate effect on 03 February 2021. He has been appointed in place of the incumbent chief RK Shukla, whose tenure came to an end on February 03, 2021.
- Sinha, a 1988-batch Gujarat cadre Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, is currently an additional director at CBI, the premier investigating agency of India. Sinha shall look after the duties of Director CBI till the appointment of new director CBI, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Ajay Singh re-elected Boxing Federation of India President

- Ajay Singh Says focus will be on training of Tokyo Olympics-bound boxers, grassroot development and women's boxing.
- Spicejet chairman Ajay Singh defeated Ashish Shelar in a high-profile contest to get re-elected as president of Boxing Federation India for a second term at the general elections held in Gurugram on Wednesday.
- Singh defeated Shelar, former Maharashtra Cricket Association president, 37-27. Hemanta Kumar Kalita was elected secretary general and Digvijay Singh treasurer. The elections were held in the presence of AIBA observer Yury Zaystsev and IOA observer Rakesh Gupta.

Praveen Sinha named acting CBI chief after Shukla's 'quiet' tenure

- The decision was taken as the high powered panel comprising the PM, Chief Justice of India S A Bobde and leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury have not been able to meet to choose the agency's next chief.
- The Centre on Wednesday appointed the Central Bureau of Investigation's deputy chief, 1988 batch Gujarat cadre Indian Police Service officer Praveen Sinha, as the acting director of the federal agency with "immediate effect", according to an order issued by Department of Personnel and Training.

Anish Shah appoint as new chairman of Mahindra Finance

- Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services has announced the appointment of Anish Shah as the chairman of the board, effective April 2, 2021. Shah is already a director of the company.
- He is the deputy managing director and group CFO of Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. Shah takes over from Dhananjay Mungale. Mungale shall continue to be an Independent Director on the Board of MMFSL.

Nguyen Phu Trong re-elected as Chief of Vietnam for 3rd term

- The ruling Community Party of Vietnam has re-elected its 76-year-old General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong for a third five-year term. He is serving the post since 2011. Trong was

granted an exemption to contest in the election, though he was above the age limit of 65. The General Secretary is the highest office within the Communist Party of Vietnam. Trong also holds the position of the President of Vietnam since 2018.

- Vietnam has a communist government, which means that the country does not have a single strongman at the apex. There are four main leaders that collectively run the show which includes: The Communist Party general secretary, the prime minister, the president and the chair of the National Assembly.

Indian-American Bhavya Lal appointed Acting Chief of Staff of NASA

- Indian-American Bhavya Lal was appointed by NASA as the Acting Chief of Staff of the US space agency. She served as a member of the Biden Presidential Transition Agency Review Team for the agency and oversaw the agency's transition under the administration of President Joe Biden. Lal brings extensive experience in engineering and space technology, serving as a member of the research staff at the Institute for Defence Analyses Science and Technology Policy Institute (STPI) from 2005 to 2020.
- Bhavya Lal led the analysis of space technology, strategy, and policy for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and National Space Council, as well as federal space-oriented organisations, including NASA, the Department of Defence, and the intelligence community.
- Lal is an active member of the space technology and policy community, having chaired, co-chaired, or served on five high-impact National Academy of Science committees.
- She served two consecutive terms on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Advisory Committee on Commercial Remote Sensing and was an External Council member of NASA's Innovative Advanced Concepts Program and the Technology, Innovation and Engineering Advisory Committee of the NASA Advisory Council.

SBI Card appoints Rama Mohan Rao Amara as MD & CEO

- SBI Cards and Payment Services Ltd (SBI Card) has appointed Rama Mohan Rao Amara as its Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer for a period of two years. Rao is a veteran banker, with a successful career spanning over 29 years at SBI, the credit card company. Prior to taking charge at SBI Card, he was the Chief General Manager, SBI Bhopal Circle.
- Earlier this week, Ashwini Kumar Tewari had resigned from the post of MD and CEO of SBI Card owing to his appointment as the Managing Director of State Bank of India (SBI).

Facebook appoints Henry Moniz as its first cco

- Henry Moniz, who has been the chief compliance officer and chief audit executive at media company ViacomCBS Inc., will join Facebook on Feb. 8 to lead the company's global compliance team, according to Facebook. He will be the first person to hold the compliance chief title at Facebook.

R S Sharma appointed as new CEO of Ayushman Bharat Scheme

- The National Health Authority (NHA) has appointed RS Sharma as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of country's flagship public health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat, also called Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. He would replace Indu Bhushan, who is serving as the Chief Executive of the Ayushman scheme since its inception in 2018.
- RS Sharma, a former chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai), who would take charge of the NHA from February 1.
- Ayushman Bharat, a flagship scheme of Government of India, was launched as recommended by the National Health Policy 2017, to achieve the vision of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). This initiative has been designed to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its underlining commitment, which is to "leave no one behind."
- Ayushman Bharat is an attempt to move from sectoral and segmented approach of health service delivery to a comprehensive need-based health care service. This scheme aims to undertake path-breaking interventions to holistically address the healthcare system (covering prevention, promotion and ambulatory care) at the primary, secondary and tertiary level. Ayushman Bharat adopts a continuum of care approach.

BCCI Secretary Jay Shah takes over as President of ACC

- Jay Shah, the incumbent Secretary of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has been appointed as the new President of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC). He is the youngest person ever to be appointed to the office. He replaces Nazmul Hussain, Chief of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) who was the previous chief of the ACC.
- The ACC is Asia's regional administrative body and it currently consists of 24 member associations. ACC is responsible for organizing the Asia Cup tournaments. The 2020 edition of the Asia Cup was postponed to June this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pakistan was to originally host the tournament but the tournament is now expected to be held in either Sri Lanka or Bangladesh.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Remembering Vinayak Damodar Savarkar on his 55th death anniversary

- Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was born May 28, 1883, at Bhagur village of Nashik district in Maharashtra. Veer Savarkar died on February 26, 1966, in Bombay. He was a nationalist and one of the most important figures of the Hindu Mahasabha ("Great Society of Hindus"), a Hindu nationalist organization and political party.
- Veer Savarkar was a freedom fighter, politician, lawyer, writer, social reformer, and institutor of Hindutva ideology. He got the nickname 'Veer' at the age of 12 after performing a bravery act.
- During his student days in London (1906-10), Savarkar assisted a group of Indian revolutionaries in techniques of assassination that his associates learned from expatriate Russian revolutionaries in Paris.

World NGO Day: 27 February

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- World NGO Day is celebrated every year on 27th February globally. World NGO Day aims to inspire people to become more actively involved within NGOs (Charities, NPOs, CSOs) and encourage a greater symbiosis between NGOs and both the public and private sector.
- The universal concept of World NGO Day is Celebrate, Commemorate and Collaborate the various NGOs around the world, and the people behind them. World NGO Day is a day for NGOs around the globe to share knowledge and experiences with one another.
- The Day was officially recognised and declared by the 12 member countries (Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Norway and Sweden). It was marked for the first time by the UN, EU leaders and international organisations in 2014.

Central Excise Day: 24 February

- Central Excise Day is celebrated every year on February 24 across India. The day is being celebrated to honour the service of the Central Board of Excise and Custom (CBEC) to the country. The day is celebrated to honour the officers associated with CBEC and their services. This is done to encourage the officers to carry out their duties with utmost sincerity. The officers, every year perform checking of corruption in goods from the manufacturing sector.
- The day is celebrated to commemorate the legislation of the Central Excise and Salt act on 24 February 1944.

World Thinking Day: 22 February

- World Thinking Day, originally known as Thinking Day, is celebrated annually on 22 February by all Girl Scouts, Girl Guides and other girl groups worldwide. The day is observed to think about fellow brothers and sisters around the world, address their concerns and understand the true meaning of guiding.
- The theme for World Thinking Day 2021 is peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is at the heart of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting and is as vital and relevant today as for the last 100 years. By completing the steps in the Stand Together For Peace activity pack, Girl Guides and Girl Scouts will; Stand Strong, Stand up and Stand Together for peacebuilding.

National Productivity Day 2021

- National Productivity Day is observed every year in India on February 12. The objective of National Productivity Council is stimulating and promoting productivity and quality consciousness across all sectors in the country. The main observance of the day is to encourage all stakeholders in the implementation of productivity tools and techniques with contemporary relevant themes.
- The day is celebrated by the National Productivity Council (NPC) to promote productivity culture in India. National Productivity Council (NPC) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Government of India is a premier institution for propagating productivity movement in India. NPC works for providing solutions towards accelerating productivity,

enhancing competitiveness, increasing productivity.

World Radio Day: 13 February

- World Radio Day is celebrated on 13 February each year to recognize radio as a powerful medium, which brings people together from every corner of the globe, to promote diversity and help build a more peaceful and inclusive world.
- The theme of World Radio Day 2021 is “New World, New Radio”.
- On the occasion of World Radio Day 2021 (WRD 2021), UNESCO calls on radio stations to celebrate this event’s 10th anniversary and the more than 110 years of radio through three sub-themes.
- Evolution: The world changes, radio evolves – radio is resilient and sustainable;
- Innovation: The world changes, radio adapts and innovates- radio adapts to new technologies and remains the go-to medium of mobility, accessible everywhere and to everyone;
- Connection: The world changes, radio connects – radio services our society during natural disasters, socio-economic crises, epidemics, etc.

National Women’s Day of India 2021

- In India, the National Women’s Day is observed every year on 13 February to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu. This year Nation celebrates its 142nd Birth Anniversary. She was born on February 13, 1879. She was famous for her nickname ‘Nightingale of India’ or ‘Bharat Kokila’ because of her poems.
- Sarojini Naidu was not only a freedom fighter, but she also became the first woman governor of the United Provinces, the present Uttar Pradesh. She was one of the forefront leaders who led the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement. She was an important figure in India’s struggle for independence from colonial rule.

International Mother Language Day: 21 February

- The International Mother Language Day (IMLD) is observed annually on 21 February to raise awareness regarding linguistic and cultural diversity and to promote multilingualism. The theme of the Day this year, “Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society”.
- International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in November 1999. The UN General Assembly welcomed the proclamation of the day in its resolution of 2002.

World Day of Social Justice observed globally on 20th February

- World Day of Social Justice is celebrated annually all over the world on 20 February. The International Labour Organization unanimously adopted the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization on 10 June 2008. This year theme of World Day of Social Justice is “A Call for Social Justice in the Digital Economy”.

- Recognize the need to promote and tackle issues of social justice such as poverty, exclusion, gender equality, unemployment, human rights, and social protections.
- Focus on the goal of achieving full employment and support for social integration.
- Encourage people to look at how social justice affects poverty eradication.
- Social justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality or the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability.

World Pangolin Day 2021: 20 February

- World Pangolin Day is celebrated on the “Third Saturday of February” every year. In 2021, the annual World Pangolin Day is being celebrated on 20 February 2020. It marks the 10th edition of the event.
- The day aims to raise awareness about these unique mammals and speed up conservation efforts. Pangolin numbers are rapidly declining in Asia and Africa.

6th Soil Health Card Day Observed on 19 February 2021

- Every year India observes the Soil Health Card Day on 19 February to commemorate the launch of the Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme, and create awareness about the benefits of the scheme. 2021 marks the sixth year of the launch of the SHC Scheme. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme on 19th February 2015 at Suratgarh in Rajasthan.
- The scheme aims at issuing soil health cards to farmers every two years so as to provide a basis to address nutritional deficiencies in the soil. The scheme ensures additional income to farmers by an increase in yields and it also promotes sustainable farming.

International Epilepsy Day 2021

- The International Epilepsy Day is observed on the second Monday of February every year across the world. In 2021, the International Epilepsy Day was observed on February 08.
- The day is organised jointly by the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE) and the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) to raise awareness about epilepsy and highlight the kinds of problems faced by victims, their friends and family. Epilepsy is a neurological disorder which makes a person go through sudden and recurrent episodes of sensory disturbances.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

- International Day of Women and Girls in Science is observed globally on 11 February. International Day of Women and Girls in Science to recognize the critical role of women and girls play in science and technology. In December 2015, the United Nations adopted a resolution to celebrate February 11 as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. The Day is implemented by UNESCO and UN-Women in collaboration with institutions and

civil society partners that aim to promote women and girls in science.

- The 2021 theme of the Day is “Women Scientists at the forefront of the fight against C-19”.
- In 2016 is the first time it was celebrated. The idea behind this day is to ensure equal participation and involvement of women and girls in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

World Unani Day: 11 February

- World Unani Day has observed every year on 11th February. The main objective of World Unani Day is to spread awareness about health care delivery through the Unani system of medicine through its preventive and curative philosophy. This day is celebrated every year to mark the birth anniversary of great Unani scholar and social reformer Hakim Ajmal Khan. The first Unani Day was celebrated in 2017 at Central Research Institute of Unani Medicine (CRIUM), Hyderabad.
- The Unani system of medicine has a long and impressive record in India. It was introduced in India by the Arabs and Persians sometime around the eleventh century.
- It has the largest number of Unani educational, research and health care institutions.
- The Unani system of medicine originated in Greece. Its foundation was laid by Hippocrates.
- The system owes its present form to the Arabs who not only saved much of the Greek literature by rendering it into Arabic but also enriched the medicine of their day with their own contributions.

World Pulses Day: 10 February

- The United Nations designated World Pulses Day is observed every year on 10 February. The day has been established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to recognize the importance of pulses (dry beans, lentils, dry peas, chickpeas, lupins) as a global food.
- The theme, “Nutritious Seeds for a Sustainable Future,” was decided back in 2016 when the year was nominated to be celebrated as International Year of Pulses. Since then, the theme has remained the same from 2019 to 2021.
- In 2018, the UN General Assembly decided to mark 10 February as World Pulses Day. The first WPD was held on February 10, 2019. On 20 December 2013, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/68/231) proclaiming 2016 as the International Year of Pulses (IYP). The celebration of the year, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), increased the public awareness of the nutritional and environmental benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food production.

International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation

- International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female is observed globally on 6 February. This day is sponsored by the United Nations for their efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation. It was first introduced in 2003.
- This year theme of International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female: No Time for Global Inaction: Unite, Fund, and Act to End Female Genital Mutilation.

- Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons and is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights, the health and the integrity of girls and women. Girls who undergo female genital mutilation face short-term complications such as severe pain, shock, excessive bleeding, infections, and difficulty in passing urine, as well as long-term consequences for their sexual and reproductive health and mental health.

International Day of Human Fraternity: 4 February

- International Day of Human Fraternity is observed on 4th February globally. International Day of Human Fraternity aims to underline the importance of raising awareness about different cultures and religions, or beliefs, and the promotion of tolerance. It also aims to educate people that tolerance, pluralistic tradition, mutual respect, and the diversity of religions and beliefs promote human fraternity.
- This year International Day of Human Fraternity 2021 theme: A Pathway to the Future.

World Cancer Day: February 4

- World Cancer Day is observed every year on 4 February by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC). The day is celebrated to raise awareness and education about cancer, and pressing governments and individuals across the world to take action against the disease.
- World Cancer Day 2019-21 theme: 'I Am And I Will'. Created in 2000, World Cancer Day has grown into a positive movement for everyone, everywhere to unite under one voice to face one of our greatest challenges in history.

World Wetlands Day: 02 February

- The World Wetlands Day is observed every year on February 2 globally. The day aims to raise awareness about the crucial role played by wetlands for people and our planet. The international theme for World Wetlands Day 2021 is 'Wetlands and Water'. 2021 marks 50 years of the Convention on Wetlands.
- The day is celebrated to mark the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on February 2, 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. World Wetlands Day was first celebrated in 1997.
- Wetlands are a habitat for a dense variety of plant and animal species and also rich with the biodiversity which is declining according to the researcher's estimates. These are the land areas that are saturated or flooded with water either perennially or seasonally.
- Coastal wetlands: mangroves, estuaries, saltwater marshes, lagoons etc.
- Inland wetlands: marshes, fens, lakes, swamps, rivers, floodplains and ponds.
- Human-made wetlands: Fish ponds, saltpans, and rice paddies.

Indian Coast Guard to celebrate 45th Raising Day

- The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) will celebrate its 45th Raising Day today, February 1.
- According to an official release by the Ministry of Defence, the ICG has played a significant

role in securing the Indian Coasts and enforcing regulations within the maritime zones of India.

- The ICG seized contraband worth Rs 1,500 crore and ten illegal foreign fishing boats with 80 miscreants in the Indian exclusive economic zone in 2020.
- A country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is an area extending from the coastline to 200 nautical miles in the sea, wherein it has exclusive rights to fish, drill and also conduct other economic activities.

World Leprosy Day 2021: 31 January

- World Leprosy Day is observed around the world on the last Sunday of January every year. This year World Leprosy Day held on 31 January. The day is celebrated to raise global awareness of this deadly ancient disease and call attention to the fact that it can be prevented, treated and cured.
- This year theme of World Leprosy Day 2021 is “Beat Leprosy, End Stigma and advocate for Mental Wellbeing”.
- The day was initiated in 1954 by French philanthropist and writer, Raoul Follereau, as a tribute to the life of the Mahatma Gandhi who had compassion for people afflicted with leprosy.

SUMMITS AND MOU'S

India, World Bank ink project for enhancing school education in Nagaland

- The Government of India, the Government of Nagaland and the World Bank signed a \$68 million agreement for “Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project”, to enhance the governance of schools across Nagaland. The \$68 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a final maturity of 14.5 years including a grace period of 5 (five) years.
- The “Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project” will improve classroom instruction; create opportunities for the professional development of teachers, and build technology systems to provide students and teachers with more access to blended and online learning as well as allow better monitoring of policies and programmes.
- As many as 1,50,000 students and 20,000 teachers in the government education system in Nagaland will benefit from the statewide reforms in schools.

India signs trade deal, \$100 million defence agreement with Mauritius

- The Indian foreign minister S Jaishankar was on an official visit to two key Indian Ocean region countries- Maldives and Mauritius. The External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar visited the Island nation Mauritius to review the comprehensive and important bilateral relationship between the two nations. India signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) or (Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Partnership Agreement-(CECPA)) with Mauritius.
- The FTA or CECPA is the first such pact with any African country, and will help Mauritius to emerge as a “hub of Africa”.
- India has also offered a USD 100 million Line of Credit (LoC) to Mauritius to facilitate the

- procurement of defence assets.
- Apart from this, an agreement has also been signed between the two countries to provide a Dornier aircraft and an Advanced Light Helicopter Dhruv on lease to Mauritius on a gratis basis for 2 years, so that the country can carry out patrolling activities and monitor its vast maritime domain more effectively.
 - India delivered 100,000 doses of Made in India COVID-19 vaccines to the country. It had supplied 100,000 doses earlier. Both the countries also signed MoU on Consumer Protection and a Contract for an 8 MW solar plant.

PM Narendra Modi To Inaugurate 2nd Edition of 'Maritime India Summit'

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the virtual Maritime India Summit (MIS) 2021, from March 2 to 4, 2021. The 'Maritime India Summit 2021' is the flagship initiative of the Union Ministry of State for Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), Government of India. FICCI is the industry partner for the summit.
- The theme of the event is "Exploring the potential business opportunities in the Indian Maritime sector and making Aatmanirbhar Bharat".
- The objective of the Summit is to promote both domestic and international investment in the Indian Ports and Maritime sector. The summit will provide a powerful platform for international collaboration with partner countries for mutual exchange of knowledge and opportunities. Around one lakh delegates and 40 partner countries are expected to participate in the event.

India & Ethiopia Sign Agreements On Visa Facilitation and Leather Technology

- India and Ethiopia signed two agreements related to visa facilitation and leather technology. The Ethiopia Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Demeke Mekonnen Hassen is on a 4-day visit to India to hold useful and productive discussions on a range of bilateral and regional issues.
- During the course of meetings, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Ethiopian minister Hassen agreed to expand India and Ethiopia bilateral agenda especially defence, economic, S&T, digital and cultural cooperation.

India & Maldives sign 5 deals to boost infrastructure

- External Affairs Minister (EAM), S. Jaishankar was on a two-day official visit to the archipelago nation the Maldives to review bilateral ties and development cooperation. During this visit, Mr S Jaishankar handed over 1 lakh additional doses of the made-in-India COVID-19 vaccine to the Maldives. With this, the total Covid vaccine doses gifted by India for the Maldives reaches two lakh. Jaishankar also offered a \$40-million line of credit (LoC) to support the development of sports infrastructure in the Maldives.
- Amendatory Agreement to repurpose an older EXIM Bank of India Line of Credit of USD 25 million for Road Devt.
- Letter of Intent between EXIM Bank and local authorities for financing a housing project of 2000 units in Hulhumale.

- MoU on grant funding USD 0.5 million for a fish processing plant in Kendhikulhudhoo in the northern Maldives.
- MoU on capacity building and exchange of content and expertise between Prasar Bharati and Public State Media, Maldives.
- MoU on sustainable urban development between MoHUA and Ministry of national planning, housing and infrastructure, Maldives.

Indian Oil signs pact with Greenstat Norway for hydrogen fuel

- Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) has signed a Statement of Intent with Greenstat Hydrogen India Pvt. Ltd., a subsidiary of Greenstat Norway, to set up a Centre of Excellence on Hydrogen. Under this association, a Center of Excellence on Hydrogen (CoE-H) including CCUS and Fuel Cells, would be developed for clean energy by IndianOil and M/s Greenstat in cooperation with Indo-Norwegian Hydrogen Cluster companies/organizations.
- Facilitate transfer and sharing of technology, know-how and experience through the green Hydrogen value chain and other relevant technologies including hydrogen storage and fuel cells.
- CoE-H will be a vehicle for promoting R&D projects in Green and Blue Hydrogen between Norwegian and Indian R&D institutions/universities.

India Signs Deal To Develop, Maintain Coast Guard Harbour In Maldives

- India on Sunday reiterated its commitment to the Maldives' security and signed a USD 50 million defence Line of Credit agreement with it to boost the maritime capabilities of the strategic island nation, as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held talks with the country's top leaders to further strengthen bilateral ties and explore new areas of cooperation.
- The USD 50 million credit line agreement for defence projects was signed between the Finance Ministry of Maldives and the Export Import Bank of India.
- The signing of the agreement took place after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held talks with Maldivian Defence Minister Mariya Didi, Minister of Finance Ibrahim Ameer, Minister of Economic Development Fayyaz Ismail and Minister of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Mohamed Aslam.

India-Australia circular Economy Hackathon (I-ACE)

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed the valedictory function of the India Australia Circular Economy Hackathon (I-ACE) via videoconferencing. A circular economy implies reusing waste back into the production cycle to make new products instead of wasting such materials with embedded resources.
- The I-ACE was jointly organized by Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog, Government of India and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Australia. More than 200 participants in 39 teams from India and 33 teams from Australia took part.
- Innovation in packaging reducing packaging waste
- Innovation in food supply chains avoiding waste
- Creating opportunities for plastic waste reduction

- Recycling critical energy metals and e-waste

CSIR inks MoU with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to promote health research

- The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support the development, conduct and promotion of health research in India. Gates Foundation and CSIR will work together to identify opportunities to initiate scientific and technological collaborations. These will focus on developing and testing new preventions, therapies and interventions that can help to solve major health concerns that affect India and other developing countries.
- Genetic diseases that impact infant and neonatal mortality;
- New diagnostics and devices for infectious disease and environmental surveillance;
- Development of cost-effective processes for drug, vaccines, biologics, and diagnostics manufacturing;
- Novel microbiome-directed foods;
- Socio-economic impact of science and technological tools;
- Other areas of health and development.

ISRO announces BHUVAN, option to Google Maps

- Indian Space Research Organisation and location and navigation technology solutions provider MapmyIndia announced an initiative to partner together to offer India's best, and fully indigenous, mapping portal, and geospatial services.
- It combines the power of MapmyIndia's digital maps and technologies with ISRO's catalogue of satellite imagery and earth observation data, according to MapmyIndia's CEO and Executive Director, Rohan Verma.
- He termed it a path-breaking milestone in India's journey towards Aatmanirbhar Bharat, wherein Indian users would not be dependent on foreign organisations for maps, navigation, and geospatial services, and leverage made-in-India solutions instead.

India and Afghanistan Inks MoU for the construction of the Lalandar "Shatoot" Dam

- India and Afghanistan have signed a Memorandum of Understanding MoU over video-teleconferencing (VTC), for the construction of the Shahtoot Dam (Lalander Dam) on a tributary of the Kabul river in Afghanistan. The project, which costs nearly \$ 300 million, is a part of the New Development Partnership between India and Afghanistan.
- The MoU was signed between External Affairs Minister Dr Jaishankar and Afghanistan Foreign Minister Mr Hanif Atmar, in the presence of Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Afghanistan President Dr Mohammad Ashraf Ghani.
- The Lalander [Shatoot] Dam would meet the safe drinking water needs of Kabul City, provide irrigation water to nearby areas, rehabilitate the existing irrigation and drainage network, aid in flood protection and management efforts in the area, and also provide electricity to the region.
- This is the second major dam being built by India in Afghanistan, after the India- Afghanistan

Friendship Dam [Salma Dam], which was inaugurated in June 2016.

Skyroot, Bellatrix signs MoU to use latter's orbital transfer vehicle

- Skyroot Aerospace has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bellatrix Aerospace to make use the Orbital Transfer Vehicle, being developed by Bellatrix Aerospace, in the upper stage of Vikram series of launch vehicles, being developed by Skyroot. The vehicle is expected to launch to low earth orbit in 2023 on the Vikram rocket. The vehicle is expected to help global operators reduce time and costs for launching communication and earth observation satellites.
- It is a spacecraft that can perform various in-orbit operations such deployment of customer payload to precise orbits, allowing a launch vehicle to deliver satellites to more orbits than what was conventionally possible.
- In simple words, OTV is like a 'taxi in space' to take small satellites into their operational orbits.
- OTV will offer ride-sharing for small satellites and drop each one of the passengers to their intended slots in space.

India, EU hold high-level dialogue

- The first India-European Union High-Level Dialogue was co-chaired by the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal from India side and the European Union Executive Vice-President & Trade Commissioner Mr Valdis Dombrovskis, from the EU side. This Dialogue was organised in line with the commitment made at the 15th India-EU Leader's Summit held in July 2020.
- Ministers agreed for further deepening of bilateral trade and investment relationship through a series of regular engagements, aiming at quick deliverable for the businesses in these tough times.
- They also agreed to meet within the next three months, to reach consensus on a host of bilateral trade & investment cooperation issues like bilateral Regulatory Dialogue; an India-EU Multilateral Dialogue to explore further possibilities of cooperation.

HAL inks deal with MIDHANI to develop, manufacture composite raw materials

- The state-owned aerospace and defence company, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Hyderabad-based Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI) for development and production of composite raw materials for use in aerospace. This is the first time that such an MoU has been signed for composite raw materials. The MoU was signed during the Aero India 2021 on February 04, 2021, in Bengaluru.
- Composites raw materials are currently imported since there is no equivalent proven Indian approved/qualified supplier for these raw materials for the aircraft applications.
- These composite raw material, mainly in the form of preregs, are used in platforms like Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) and Light Utility Helicopter (LUH).

Ford joins hand with Google to offer cloud-based data services

- Ford Motor Co has joined hands with Alphabet Inc's Google to cooperate in software, artificial intelligence and cloud computing, to develop new consumer services and modernize internal operations. The automaker will deploy Google artificial intelligence technology to improve the efficiency of vehicle development, supply chain and manufacturing operations.
- The Dearborn, Michigan-based automaker has entered into a six-year partnership with the tech giant, under which it will incorporate the Android operating system of the Google into its Ford and Lincoln vehicles starting in 2023. The customers of Ford will get built-in Google apps, including its map and voice technology.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Biden admn names Anjali Bharadwaj for anti-corruption award

- Anjali Bharadwaj, an Indian social activist working on issues of transparency and accountability, is one of the 12 "courageous" individuals named by the Biden administration for the newly-instituted International Anti-Corruption Champions Award.
- The 48-year-old Bhardwaj has served as an active member of the Right to Information Movement in India for over two decades. She is the founder of the Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS), a citizens' group which promotes transparency and accountability in government and encourage the active participation of citizens.

Union Bank Of India wins World HRD Congress Awards

- Union Bank of India was awarded "Best Service Provider" in Human Resources and also the best institution for "Excellence in Learning & Development" at the 29th Global HRD Congress awards. Kalyan Kumar, Chief General Manager, HR was named as "Chief Human Resources Officer of the Year".
- Global HRD Congress Awards are given to institutions annually for the best HR practices under different categories. The eminent jury which consists of the best in the industry will select the organizations taking into account their remarkable achievements in HR.

Theodore Baskaran won Sanctuary Lifetime Service Award 2020

- S. Theodore Baskaran who is a writer, a historian, a naturalist and an activist has won the Sanctuary Lifetime Service Award, 2020. The award was instituted by the Sanctuary Nature Foundation. Theodore Baskaran was chosen for the award in the light of his dedication to the wildlife conservation. He won the award for his writing prowess in English and Tamil contributing towards the conservation discourse. He was also chosen for the award in the backdrop of inspiring the young naturalists.
- Some of his books in the English language include- Dance of the Sarus: Essays of a Wandering Naturalist; Book of Indian Dogs and A Day with the Shama: Essays on Nature.
- Theodore is of the view that any conservation initiative should be in the local language in

order to gain momentum as a people's movement. He was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award (Iyal Virudhu) for his writing on nature in Tamil. The award was given by the Canada Literary Garden in the year 2014 in Toronto.

SERB announces Women Excellence Award 2021 in Science on the International Day of Women

- The SERB Women Excellence Award that has been conferred on them provides a grant of Rs. 15 lakhs for a period of three years to the awardees to pursue their research ideas.
- The award given by the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), a statutory body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) supporting basic research in the frontier areas of science and engineering, was launched in the year 2013. It is a one-time award given to women scientists below 40 years of age who have received recognition from any one or more of the National Academies such as Young Scientist Medal, Young Associateship, etc.
- The women scientists selected for the awards include Dr. Shobhna Kapoor, Assistant Professor at Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, working in the area of Chemical Biology with expertise in 'Host-Pathogen Interactions and Membrane Biology, Chemical Biology and Biophysics'.

Koozhangal" Wins Tiger Award at Rotterdam International Film Festival 2021

- The Tamil film "Koozhangal" has won "Tiger" award, at the 50th edition of the International Film Festival Rotterdam 2021. The Tiger award is the top honour of the festival, given for best film. Koozhangal (meaning Pebbles) has been Produced by Nayanthara and directed by Vinod Raj PS.
- This is the second Indian film to win this international award and the first Tamil Film. The first Indian film was "Durga" directed by the Malayalam director Shashidharan. The Tiger Award worth Euro 40,000 cash prize, is shared between the director and producer of the winning film.

Bengaluru Airport Bags ACI World's 'Voice Of The Customer' Award

- The International Epilepsy Day is observed on the second Monday of February every year across the world. In 2021, the International Epilepsy Day was observed on February 08.
- The day is organised jointly by the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE) and the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) to raise awareness about epilepsy and highlight the kinds of problems faced by victims, their friends and family. Epilepsy is a neurological disorder which makes a person go through sudden and recurrent episodes of sensory disturbances.

Robert Irwin wins Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2021

- Robert Irwin, an Australian wildlife photographer, has won the first prize in the Wildlife Photographer of the Year People's Choice Award Contest. Robert won the award for the image titled 'bushfire', which is the picture of the devastating Australian Bushfire in 2020, he captured using a drone, near the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve in Cape York, Queensland. The

image shows a line of fire burning in between the bushes, dividing it into parts.

- Irwin's image was chosen from a shortlist of 25 finalists that received a total of 55,486 votes. The Wildlife Photographer of the Year is the largest wildlife photography competition in the world, organised by the Natural History Museum.

50th Kerala State Film Awards conferred

- Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has presented the 50th Kerala State Film Awards 2019 and the J C Daniel Award at a function here. Pinarayi Vijayan released the stamp published in connection with the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK).
- Veteran filmmaker Hariharan, who was conferred with the J C Daniel Award, is an artist who had travelled with cinema for about half a century and made films which went on to become milestones in the annals of Malayalam tinsel town. The film awards were also distributed. Culture Minister A K Balan presided.

A.R. Rahman presented 'Alert Being Icon Award'

- Music composer AR Rahman and social activist from Saidapet Hari Krishnan were among the 14 people who were presented the fourth edition of the Alert Being Awards 2020 by the NGO ALERT, for their Good Samaritan work. In his video message, Mr Rahman said ALERT had been doing a brilliant job in empowering a common man to save lives. Hari Krishnan had been appointed by the Greater Chennai Corporation as a district volunteer head for Covid-19 relief work.
- The Alert Being Icon Award for an organisation was presented to the Biocon Foundation founded by Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw.
- Thirty COVID-19 warriors were honoured with Alert Being Covid Frontline Warrior for their contribution during the pandemic. Alert Being Awards 2020 received 156 nominations from 15 States and 35 districts across India.

RANKING

India ranks 53rd in EIU's Democracy Index

- India's position has slipped by two places to be placed at 53rd spot in the 2020 Democracy Index, from among 167 countries. The overall score of India is 6.61 in the Index, on a scale of 0-10. India has been classified as a 'flawed democracy'.
- Democracy Index is the global ranking released by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) that provides a snapshot of the current state of democracy worldwide.

India ranks 10th in 'Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index'

- India ranked 10th out of 11 Asia Pacific countries in a newly-launched health index to measure the progress towards personalised healthcare. Singapore(1st), Taiwan (2nd), Japan (3rd) and Australia (4th) also performed well in overall readiness. These include Policy Context, Health Information, Personalised Technologies and Health Services.
- The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) report "Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index"

measures the readiness of 11 health systems across the region—Australia, China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and New Zealand—in adopting personalised healthcare, enabling the right care to be tailored to the right person at the right time.

- The 'Personalised Health Index' measures performance against 27 different indicators of personalised health across four categories called "Vital Signs".

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Kabir Bedi's autobiography to release in April

- Veteran actor Kabir Bedi will tell his life story in his memoir, which will be released in April. Entitled "Stories I Must Tell: An Actor's Emotional Journey," the actor will provide an honest glimpse into his life.
- The book will take readers through the ups and downs of Kabir Bedi's life, both professional and personal. He will also talk about his relationships, including marriage and divorce, why his beliefs have changed, and his days in movies, television and theatres in India, Europe and Hollywood.

Home Minister released a book 'Rashtra Pratham – 82 varshon ki Swarnim Gatha'

- Home Minister Amit Shah has released a book 'Rashtra Pratham – 82 varshon ki Swarnim Gatha' in New Delhi. The book chronicles the glorious history of CRPF since its raising in 1939 and it has detailed and thoroughly researched accounts of CRPF's journey, challenges, successes, and sacrifices and said it will become a source of inspiration for personnel joining the force.
- CRPF jawans have always remained at the forefront be it in Left Wing Extremism affected areas, borders or providing security ring to the Indian Parliament.

Vice President releases 'Maverick Messiah', a political biography on NTR

- Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu has released "Maverick Messiah", a political biography on former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao authored by senior journalist Ramesh Kandula.
- NTR was ranked among the top pioneers of 'alternative politics'. His entry into politics and 'dramatic' success within about nine months of floating a regional party gave a new direction to national politics.

Bhim Army's Chandra Shekhar Azad named in TIME's list

- Bhim Army Chief Chandra Shekhar Azad and five Indian-origin personalities have been featured in the 2021 TIME100 Next. TIME100 Next 2021 is the second edition of the annual list of Time magazine's 100 'emerging leaders who are shaping the future.'
- Bhim Army is a Dalit rights organisation based in Uttar Pradesh to help Dalits escape poverty through education. It was founded by Satish Kumar, Vijay Ratan Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad in 2015.

Thaawarchand Gehlot Releases 3rd Edition of Indian Sign Language Dictionary

- The Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot released the “3rd edition of the Indian Sign Language (ISL) Dictionary, in a virtual event. The 3rd edition of the ISL dictionary contains a total of 10,000 terms. These include the 6000 terms of the first and second edition of the dictionary.
- The terms are of everyday use from academic terms, legal & administrative terms, medical terms, technical terms and agricultural terms.
- The Dictionary has been developed by the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC), an autonomous Institute under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- The 1st edition of the ISL Dictionary was launched on 23 March 2018 with 3000 terms.
- The 2nd edition was launched on 27th February 2019, with 6000 terms (including earlier 3000 terms).

Award winning Author Irwin Allan Sealy's new novel 'ASOCA'

- Prizewinning writer Irwin Allan Sealy's new novel 'ASOCA: A Sutra', an imagined memoir of Ashoka The Great. The novel will be presented as an imagined memoir of Ashoka The Great, the emperor who ruled most of the Indian Subcontinent and played a pivotal role in the spread of Buddhism from India to other parts of Asia in the 3rd century BC. It will be published by Penguin Random House India.
- Earlier, Penguin had published the thirtieth-anniversary edition of Sealy's critically acclaimed debut novel The Trotter-Nama and this is the second book by the author to be published by PRH. This book will be released under Penguin's Viking imprint in July 2021.

Meghna Pant's new book "The Terrible, Horrible, Very Bad Good News"

- Award-winning writer, journalist and speaker, Meghna Pant has penned a new book "The Terrible, Horrible, Very Bad Good News". The book will be released in April 2021, and soon be seen as a major motion picture under the title Badnam Ladoo.
- The book is about a small-town woman, Ladoo, who scandalizes her conservative family when she decides to use a sperm donor to have a baby while continuing to look for Mr Right. This book takes a humorous and light approach to address an important issue, relevant to every woman in the world, without being belligerent or pedantic.

Peter Mukerjea pens memoir 'Starstruck: Confessions of a TV Executive'

- Former media baron Peter Mukerjea has come out with his memoir 'Starstruck: Confessions of a TV executive'. The book is presented as a recollection of his experiences in the satellite television industry in India and the changes it has gone through over the years.
- Mukerjea is the former chief executive of Star India. Through this book, he has shared his journey, to highlight and showcase the plenty of mistakes made and the plenty of lessons learnt over almost three decades. It must be remembered that Mukerjea was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in November 2015 in connection with the Sheena Bora murder case.

Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas' memoir named 'Unfinished'

- Actor-producer Priyanka Chopra Jonas officially turned author with the release of her first book, "Unfinished: A Memoir", which she described as "honest, raw and vulnerable". The end result is a book, published by the Michael Joseph imprint, which covers her dual-continent 20-year-long career as an actor and producer and her work as a Unicef Goodwill Ambassador.
- The memoir promises to offer insights into Priyanka Chopra Jonas' childhood in India, her formative teenage years in the US. Her return to India resulted in the newcomer to the pageant world, against all odds, winning the national and international beauty competitions – Miss India and Miss World – that launched her global acting career.

Jual Oram launches book on economic awareness in India

- Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Defence and MP Jual Oram has launched 'Turn Around India: 2020- Surmounting Past Legacy', a book on creating economic awareness among masses. The book is authored by RP Gupta.
- 'Turn Around India: 2020' is an intimate narrative of Gupta's experiences and how he attained success through sheer hard work and determination. The book provides a practical and viable option for reviving Indian economy for creating new jobs and enlarging public income and also, the structural reforms such as fiscal and monetary stimuli for overcoming economic crisis arising due to pandemic. The book talks about the economic history of India enabling to identify the strengths and weakness and take corrective actions.

'By Many a Happy Accident: Recollections of a Life' authored by M Hamid Ansari

- A book titled 'By Many a Happy Accident: Recollections of a Life' has been authored by M Hamid Ansari. Mohammad Hamid Ansari was the vice president of India and chairman of the Rajya Sabha for two consecutive terms from 2007 to 2017. A former diplomat, he served as ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, as high commissioner to Australia and as permanent representative to the United Nations in New York.
- The book is an account of a life of unplanned happenings that took M. Hamid Ansari away from his preferred fancy for academia to professional diplomacy and then be co-opted in public life and catapulted to the second-highest office in the land for two consecutive terms. None of his predecessors, except Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, had experienced this honour.
- Besides chairing the Rajya Sabha and shedding interesting light on some of its functional aspects, Ansari used the vice presidency as a formidable pulpit to express himself candidly on a range of issues at different times in India's changing political landscape.
- Their overarching theme was the need for modern India to re-commit itself to the constitutional principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, to the values of a composite culture, and for correctives in polity relating to identity, security and empowerment of the weaker segments of our society.

“Platform Scale: For a Post-Pandemic World” authored by Sangeet Paul Choudhary

- A Book titled ‘Platform Scale: For a Post-Pandemic World’ has been authored by Sangeet Paul Choudhary. It is published by Penguin Random House India. It explains the importance of inner workings of platform business models and their ability to scale rapidly. The 1st edition of Platform Scale was published in 2015.
- The book tells how the decade leading up to the C-19 pandemic witnessed the rise of platform business models as they drove stock market gains and extended their influence across the economic and political activity.

Hunter Biden to Release Memoir 'Beautiful Things'

- United States President Joe Biden’s son, Hunter Biden, is publishing his memoir titled “Beautiful Things”, which narrates about his struggles with addiction and drug abuse. The book is scheduled to be published in the United States on April 6 by Gallery Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster.
- The 51-year-old Hunter Biden has narrated his personal story about how he was a drug addict- from his first sips of alcohol as a child, when he was dealing with the aftermath of a family tragedy, to his crack-cocaine use and how he fixed that problem.

Dalai Lama pens new book ‘The Little Book of Encouragement’

- Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama has come out with his new book titled ‘The Little Book of Encouragement’, in which he has shared quotes and words of wisdom to promote human happiness. The book has been edited by Renuka Singh and published by Penguin Random House.
- The Little Book of Encouragement contains 130 quotes related to how to deal with the new realities of the panic-stricken world, combat rising extremism, polarity and climate change besides Dalai Lama’s views on Tibet.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

SBI joins JPMorgan’s blockchain payments network

- State Bank of India has tied up with JPMorgan to use the US bank’s blockchain technology to speed up overseas transactions. The tie-up is expected to reduce SBI customers’ transaction costs and time taken for payments. SBI has joined Liink, a new blockchain-based interbank data network developed by JPMorgan. By integrating the technology, the bank expects to reduce transaction costs and improve cross-border payments for its customers.
- Liink is a peer-to-peer network and ecosystem operating under the umbrella of JPMorgan’s blockchain- and digital-currency-focused business, dubbed Onyx.
- Piloted in 2017, the product was originally referred to as Interbank Information Network and rebranded as Liink in October 2020.
- The Liink solution has enlisted more than 400 financial institutions and corporations in 78 countries, including 27 of the world’s top 50 banks. The network has around 100 live banks on the network, including both state-owned and private institutions.

NPCI enables UPI AutoPay live on music streaming platform 'Gaana'

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has announced that UPI AutoPay has now gone live on Gaana. Its integration with UPI AutoPay has made Gaana the 1st player in the Media & Entertainment industry to roll out the innovative e-mandate feature on UPI. The introduction of UPI AutoPay will empower Gaana's users to experience a smooth and seamless mechanism of renewing their subscriptions.
- Customers can enjoy premium, uninterrupted streaming of their choicest music, podcasts and radio without having to remember about the subscription renewal date. The strategic role played by Paytm and Juspay as payment aggregators will create a superior transaction experience for the customers. Based on the mandate, the subscription amount will be deducted automatically on the authorized date without entering UPI PIN.

AU Small Finance Bank has named Sharad Goklani as President & CTO

- AU Small Finance Bank has named Sharad Goklani as its new President & CTO. He was earlier associated with Equitas Small Finance Bank as its EVP & Chief Technology Officer. As a part of his new appointment, Goklani will be based in Jaipur Rajasthan. Prior to Equitas, he was associated with Bharti Airtel and Bharti Telesoft. He holds a Master degree in computer application from Jaipur University.
- AU was started 25 years ago by Sanjay Agarwal, a merit holder Chartered Accountant and a first-generation entrepreneur.
- As per the official website, it was founded in Jaipur in 1996 as Au Financiers, a non-deposit taking Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC), it effectively worked on funding economic growth, especially for the under-served and un-served low & middle-class individuals.
- Au Financiers converted into AU Small Finance Bank in April 2017 after receiving the license from RBI.

ICICI Bank launches 'Namma Chennai Smart Card'

- ICICI Bank has announced the launch of a Common Payment Card System (CPCS) in partnership with the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) and Chennai Smart City Limited (CSCL) to provide citizens with a one-stop solution for making various kind of payments. The prepaid card also facilitates retail payments within Chennai as well as in retail stores and e-commerce websites across the country. This will offer a common payment card platform to residents for making payments for various services within the city.
- The Namma Chennai Smart Card has various features, which residents can manage seamlessly online on a dedicated customer portal*. These include features like card block/unblock, activation, pin-reset, etc.
- Additionally, in the coming days, residents will also be able to reload the card digitally through UPI on the customer portal or the iSmart City app. Customers will also get exciting discount offers on the card around the year, which will be promoted in the coming days on the Bank's website.
- Users also have the option to manage the card online through a dedicated customer portal

or the iSmart City app.

India, AIIB sign agreement to improve Assam power transmission

- The Government of India and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has signed a \$304 million loan agreement on February 23, 2021, for the Assam Intra-State Transmission System Enhancement Project. The project aims to improve the reliability, capacity and security of the power transmission network in the northeastern state of Assam.
- It includes constructing 10 transmission substations and laying transmission lines with the associated infrastructure, upgrade 15 existing substations, and transmission lines and existing ground wire to optical power ground wire and provide technical assistance to support project implementation.
- The total estimated cost of the project is \$365 million. AIIB will finance \$304 million while the remaining funding of \$61 million will be done by the state government.

RBI ropes in Punjabi rapper for awareness campaign on cyber fraud

- The RBI has roped in Punjabi singer-rapper Viruss in its public awareness campaign. The campaign also includes Viruss' popular 2017 Indie hit 'Bam Bhole' that was recreated for Akshay Kumar-Kiara Advani starrer Laxmii. As cyber frauds continue to increase, the Reserve Bank of India has undertaken an unusual measure to spread awareness.
- The apex bank that has been very active on social media since the lockdown urges tech-savvy netizens to stay alert or 'satark' against common fraudsters and cybersecurity threats, including in UPI.
- The RBI has been running the campaign 'RBI Kehta Hai' on social media accounts since 2016 but has never been accompanied by peppy music.
- Since 2016 when it created the tagline RBI Kehta Hai, the central bank's communication has been centred on financial literacy and public awareness towards frauds, etc.
- The bank uses social media to talk about the facilities it offers for senior citizens, cybersecurity, digital banking, and setting limits on card transactions.

RBI brings State Bank of Sikkim under its regulatory purview

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has brought the State Bank of Sikkim under its regulation. Till now, RBI had the right and obligation to function as a banker to all the state government except for the state government of Sikkim. Now the bank will be regulated by the RBI on a par with other banks, however, the bank's ownership structure will not change.
- The State Bank of Sikkim was established as an autonomous body wholly owned by the Government of Sikkim, in the year 1968, five years before Sikkim became part of India in 1973.
- It was established under the State Bank of Sikkim Proclamation, 1968.
- The bank provides treasury operations for the state government and operates only within the jurisdiction of Sikkim.
- The bank currently has 42 branch offices and operates three revenue counters for

government works.

RBI permits residents to make remittances to IFSCs under LRS

- The Reserve Bank of India has permitted resident individuals to make remittances under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) to International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs) in the country. The decision of the RBI is aimed at deepening the financial markets in the IFSCs and providing an opportunity for resident individuals to diversify their portfolios. The RBI has reviewed the extant guidelines on LRS and decided to permit resident individuals to make remittances under LRS to IFSCs set up in India under the Special Economic Zone Act, 2005.
- The remittance shall be made only for making investments in IFSCs in securities, other than those issued by entities/companies resident (outside IFSC) in India. Any funds lying idle in the account for a period up to 15 days from the date of its receipt into the account shall be immediately repatriated to domestic INR account of the investor in India.

ICICI Lombard partners with Flipkart to offer 'Hospicash' insurance

- The e-commerce company Flipkart has partnered with ICICI Lombard to offer its customers the 'Group SafeGuard' insurance, a group health insurance policy. The 'Group SafeGuard' comes with daily cash benefits starting from Rs 500, and 'Hospicash' benefit for Flipkart consumers.
- The product will allow consumers to avail a payout for each day of hospitalisation.
- The fixed daily amount will enable consumers to pay for incidental medical or emergency expenses.
- The insurance is affordably priced, paperless, and flexible; covering both accidental hospitalisations or planned surgeries/treatment.

RBI constitutes 8-member expert panel for strengthening Urban Co-operative Banks

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted an eight-member expert committee on Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs) to examine issues and suggest a road map for strengthening the sector. The committee will be chaired by the former RBI Deputy Governor N. S. Vishwanathan.
Role of the Committee
- Assess the regulatory measures taken by the RBI and other authorities in respect of UCBs and their impact over the last five years to identify key constraints and enablers in fulfilment of their socio-economic objective.
- Review the current regulatory approach and recommend suitable measures to strengthen the sector.
- Suggest effective measures for faster rehabilitation and resolution of UCBs and assess the potential for consolidation in the sector
Other members
- Harsh Kumar Bhanwala: Former Chairman of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD),

- Mukund Chitale: Chartered Accountant
- NC Muniyappa and RN Joshi: retired Indian Administrative Service officers
- MS Sriram: IIM Bengaluru Professor
- Jyotindra Mehta: President of the National Federation of Urban Cooperative Banks and Credit Societies
- Neeraj Nigam: Chief General Manager-in-Charge, Department of Regulation, RBI

ICICI Lombard launches Corporate India Risk Index

- Private general insurer ICICI Lombard has launched the 'Corporate India Risk Index'. This is intended to be a unified, standardised corporate risk index that spans industries and companies. This will help companies understand the level of risk that their business is facing and also assist in developing a successful risk aversion plan.
- It has worked with consulting firm Frost and Sullivan to develop the risk measurement tool.

World Bank Signs \$100 million Project with Chhattisgarh

- Indian Govt and Chhattisgarh Govt has signed a \$100 million for CHIRAAG (Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural and Accelerated Agriculture Growth) project with the World bank. The main purpose is to develop sustainable production systems that allow tribal households in remote areas of Chhattisgarh to practice round-the-year production of diversified and nutritious food.
- The project will be implemented in the southern tribal-majority region of the state where a large population is undernourished and poor. Over 180,000 households from about 1,000 villages in eight districts of Chhattisgarh, will be benefited from this project.

Exim Bank to provide USD 400 mn funding for Maldives

- The Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) will provide USD 400 million to the Maldives through Line of Credit (LoC) to fund the Greater Male Connectivity Project. The agreement under the LoC will be effective from January 28, 2021.
- The 6.7 km Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) will be the largest civilian infrastructure project in the Maldives, connecting Male with three neighbouring islands – Villingili, Gulhifahu and Thilafushi. The Government of India will be funding the implementation of a major connectivity project in the Maldives through a USD 400 million lines of credit and USD 100 million grant.

New Development Bank Commits \$100 million in NIIF Fund of Funds

- The New Development Bank (NDB) has committed to invest USD 100 million (Rs 727.6 crore), into the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited (NIIF) Fund of Funds (FoF). With NDB's investment, the total commitments secured by the FoF has reached \$800 million (about Rs 5,820 crore). This investment marks NDB's first equity investment into India and its first-ever investment into a Fund of Funds.
- Currently, the Government of India (GoI), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) are the investor in the FoF. Now NDB has joined the group.

The FoF was established in 2018 with the objective of providing homegrown Indian private equity fund managers access to an India-focused institutional investor that operates at scale.

- The Investments will hugely benefit the Indian economy which is facing difficulties due to pandemic.
- It will also support India's efforts to boost investment in infrastructure.
- NDB's support will further address issues like investment gaps, availability of institutional funding for domestic private equity funds.

PhonePe partners with Axis Bank on UPI multi-bank model

- Digital payments platform, PhonePe has announced that it has partnered with Axis Bank on a Unified Payments Interface (UPI) multi-bank model. The partnership will provide PhonePe users with the option to create and use multiple UPI IDs with Axis Bank's "@axl" handle.
- This collaboration with PhonePe strengthens our commitment towards digitisation of the Indian payment ecosystem. It will help expand our reach to customers and the merchant community while offering secure and seamless payment experiences.
- PhonePe had emerged as the top UPI app in January, processing 968.72 million transactions worth ₹1.92 trillion, according to data by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). PhonePe will also start acquiring merchants with Axis Bank in addition to its partnership with YES Bank. It will help expand our reach to customers and the merchant community while offering secure and seamless payment experiences.

RBI to conduct bond purchases for Rs 20,000 crore

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced that it will purchase four government securities (G-Secs) that amount to ₹20,000 crores. The central bank will purchase it on February 10, 2021, under the open market operations (OMOs). This move was announced in aftermath of the yields that were moving up to touch the intra-day high of 6.1634 per cent recently. The RBI was concerned about the higher government borrowing.
- After the announcement of the OMO purchase was made, the yield on the benchmark 10-year G-Sec slowed down by 3-4 basis points. It now carries a coupon rate of 5.77 per cent as opposed to its previous closing yield of 6.1283 per cent.
- Open Market Operations are the purchase and sale of the Government securities (G-Secs) by RBI from and to the market. The Open Market Operations are conducted with the objective of adjusting the rupee liquidity conditions in the economy. In such operations, when RBI sells the government security in the market banks use to purchase them. When the banks purchase the Government securities, their ability to lend money to the industries, households and other commercial sector gets reduced. Following the reduced surplus cash, the liquidity of the rupee also contracts. This results in contraction of the credit creation or the credit supply. On the other hand, when the RBI purchases the securities, commercial banks find gets surplus cash and this in turn creates more credit in the system.

FSSAI caps trans fatty acids to 2% in food products from January 2022

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has restricted the permissible amount of industrial Trans Fatty Acid (TFA) in food products to 2 per cent. The latest amendment will come into effect from January 01, 2022. Currently, the permissible limit for trans fats in food products in 2021 is 3 per cent, cut down from the previous limit of 5 per cent.
- FSSAI has amended the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulations, 2011 to put into effect the new Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2021.
- As per the new rule, the food products in which edible oils and fats are used as an ingredient shall not contain industrial trans fatty acids more than 2% by mass of the total oils/fats present in the product, starting from January 01, 2022.
- Trans fat regulation, that aims to limit the amount of “trans fat”, fat-containing trans fatty acids — in industrial food products, has been enacted in many countries.
- These regulations were motivated by numerous studies that pointed to significant negative health effects of trans fat.
- Trans fats are associated with increased risk of heart attacks and death from coronary heart disease.

RBI to Set up Committee on Urban Co-op banks

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will set up an expert committee on Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs). The committee, involving all stakeholders, will provide a medium-term road map for strengthening the sector, enable faster resolution/rehabilitation of UCBs.
- Along with enabling faster resolution of UCBs, the committee will also examine critical aspects related to the urban co-op banks.
- The provisions of the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020 have become applicable to Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs) from June 26, 2020.
- The amendments have brought near parity in supervisory and regulatory powers between UCBs and commercial banks in respect of regulatory powers, including those related to governance, audit, and resolution.
- The members of the committee and its terms of reference have not been notified yet. It will be informed separately by the RBI.

Federal Bank launches ‘FedFirst’ savings account scheme for children

- Federal Bank has announced the launch of "FedFirst", a special savings account scheme for children below 18 years of age. The account helps children develop healthy saving and spending habits, thereby giving them the freedom to save, spend and earn.
- The account is designed to enable children to learn the importance of money management. The account comes with unique features and offers.
- The account holder is provided with a FedFirst contactless Debit Card with a daily cash withdrawal limit of ₹2,500 and POS/e-com limit of ₹10,000, in addition to free online facilities including access to internet banking, mobile alerts and e-mail alerts.

RBI: India's GDP growth projected at 10.5 per cent for FY22

- In the last bi-monthly monetary policy meet for the current, the Reserve Bank of India projected India's GDP growth rate at 10.5 per cent for the fiscal year 2021-22. The growth outlook has improved significantly, and the vaccination drive will further boost the economic rebound.
- The apex bank expects the Indian economy to grow in the range of 8.3 per cent to 26.2 per cent in the first half of FY22, followed by a 6 per cent growth in Q3FY22. The central bank's projection is lower than that of the Economic Survey that projected India to grow at a rate of 11 per cent in the coming fiscal.

RBI Monetary Policy: Policy Rate unchanged

- The six-member Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), headed by Governor Shaktikanta Das, has decided to maintain the status quo on policy rate amid sticky rate of inflation. At this point, the repo rate or the rate at which RBI lends to banks stands unchanged at 4 per cent. The reverse repo rate also stayed unchanged at 3.35 per cent. The MPC committee members voted unanimously in favour of the decision.

The key decisions taken in the Monetary Policy Committee meeting are:

- Policy Repo Rate: 4.00%
- Reverse Repo Rate: 3.35%
- Marginal Standing Facility Rate: 4.25%
- Bank Rate: 4.25%
- CRR: 3%
- SLR: 18.00%

RBI Monetary Policy Highlights & Key Decisions:

- The MPC continued to maintain the accommodative stance.
- The MPC has predicted the economic growth rate i.e. GDP growth rate of India at 10.5 per cent in 2021-22 (FY22).
- This is the first MPC meeting after the presentation of the Union Budget 2021-22.
- The six-member MPC headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das meets every two months to analyze the state of the Indian economy and inflation and address the monetary issues in the country.

PHDCCI Report: India to emerge as second most resilient economy in 2021

- India will emerge as the second most resilient economy in 2021, as per the International Economic Resilience (IER) Rank, released by industry body, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI). The ranking has been topped by Germany, among the top-10 leading economies. South Korea is at the third position in the list.
- Apart from this, India's real GDP growth rate is projected to be the highest in the year 2021 among the top-10 leading economies in the world, at 11.5%. It reflects India's strong "economic resurgence" to the global economic turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

PNB Restricts Withdraw of Money from non-EMV ATMs

- Punjab National Bank (PNB) has decided to restrict its customers from withdrawing money from non-EMV automated teller machines (ATMs) with effect from 01 February 2021, in an attempt to check frauds, related to money transactions. This restriction will apply to both, financial and non-financial transactions. To overcome this, PNB will introduce OTP based systems for withdrawing cash.
- Non-EMV ATMs are those which reads data through magnetic strips and do not hold the ATM card during the transaction.
Other major decision
- PNB has also decided to replace the old IFSC and MICR codes. This means that the old codes will not work after March 31, 2021.
- Customers will have to get a new code from the bank
- This decision has been taken due to merger of Punjab National Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India on 1st April 2020.

Union Budget 2021-22 is being presented by FM Nirmala Sitharaman

- Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman is presenting the Union Budget 2021 for the 3rd time in a row. The Union Budget is the yearly financial report estimating the income and expenditure presented to outline future policies to be adopted by the government for sustainable growth and development. The Economic Survey 2020-21 was released on 29th January 2021 by the Chief Economic Advisor of India, Krishnamurthy Subramanian. According to the survey, India's economy could contract 7.7 per cent in the financial year that ends on March 31.
- Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman concluded her Budget speech at 12.50 pm. In February 2020, FM Nirmala Sitharaman spoke for a record 162 minutes — two hours and 42 minutes — in Lok Sabha. FM Sitharaman only had two pages of her Budget speech unread, when she appeared uneasy and her Budget speech was cut short.
The key highlights from the Union Budget 2021-22:
- Total COVID-19 support measures amount to 13 per cent of GDP and total COVID-19 support measures by government and RBI amounts to Rs 27.1 lakh crore. The 'Aatmanirbhar' Packages accelerated India's rate of reform.
- India has two COVID-19 vaccines available and we expect two more vaccines soon. India currently also has one of the lowest death rate and active cases in the world. India's economic contraction is due to a global pandemic. The government is fully prepared to support and facilitate economic reset.
- Three times has a Budget followed contraction in the economy. Vision for Aatmanirbhar Bharat in Part-A of the Budget speech. 'Aatmanirbharta' consists of doubling farm income and strong infrastructure. It consists of good governance and women empowerment. Proposals for the FY22 Budget rests on 6 pillars.
- First of six pillars Aatmanirbhar Yojana in addition to the National Health Mission introduce the Aatmanirbhar Health Yojana with an outlay of Rs 64,180 crore over six years. This will strengthen the National Centre for Disease Control. Besides this, the government will also

set up 15 Health Emergency Centres.

- Jal Jeevan Mission with an outlay of Rs 2.87 lakh crore to cover houses and to be implemented over five years. Budget 2021 will also launch Mission Poshan 2.0. Besides this, the launch of urban 'Swacch Bharat Mission' 2.0 with an outlay of Rs 1.42 lakh crore has been made.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced voluntary vehicle scrapping policy. Vehicles to undergo fitness test – which is 20 years for passenger vehicles and 15 years for commercial vehicles. Further details of the scrappage policy to be announced shortly.
- Fitness testing for both PVs and CVs a positive move to create not only employment opportunities but a move that will ensure a cleaner environment as part of the Health Infrastructure pillar. This will also boost demand for more cleaner vehicles.
- The government has set an ambitious target of building infrastructure in the country. But funding these infrastructure projects would have posed a steep challenge because of the revenue constraints and the stress on the loan books of banks. FM Sitharaman is likely to announce a dedicated development financial institution to facilitate the financing of greenfield infrastructure projects.
- Rs 35,000 crore to be allocated for further funds for COVID-19 vaccines. we will provide more for COVID-19 vaccines if required. The private sector may be kept out of vaccination efforts it appears, a disappointment for them. At a blended cost of Rs255/dose (in the first phase), that will cover 2 doses of the vaccine for 68.6crore people in FY22.
- Government has committed Rs 1.97 lakh crore for Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) covering 13 sectors. Further, 7 textile parks will be launched for over three years.

RBI cancels licence of Kolhapur-based Shivam Sahakari Bank

- According to RBI, the licence of Maharashtra-based Shivam Sahakari Bank has been cancelled as it does not have adequate capital and earning prospects. The Commissioner for Cooperation and Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Maharashtra has also been requested to issue an order for winding up the bank and appoint a liquidator for the bank. With the cancellation of licence the process of paying the depositors as per the DICGC Act, 1961 will be set in motion.
- As per the data submitted by the Kolhapur-based bank, more than 99 per cent of the depositors are fully insured by Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC). The bank with its present financial position would be unable to pay its present depositors in full.