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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

New Zealand passes miscarriages bereavement leave law

- New Zealand's parliament has passed legislation giving mothers and their partners the right to paid leave following a miscarriage or stillbirth, becoming only the second country in the world to do so. India is the only other country with similar legislation.
- The leave provisions apply to mothers, their partners as well as parents planning to have a child through adoption or surrogacy. One in four New Zealand women has had a miscarriage. The bill will give women and their partners time to come to terms with their loss without having to tap into sick leave. Because their grief is not a sickness, it is a loss. New Zealand was the first country in the world to give voting rights to women and has been a pioneer on issues around woman's rights.

Suez Canal reopens after giant stranded ship is freed

- The giant container ship "Ever Given" that blocked traffic in the Suez Canal for the last week resumed its journey, after being successfully refloated. The efforts to float the delinquent Panamanian container ship Ever Given are successful.
- The 1,400-foot-long cargo ship jammed diagonally across a southern section of the Suez Canal, leaving a total of 367 ships, including dozens of container ships and bulk carriers, unable to use the key trading route.

Indo-Korean Friendship Park Inaugurated at Delhi Cantonment

- India's First Indo-Korean Friendship Park was jointly inaugurated at Delhi Cantonment by Hon'ble Raksha Mantri, Shri Rajnath Singh, and Hon'ble Minister of National Defence, Republic of Korea Mr Suh Wook. The park has been developed in joint consultation with the Ministry of Defence, the Government of India, the Indian Army, the Delhi Cantonment Board, the Embassy of Korea and the Korean War Veterans Association of India.
- Besides being a symbol of strong India-South Korea friendly relations, this park will also act as a monument to India's contributions as part of 21 countries that participated in the Korean war 1950-53, under the aegis of the United Nations.

US President Biden invites PM Modi to Leaders Summit on Climate

- President Joe Biden has invited 40 world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to a US-hosted virtual summit on climate next month to underscore the urgency and the economic benefits of stronger climate action. Biden will host a two-day climate summit of world leaders starting on Earth Day, April 22, in which he will outline the US goal for reductions of carbon emissions by 2030, known as the nationally determined contribution under the historic Paris accord.
- The White House said a total of 40 world leaders, including Prime Minister Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, were invited to the conference, which will be live-streamed to the public.
- Other leaders invited for the summit include Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Saudi Arabia King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Bhutanese Prime Minister Lotay Tshering are the other two leaders from South Asia to be invited for the mega-conference.

Republic of Congo President Sassou Nguesso wins election

- The longtime president of the Republic of Congo, Sassou Nguesso is set for another five-year term after getting over 88% of the vote. The election day was marred by the death of his main opponent, Guy Brice Parfait Kolelas.
- The African leader is one of the world's longest-serving presidents, earning him the nickname "emperor." He has led Congo for a total of 36 years. The former paratrooper first became president in 1979 and remained in power for three consecutive terms.

Bangladesh celebrates 50 years of independence

- Bangladesh celebrates 50 years of its Independence and National Day on 26 March, coinciding with the grand celebration of the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- On March 26, 1971, Bangladesh was proclaimed as an independent nation by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and this led to Bangladesh Liberation War when war ensued between Pakistan and Bangladesh liberation forces with Indian support.

Indian-American Doctor Vivek Murthy appointed as US Surgeon General

- The US Senate has voted, 57-43, to confirm the appointment of Indian-American doctor Vivek Murthy as the Surgeon General under US President Biden's administration.
- The 43-year-old Dr Murthy would occupy the position of America's Surgeon General for the second time. Prior to this, Dr Murthy was appointed as surgeon general under the Obama administration in 2011 but was fired by former President Trump in 2017.

World's first Ship Tunnel to be built in Norway

- The Norwegian Coastal Administration has received the green signal to start working on the construction of the world's first tunnel, being built exclusively for ships. The tunnel is dubbed as "Stad Ship Tunnel" and would be built under the mountainous Stadhavet peninsula in northwestern Norway.

About the Tunnel:

- The 1.7 km tunnel will be able to handle ships of up to 16,000 tonnes and give ships a safer passage through the treacherous Stadhavet Sea.
- The tunnel will be 49 metres (161 ft) high and 36 metres (118 ft) wide.
- It is estimated to cost at least 2.8 billion Norwegian kroner (NZ\$460 million) the construction of this ship tunnel.
- The construction would begin in 2022 and would take three to four years to complete.

Pabbi-Anti-Terror 2021: India, Pakistan and China to hold anti-terror exercise

- The eight-member bloc said that the decision to hold the joint exercise 'Pabbi-Anti-Terror 2021' was announced during the 36th meeting of the Council of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, including India, Pakistan and China, will hold a joint anti-terrorism exercise this year.
- "Decisions have been made to improve cooperation between the competent authorities of the SCO member states in identifying and suppressing channels that finance terrorist activities. Delegations of the competent authorities of India, Kazakhstan, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the RATS Executive Committee attended the meeting.

Russia Launches 38 Satellites From 18 Countries Into Space

- Russian space agency 'Roscosmos' successfully launched 38 foreign satellites into orbit, onboard Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. The 38 satellites belonged to 18 countries including South Korea, Japan, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Italy and Brazil. One of these satellites named 'Challenge-1' was the first-ever satellite made completely in Tunisia, which was created by the Telnet telecommunications group.
- In 2018, a Soyuz rocket carrying a Russian cosmonaut and a NASA astronaut failed mid-flight, forcing the crew to carry out an emergency landing. Both survived without injuries.

Dutch PM Mark Rutte powers to fourth straight election win

- Netherlands Prime Minister, Mark Rutte has won the 2021 parliamentary elections with most seats to be sworn in as the Prime Minister for the fourth straight term. Earlier Rutte and his entire Cabinet offered their resignation on 15 January 2021 in response to a scandal relating to child welfare fraud, however, Rutte remained in office till the conclusion of the 2021 election.
- Rutte has been Prime Minister of the Netherlands since October 2010.

Samia Suluhu Hassan sworn in as Tanzania's first woman President

- Samia Suluhu Hassan was sworn in as the sixth President of Tanzania, becoming the first female leader of the East African country. The 61-year-old Hassan assumed the presidency, following the death of previous President John Magufuli, due to a heart condition.
- She will finish Magufuli's second five-year term, which will run until 2025. Prior to taking charge as President, Hassan was the Vice-President of Tanzania, also being the first female vice-president of the country, since November 2015.

World's Largest Floating Solar Farms being built in Singapore

- The largest floating solar farm in the world is being built in Singapore. The country has resorted to set up energy plants off the coasts and reservoirs across it. This floating solar farm is being set up in the light that despite being one of the smallest countries across the

world, it is one of the biggest per capita carbon dioxide emitters in India. Thus, to cater to the issue of climate change and to cut the greenhouse gas emission it is building the floating solar farm. This project is being built by Sembcorp Industries.

- Renewable energy is a challenge for Singapore because the country has no rivers for hydro-electricity. The wind is also not that strong to power the turbines. Thus, with the setting up of the floating solar farms, the authorities seek to change that notion. So, this tropical country has turned to solar power. Since, it has little land space, equal to half the size of Los Angeles, the country has decided to set up energy plants off its coasts and on reservoirs.

Kuwait Foreign Minister arrives in India for two-day visit

- Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State of Cabinet Affairs of Kuwait Dr Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah arrived India on Wednesday for a two-day visit.
- During his visit, Mohammed Al-Sabah will meet External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday.
- On March 2, Jaishankar and Al-Sabah had discussed bilateral cooperation and the regional situation between the two countries.
- India recently dispatched a consignment of Indian-made COVID-19 vaccines to assist Kuwait in its fight against the coronavirus.

WHO declares El Salvador malaria-free

- El Salvador is the first country in Central America to be certified malaria-free by the World Health Organization. WHO grants a certification of malaria elimination when a country proves “beyond a reasonable doubt” that there has been no indigenous transmission of the disease nationwide for the previous three consecutive years.
- El Salvador hasn’t had a malaria outbreak since 1996 and has reported no indigenous cases since 2017. In 1990, the country had 9,000 cases per year, a figure that declined to 26 by 2010. WHO credited El Salvador’s sustained domestic funding for malaria prevention, detection, and treatment for the success.

India-Finland Virtual Summit 2021

- The India-Finland Virtual Summit was held on March 16, 2021, with the participation of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of the Republic of Finland Ms Sanna Marin. The virtual summit was organised to discuss the entire gamut of bilateral issues as well as other regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.
- The two leaders reviewed the ongoing bilateral engagements and committed to further expand and diversify the relationship across sectors such as trade and investment, innovation, education, emerging technologies including Artificial Intelligence, 5G/6G, and quantum computing.
- The two leaders also discussed the Covid-19 situation including their respective vaccination drives and emphasized the importance of global efforts for urgent and affordable access to vaccines across all nations.
- The leaders exchanged views on regional and global issues, including the India-EU

partnership, cooperation in the Arctic region, WTO and UN reforms. Both sides noted the potential for India and Finland to cooperate in undertaking developmental activities in Africa.

'Burqa ban' in Sri Lanka

- The Pakistani High Commissioner in Colombo has raised concern over Sri Lanka's recent announcement on outlawing the burqa, noting that such a ban would "injure" the feelings of ordinary Muslims in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.
- Sharing a news report on the development, head of the Pakistani mission Saad Khattak on Monday said in a Twitter thread: "The likely ban on Niqab #SriLanka will only serve as injury to the feelings of ordinary Sri Lankan Muslims and Muslims across the globe. At today's economically difficult time due to Pandemic and other image related challenges faced by the country at international fora, such divisive steps in the name of Security, besides accentuating economic difficulties, will only serve as fillip to further strengthen wider apprehensions about fundamental human rights of minorities in the country."

India, Pakistan Indus Commissioners set to meet on March 23-24

- Indus Commissioners of India and Pakistan are set to meet on March 23-24 in New Delhi.
- Pradeep Kumar Saxena, Commissioner (Indus), who will lead the Indian delegation in the meeting, "The annual meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) will be held on March 23-24 in New Delhi."
- "We are committed towards full utilisation of India's rights under the treaty and believe in amicable solution of issues through discussion."
- This will be the first meeting of Indus Commissioners after a gap of two and a half years. The last meeting of the India-Pakistan Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) was held in Lahore, Pakistan from August 29-30, 2018.

PM Modi Virtually Attends First Quad Summit 2021

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japan Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga come together for the first QUAD Summit. The meeting was held virtually during which the four participants will exchange views on different areas of cooperation like maintaining a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, C-19, emerging and critical technologies, maritime security, and climate change.
- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue nations are planning to counter China by cooperating and pool their resources to fund new production technologies and development projects. The world leaders talked about the cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and its development. President Biden also said that they are launching a new pact for the manufacturing of C-19 vaccines.
- QUAD is also known as the Asian NATO. It is an informal strategic forum comprising India, the United States, Japan, and Australia. The forum is maintained by semi-regular summits, military drills and information between member countries. The idea of QUAD was first

brought up by the then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe back in 2007. Since then the representatives from the member countries have met regularly and worked together. However, this was the first-ever meeting between the national heads of the QUAD countries.

World's Most Powerful Supercomputer Fugaku is ready for use

- The Japanese scientific research institute called RIKEN and Fujitsu started developing the “Fugaku” six years ago. It is the world’s most powerful supercomputers. Fugaku has been named after an alternative name for Mount Fuji. Now, this supercomputer is fully ready and developed in Japan and is now available for research use. This supercomputer has been developed with the aim of making the device core of the computing infrastructure of Japan.

Important points:

- Then the supercomputer was tested for the particular projects in order to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020.
- Now the Fugaku is fully open and available for shared use. The Research Organization for the Information Science and Technology (RIST) of Japan has selected some 74 projects which will use this supercomputer in the financial year 2021.
- RIST has also proposed for the development of the new projects in several categories and has invited the researchers who are interested to apply for the same.

Deepika Padukone joins WEF list of Young Global Leader

- Actor Deepika Padukone has joined the list of the Young Global Leaders (YGLs) compiled by the World Economic Forum. The list also includes several Indian citizens and India-origin persons. They join a group of Nobel Prize recipients, Pulitzer winners, heads of state and chief executive officers committed to improving the state of the world.
- Announcing its 2021 class of YGLs, the WEF said these are the world’s most promising 112 tomorrow’s leaders under the age of 40 and are involved in activities ranging from advocating public healthcare to campaigning for inclusivity in medical research. The Forum of Young Global Leaders was founded in 2005 by Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the WEF, to create a world where leaders take responsibility for a sustainable future while meeting increasingly complex and interrelated challenges.

Switzerland votes to ban full face coverings in public places

- Switzerland has voted in favour of a proposal banning full facial coverings including the burqa and niqab in almost all public places. In the public referendum, around 51.21 per cent of voters voted in support of the controversial proposal. The vote means that full facial covering will be banned in all publicly accessible places in Switzerland including on the streets, public transport, in public offices such as restaurants, shops and in the countryside.
- The full-face covering will be allowed in places of worship and other sacred sites. It will also be allowed for health and safety reasons and in situations where it is a local custom such as carnivals.
- According to the proposal by the Swiss Federal Government, there will be no additional

exceptions such as for tourists.

- France was the first European nation to ban burqas and niqabs in public places in 2011. The European Court of Human Rights had upheld the ban in 2014.

Economic Freedom Index 2021 announced

- The Heritage Foundation, a US Conservative think-tank, recently launched the “Economic Freedom Index”. The index was prepared by covering 184 countries this time for the period of July 2019 to June 2020. This is the first time the index has been published since the COVID-19 pandemic overturned lives as well as global economies and the scoring reflects a small extent how governments have responded to the health crisis.
- In the index, Singapore has topped the global ranking for the second consecutive year. In the 2021 Index, India came in around the middle of the pack among Asia-Pacific countries ranking 26th out of 40 countries, scoring 56.5 points. Globally, the Foundation rates India’s economy as the 121st freest. Although its overall score is unchanged, improvements were made in business freedom. This was offset by declines in judicial effectiveness and other scores.

Index

- Rank 1: Singapore
- Rank 2: New Zealand
- Rank 3: Australia
- Rank 4: Switzerland
- Rank 5: Ireland
- The biggest news generated from the “2021 Index of Economic Freedom” was however not the rankings or how COVID-19 impacted the scores but that The Heritage Foundation decided to exclude Hong Kong from its rankings for the first time ever.
- The Heritage Foundation said that the reason for leaving Hong Kong out is that the Special Administrative Region and its economic policies have now come under the direct control of Beijing.

Bangladesh to commemorate 50th anniversary of 1971 Liberation war

- In the 50th year of Indian victory over Pakistan in the 1971 Liberation war, Indian Naval Ships arrived in the port town of Mongla for a three-day visit to Bangladesh. The Indian Naval Ships is on a three-day visit between March 8 to 10. This is the first time ever that any Indian Naval Ship is visiting the port of Mongla in Bangladesh.
- The basic aim of this visit is to pay homage to the Bangladeshi and Indian combatants and citizens who laid down their lives during the Liberation War of 1971 against Pakistan. The ships will take part in the ongoing Swarnim Vijay Varsh celebrations to commemorate 50 years of the Liberation War of 1971 and reiterating the historic Indo-Bangladeshi friendship.

UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2021

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WRAP released the Food Waste

Index Report 2021 and highlights that food wastes by different countries in 2019. As per the report, Over 931 million tonnes of food were wasted globally in 2019.

- In India, the household food waste estimate is 50 kg per capita per year, or 68,760,163 tonnes a year.
- The household food waste estimate in the US is 59 kg per capita per year, or 19,359,951 tonnes a year.
- China these estimates are 64 kg per capita per year or 91,646,213 tonnes a year.

Australia building world's first platypus sanctuary

- Australian conservationists have unveiled plans to build the world's first refuge for the platypus, to promote breeding and rehabilitation as the duck-billed mammal faces extinction due to climate change.
- The Taronga Conservation Society Australia and the New South Wales State government said they would build the specialist facility, mostly ponds and burrows for the semi-aquatic creatures, at a zoo 391 km from Sydney, by 2022.

Israel officially receives first ever UAE ambassador

- Israel's president has formally received the first-ever ambassador from the United Arab Emirates, following last year's historic agreement between the countries to normalise ties. UAE envoy Mohamed Al Khaja, who arrived in Israel, delivered his credentials to Israeli President Reuven Rivlin at a ceremony in Jerusalem. The UAE was the first country to agree to establish full diplomatic relations with the Jewish state under the Abraham Accords, a pact brokered by former US President Donald Trump.
- The agreement made the UAE only the third majority Arab country to form official ties with Israel, following Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994. Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan have subsequently joined the Abraham Accords. The agreements broke with the longstanding Arab consensus that there should be no normalisation with Israel until it reaches a comprehensive peace deal with the Palestinians.

Ghana becomes the world's first nation to receive COVAX vaccines

- Ghana has become the first country in the world to receive vaccines acquired through the United Nations-backed COVAX initiative with a delivery of 600,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine made by the Serum Institute of India. Ghana is among 92 low-and middle-income countries that are receiving vaccines for free through COVAX. Another 90 countries and eight territories have agreed to pay if they choose to receive vaccines through COVAX.
- The vaccines, delivered by UNICEF, arrived at Accra's international airport and are part of the first wave of C-19 vaccines being sent by COVAX, an international cooperative program formed to make sure low- and middle-income countries have fair access to C-19 vaccines. COVAX is led by the United Nation's World Health Organization; Gavi, a vaccine group; and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, or CEPI.

UN body recommends Bangladesh graduation from LDC

- The United Nations Committee for Development Policy (CDP) has recommended the graduation of Bangladesh from the category of Least Developed Country (LDC). Bangladesh has fulfilled the eligibility criteria in terms of per capita income, human assets and economic and environmental vulnerability. This is the second consecutive time since 2018 that the CDP has made the recommendation for Bangladesh for graduation from the LDC category. Myanmar and Lao PDR also met the criteria for the 2nd time.
- Bangladesh will get time up to 2026 to prepare for the transition to the status of a developing country. Usually, countries are given three years for transition but this year due to the Corona pandemic, Bangladesh has been given five years for the process. On the other hand, enhanced confidence of international financial bodies, improved credit rating and higher FDI is expected to benefit Bangladesh after the transition period is completed.

Russia launches space satellite Arktika-M on first mission to the Arctic

- The Arctic has warmed more than twice as fast as the global average over the past three decades and Moscow is seeking to develop the energy-rich region, investing in the Northern Sea Route for shipping across its long northern flank as ice melts.
- The satellite - Arktika-M - successfully reached its intended orbit after being launched from Kazakhstan's Baikonur cosmodrome by a Soyuz rocket, Dmitry Rogozin, the head of Russia's Roscosmos space agency, said in a post on Twitter.
- The Arktika-M will have a highly elliptical orbit that passes high over northern latitudes allowing it to monitor northern regions for lengthy periods.

IAF gifts 1971 war helicopter to Bangladesh, gets F-86 fighter

- Commemorating 50 years of defeating Pakistan in the 1971 war, Indian Air Force (IAF) Chief RKS Bhadauria gifted a legacy Alouette III helicopter to Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) and got a legacy F-86 Sabre aircraft as a return gift from Dhaka.
- "To mark the Golden Jubilee of 1971 War of Liberation, IAF chief RKS Bhadauria gifted a legacy Alouette III helicopter to the Bangladesh Air Force. Bangladesh Air Force chief too gifted an F-86 Sabre aircraft that had been restored by BAF after the 1971 war. Both legacy aircraft will find a place of pride in museums on both sides," IAF stated in a tweet.
- The exchange of aircraft took place in Dhaka during the four day trip of Bhadauria to Bangladesh where he visited different airbases and interacted with the top military leadership of that country.

NATIONAL NEWS

India, US Carry Out Joint Military Drill In Himachal Pradesh

- The 11th edition of Indo-US joint special forces exercises Vajra Prahar 2021 was conducted at Special Forces training school located at Bakloh, in Himachal Pradesh. The exercise 'Vajra Prahar' is aimed at sharing best practices and experiences in areas such as joint mission planning and operational tactics. The exercise was aimed at improving interoperability between the special forces of the two countries.

- The armies of participating nations jointly train, plan and execute a series of operations for neutralisation of threats of varied nature with a common aim of countering threats of international terrorism through mutual training and jointness.

Maharaja Chhatrasal Convention Centre inaugurated at Khajuraho

- The Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge) Shri Prahlad Singh Patel, and the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan jointly inaugurated the 'Maharaja Chhatrasal Convention Centre at Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh. The Convention Centre has been developed under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism, adding another feather to the UNESCO World Heritage site at Khajuraho.
- This new venue will cater to the business needs, by hosting meetings and conferences. The Convention Centre is equipped with all modern amenities and infrastructure to offer a secure space to host corporate banquets for teams both large and small amidst a soothing decor and ambience.

UP govt organizes 'banana festival' in Kushinagar

- Uttar Pradesh government was organised a 'Banana Festival' in Kushinagar, which has witnessed the participation of at least 35 farmers and entrepreneurs. The state government had in 2018 organised the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme to promote traditional enterprise.
- Noting the good cultivation of bananas in Kushinagar, products in the district made from banana fibre were selected in the ODOP scheme. At least 4,000 farmers are linked to banana cultivation and after inclusion in the ODOP scheme, around 500 people are employed in its processing. There are three banana fibre processing units in the district and the construction of a Common Facility Centre (CFC) is also planned.

Nagaland Health Minister launches 'i-Learn' for Community Health Officers

- Nagaland Health and Family Welfare Minister, S Pangnyu Phom has launched i-Learn, a capacity building and performance tracking application for Community Health Officers, CHOs in the state at his office chamber in Kohima. The state government launched the i-Learn application in partnership with USAID-NISHTHA/Jgpiego which will cater across the 189 Health & wellness centres in the state.

About the "i-Learn":

- i-Learn is a learning management system for CHOs with self-facilitated learning for improving and learning new skills in clinical and non-clinical areas.
- The state is committed to defeating the pandemic and as such it has rolled out several interventions including digital technology like the Naga Telehealth services.
- The Naga Telehealth, a telemedicine platform launched just about six months ago has received a good response from the state's own medical doctors and CHOs wherein more than 1000 teleconsultations have been conducted.

Jal Shakti Minister approves incentive fund

- Seven States viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh qualified for performance incentive grant for 2020-21 under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) – Har Ghar Jal to provide assured tap water supply to every rural home by 2024. For performance incentive grant, the criteria include physical and financial progress under JJM, functionality of piped water supply schemes and capacity to utilize the fund. Union Minister, Jal Shakti Shri Gajendra Singh Sekhawat approved Rs. 465 Crore as performance incentive to these States.
- Despite Covid-19 pandemic and resultant lockdowns and disruption, speedy implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission on the ground has set an example and during the financial year, more than 3.16 Crore rural households have been provided tap water connection. Presently, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Goa and Telangana States have become 'Har Ghar Jal' States/ UT and every household in 55 districts and 85 thousand villages of the country, have tap water supply.

Shaheed ashfaq ullah khan Park inaugurated

- After a long wait, Gorakhpur has finally got its own Zoological Garden, named after freedom fighter Ashfaqullah Khan.
- Dedicating the project to the people of Gorakhpur, chief minister Yogi Adityanath who inaugurated the zoo on Saturday, said that this had been his dream project and would be another marker of Gorakhpur's development, serve as a medium of tourism and help to generate employment. This is the third zoological garden in the state. Lucknow and Kanpur have one zoo each. Hailing Khan after whom the zoo has been named, the CM recalled his participation in the Kakori incident during India's freedom struggle, for which he was martyred. "The Kakori incident and Gorakhpur have an unbreakable relationship. The immortal freedom fighter Pandit Ram Prasad Bismil, also the mastermind of Kakori incident, was kept in Gorakhpur jail and hanged here.

Residential hockey centre of excellence to come up in Lucknow

- A centre of excellence in hockey will be set up in the Uttar Pradesh capital soon. The union sports ministry, with support from the state government, has taken the decision to nurture talent in a state which produced hockey stalwarts Dhyan Chand and Kunwar Digvijay Singh 'Babu' and has a rich history in the game.
- A 100-bed hostel for boys and girls, modern sports medicine and physiotherapy centres as well as top coaches would be part of the centre to come up at the state government-run Padma Shri Mohd Shahid Synthetic Stadium.
- The union sports ministry will fund the centre at a venue that already has facilities for hockey, tennis, badminton and squash. The Uttar Pradesh Sports Directorate will run it in consultation with Uttar Pradesh Hockey.

Delhi cabinet gives nod for purchase of 300 e-buses

- The Delhi Cabinet on Friday approved a proposal for purchase of 300 low-floor fully electric

air-conditioned buses by the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) under the Central government's "faster adoption and manufacturing of hybrid and electric vehicles in India (FAME) phase-II" scheme.

- The government in a statement said the first tender called by DTC in October 2019 was "not found responsive" and, therefore, the process was cancelled. A fresh tender was later called in June 2020, but that too was cancelled as the rates were not found to be competitive. Finally, a third tender in December 2020 was found to be responsive and competitive.

Global Wind Report 2021: 2020 was Best Year for Wind Industry

- Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the year 2020 was the best year in history for the global wind industry as this sector installed 93GW of new capacity in 2020, according to a new report titled 'Global Wind Report 2021, released by the Global Wind Energy Council. This is the 16th annual flagship report, released by GWEC on March 25, 2021. The 93GW represents a 53% year-on-year increase.

According to the report:

- The global wind power market increased four times in size over the past decade but the record growth was seen in 2020.
- This increase was driven by a surge of installations in China and the US alone.
- Together, the US and China installed 75% of new installations in 2020 and account for over half of the world's total wind power capacity.
- In the current scenario, 743GW of wind power capacity has been installed worldwide, which is helping to avoid over 1.1 billion tonnes of CO₂ annually.
- However, GWEC's report shows that the current rate of wind power installed will not be enough to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.
- The world needs to install a minimum of 180 GW of new wind energy every single year to limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.
- Similarly, it will need to increase the capacity to 280GW annually to meet the net-zero emission target by 2050.

Air India to be 100% Privatised: Hardeep Puri

- The much-delayed privatisation of Air India is likely to be completed in the first half of this year, said Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday. "We've decided that Air India will be 100 per cent disinvested.
- The choice isn't between disinvestment and non-disinvestment. It's between disinvestment and closing down. Air India is a first-rate asset but has an accumulated debt of Rs 60,000 crore.

DD Free Dish has crossed about 40 million subscribers

- DD Free Dish, a multi-channel Free-To-Air Direct to Home (DTH) service of public broadcaster Prasar Bharati, has crossed an estimated 40 million subscribers, according to a report. The EY FICCI Media Entertainment Report 2021 attributed the growth to less

expensive television sets, economic issues, launch of the DD Retro Channel and return of big broadcasters to the Free Dish platform, a statement said.

- DD Free Dish has continued its strong growth trajectory and its base has crossed an estimated 40 million subscribers according to the report.
- Television households will continue to grow at over 5 per cent till 2025, driven by connected TVs NSE 2.22 % which could cross 40 million by 2025 and DD Free Dish could cross 50 million, the statement said.

UP to have maximum number of international airports in the country

- Uttar Pradesh will soon be the state with maximum number of international airports in the country. With three new international airports expected to be made operational in the next three years, the state will soon have five international airports.
- The Yogi Adityanath-led government in UP has sanctioned Rs 200 crore for the Kushinagar airport, which got the Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA's) approval recently, thus becoming the third licensed international airport in UP after Lucknow and Varanasi.

IIT Kharagpur wins CoreNet Global Academic Challenge 6.0

- A team of four undergraduate students from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur emerged as winners at the CoreNet Global Academic Challenge 6.0, sponsored by Cushman and Wakefield, KI and IA: Interior Architects. The team comprised Siddhant Samarth, Pratim Majumdar, Rishita Raj and Utkarsh Agrawal and were guided by Prof. Jenia Mukherjee (Department of Humanities and Social Sciences).
- The team from IIT Kharagpur was one of the four teams to progress into the final round out of 1300 teams all over the world and were pitted against the University of Washington, New York University and the University of Denver in the final round hosted online on 18th March 2021. This is the first time that a squad from India has emerged as winners in the CoreNet Global Academic Challenge since the inception of the competition in 2015.

Vizag gets mobile water from air kiosk and Water Knowledge Centre

- The Hyderabad-based startup, Maithri Aquatech has set up the world's first mobile water-from-air kiosk and 'Water Knowledge Centre' in the smart city of Visakhapatnam. This initiative is supported by Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) and project SEWAH (Sustainable Enterprises for Water and Health) – an alliance between USAID and SWN (Safe Water Network).
- The kiosk will provide clean potable water from the air by making use of Maithri Aquatech's Meghdoot solution as a source to generate water with no dependency on groundwater as well as surface water resources.
- The kiosk will also function as a Water Knowledge Resource Centre (WRKC) by creating awareness and imparting necessary information to members of the local underserved communities as well as nearby schools on the benefits of good water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) practices.

J&K LG Manoj Sinha e-inaugurates 73 AYUSH Health & Wellness Centres

- Jammu and Kashmir, LG Manoj Sinha has e-inaugurated 73 AYUSH Health & Wellness Centres under Ayushman Bharat across the UT. These centres aim to promote good health and expanding the outreach of comprehensive primary healthcare services to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Lt Governor observed that AYUSH Health & Wellness Centres would be a game-changer in the UT of J&K, especially in promoting the AYUSH sector, so that comprehensive primary health care through AYUSH principles and practices is provided to the community for achieving the basic objective of holistic wellness model by advocating self-care and home remedies amongst the community.

Features of Health & Wellness Centres:

- Some of the features of AYUSH Health & Wellness Centres include medicinal plants garden, yoga space, providing training and suggestions for home treatment, promoting Dincharya (Art of healthy Living), Ritucharya (Wellness calendar) and a personalized healthcare approach.

Nirmala Sitharaman launches Central Scrutiny Centre and IEPFA mobile App

- Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman virtually inaugurated Central Scrutiny Centre (CSC) and Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority's (IEPFA) Mobile App. The two tech-enabled initiatives have been launched by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to leverage digital solutions to achieve the Prime Minister's vision of 'Digitally empowered India'.

About the Mobile App:

- The Mobile App will focus on financial literacy by spreading investors' awareness, education, and protection among investors.
- The Mobile App has been developed for citizen engagement and information dissemination to promote awareness among investors.

Hardeep Singh Puri inaugurates Kurnool Airport in Andhra Pradesh

- Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Civil Aviation, Hardeep Singh Puri has inaugurated the Kurnool Airport, in Andhra Pradesh virtually. The flight operations at Kurnool airport will begin on 28 March 2021. This airport has been developed under the Regional Connectivity Scheme, Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (RCS-UDAN).

About the airport:

- Kurnool airport will bring the region closer to major hubs in South India by providing direct flight operations to Bangalore, Vishakhapatnam and Chennai.
- Kurnool is the 6th airport in Andhra Pradesh to become functional after Kadapa, Visakhapatnam, Tirupati, Rajahmundry & Vijayawada.

POWERGRID Launches Certified E-Tendering Portal "PRANIT"

- Power Grid Corporation of India (POWERGRID) has launched an "e-Tendering Portal" called 'PRANIT' to make the tendering process more transparent. The portal "PRANIT" will involve

less paperwork and allow ease of operation, which in turn will make the tendering process more transparent.

- The portal has been certified by Standardisation, Testing and Quality Certification Directorate (STQC), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Govt. POWERGRID is the only organization in India to have an e-procurement solution on SAP Supplier Relationship Management (SRM), complying with all applicable requirements relating to security and transparency as stipulated by STQC.

Andhra Pradesh to launch India's first Govt-Run Animal Ambulance Network

- The state government of Andhra Pradesh has decided to set up "India's first government-run ambulance network" for animals. This decision was taken in order to further boost the animal husbandry and veterinary sector in the state. Ambulance network as one of its main missions in order to help in reaching out to the distressed animals to provide them with proper animal healthcare. The Animal Husbandry Department was directed to set up one Mobile Ambulance Veterinary Clinic at each of the assembly constituency.
- A total of 175 mobile ambulances (veterinary) clinics will be placed at Assembly Constituency Level on the lines of 108 Services for providing Veterinary services at the doorstep.
- These mobile ambulances shall provide veterinary first aid services along with spot diagnosis and attending to emergency cases. One of the major facilities these ambulances will provide is the 'Hydraulic Lift' facility to lift animals and shift them to the nearest Government Veterinary Facility in case of emergency.
- One veterinary doctor, One Para-veterinary worker, will be assigned to every ambulance.
- These ambulances will also have a 24/7 toll-free call centre.
- The department of Animal Husbandry has briefed CM that there are around 1576 veterinary dispensaries established across the state, with around 1376 veterinary doctors recruited.
- The chief minister said that more veterinary doctors need access to better functioning and better treatment.

Ramesh Pokhriyal inaugurates Shaheed Bhagat Singh Smarak in New Delhi

- The Union Minister of Education, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', virtually inaugurated the Shaheed Bhagat Singh Smarak in New Delhi on March 23, 2021.
- The inauguration took place on the occasion of a programme organised by the University of Delhi on 'Shaheed Diwas' to pay homage and commemorate 90 years of martyrdom of our national icons of the Indian National Movement –Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar and Shivaram Rajguru.

Indian Armed Forces 4th Strongest in the World

- China has the strongest military force in the world while India stands at number four, according to a study released by defence website Military Direct. China has the strongest military in the world, scoring 82 out of 100 points in the index. The USA, despite their

enormous military budgets, comes in 2nd place with 74 points, followed by Russia with 69, India at 61 and then France with 58. The U.K. just about makes the Top 10, coming in 9th place with a score of 43.

- The study said “ultimate military strength index” was calculated after taking into consideration various factors including budgets, number of inactive and active military personnel, total air, sea, land and nuclear resources, average salaries, and weight of equipment.

Gol launched “Gram Ujala Scheme” for Rural Areas

- The government of India has launched the “Gram Ujala Scheme” to provide the cheapest LED bulbs in rural areas. The scheme was launched by the Union power and new and renewable energy minister, Raj Kumar Singh. In the first phase, the scheme was launched from Arrah district in Bihar. In this phase, around 15 million LED bulbs will be distributed in the villages of Arrah (Bihar), Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Nagpur (Maharashtra), and western Gujarat.
- The Gram Ujala Scheme is an ambitious scheme that offers the world’s cheapest LED bulbs in rural areas. This is the first such scheme in India. It provides the LED Bulbs in these areas at a mere Rs.10. This scheme also furthers its climate change strategy and strengthen the self-reliance credentials. The scheme does not come with the government’s support or subsidy.

Indian Navy undertakes exercise PASSEX with Royal Bahrain Naval Force

- Indian Navy on 18th March undertook Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with Royal Bahrain Naval Force Corvette Al Muharraq in the Persian Gulf under Operation Sankalp. PASSEXs are conducted regularly by the Indian Navy with units of friendly foreign navies, whilst visiting each other’s ports or during a rendezvous at sea.
- The exercises are aimed at fostering interoperability and reflecting the commitments of both, India and Bahrain, to build cooperative partnerships in meeting emergent maritime challenges.

Maharashtra farmers start fresh fruit cake ‘movement’

- Fruit growers in rural Maharashtra have started an innovative ‘movement’ to promote fresh fruit cakes as a healthier option, instead of the traditional bakery-made cakes. According to farmers and agrarian experts, the aim of this ‘spontaneous’ movement is to encourage farmers and their families to increase the intake of fruits in their diet and to find a new way of selling their produce in times of the pandemic.
- As part of the movement, farmers, their families and various organisations of cultivators are encouraging cakes made locally using fruits like watermelon, muskmelon, grapes, orange, pineapple and banana while celebrating special events.

Bihar becomes first state to have own ethanol policy

- Bihar Cabinet has approved the Ethanol Production Promotion Policy, 2021, becoming the

1st Indian State to have an ethanol promotion policy. The policy allows the extraction of ethanol, which was restricted to sugarcane, from surplus quantities of maize as well. The new policy would permit ethanol production in Bihar from all feedstocks permitted by National Policy on Biofuels, 2018, and subsequently by the National Biofuel Coordination Committee.

- The Assembly was informed of the cabinet decision by deputy chief minister Renu Devi as the industry minister Shahnawaz Husain was away in poll-bound West Bengal for campaigning. So far, the government of India has granted permission for ethanol production from B-heavy molasses, C-heavy molasses, grains unfit for human consumption, sugarcane juice, sugar, sugar syrup, surplus rice and maize.

Advanced facility launched at NABI

- Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Science & technology Dr. Harsh Vardhan today inaugurated the new Advanced High Resolution Microscopy Facility at National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute (NABI) and Unveiled the 4 Star GRIHA Certification of Center of Innovative and Applied Bioprocessing (CIAB) Lab and Admin Building at Mohali in Punjab.
- Both NABI & CIAB are autonomous institutes under Dept. of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology.
- Following the gathering Dr. Harsh Vardhan urged both the institutes to address the problems of hunger & malnutrition and to bring nutritional revolution in the country. Minister emphasized that with government impetus on doubling the farmers income by 2022-23, NABI and CIAB's roles are crucial to achieve this ambitious goal.

Three day Shehnai festival starts at BHU

- As a part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, a 3 day Shehnai festival started at Banaras Hindu University campus Varanasi today evening. Sangeet Natak academy and music and performing arts faculty of BHU has come together to organise this music evening to remember the shehnai Maestro Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan.
- The Program was inaugurated by Prof SK Sharma and Dhrupad Singer Hritwik Sanyal and Faculty members of BHU, professor Rajesh Shah, Sangeeta Pandit, President of Sangeet Natak academy Lucknow Dr preetesh Acharya who is son of noted artist Rajeshwar Acharya were also present at the stage.

PM Modi to launch "Catch the Rain" campaign

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain' campaign on World Water Day, which is celebrated on March 22. The Prime Minister has launch the campaign at 12:30 pm through video conferencing.
- According to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the campaign has undertaken across the country, in both rural and urban areas, with the theme "catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls".
- "The campaign has implemented from March 22 to November 30 November - the pre-monsoon and monsoon period in the country. It has launched as a Jan Andolan to take

water conservation at the grass-root level through people's participation. It is intended to nudge all stakeholders to create rainwater harvesting structures suitable to the climatic conditions and subsoil strata, to ensure proper storage of rainwater.

Jharkhand launches 'SAAMAR' campaign to fight malnutrition

- The state government of Jharkhand has launched a campaign called SAAMAR to tackle malnutrition in the state. SAAMAR stands for Strategic Action for Alleviation of Malnutrition and Anemia Reduction. The campaign has been launched with a 1000 days target, where annual surveys will be conducted to track the progress. The campaign will bring together various departments to identify anaemic women and malnourished children to effectively deal with the problem in a state where malnutrition has been a major problem.
- Most importantly, the campaign, as per the note, also tries to target Primarily Vulnerable Tribal Groups. Stating that there is no research-based information available on their food and nutritional habits, it encourages research and proposes fellowships on the nutritional behaviour of these groups for effective implementation.

J&K LG Manoj Sinha inaugurates project "Awaam Ki Baat"

- Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, initiated the project "Awaam Ki Baat" – a Radio program by launching its website at Raj Bhavan, Jammu. The half-an-hour long Radio program to be aired every third Sunday of the month (to start from April), is one of the many sequential steps of a broader program aimed at disseminating the progressive steps taken by the government and providing the public with a platform to speak, write and interact with the administration, thereby voicing their suggestions, ideas and creative proposals.

KRAS releases First batch of MRSAM Missiles

- The Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS), which is a joint venture between the Kalyani Group of India and Rafael Advanced Defence Systems of Israel, have released the first batch of Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM) kits. The missile was released for the Indian Army and Indian Air Force.
- The release of the MRSAM Missile also marked the KRAS' commitment to delivering more than 1000 MRSAM missile kits to India in near future. These missile sections will then be sent for further and future integration to Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL). The Kalyani Group has infused the "State-of-the-art technology with engineering excellence in the company.
- It is the private sector MSME of India comprising of advanced manufacturing capabilities and facilities which is specially dedicated to addressing the assembly, integration and testing (AIT) of the state-of-the-art weapon systems which are being inducted in India's defence forces. KRAS also address the Maintenance and Repair Operations (MRO) of the major in-service Air Defence Missile System in the Indian Air Force.

J&K Govt approves setting up of JVC "Ratle Hydroelectric Power Corporation"

- The Jammu and Kashmir administration has approved the incorporation of a joint venture company (JVC) under the name "Ratle Hydro-electric Power Corporation". To implement the 850 MW Ratle Hydro-Electric Project (HEP) on river Chenab in the Kishtwar district of the Union Territory (UT) of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). The JV company has been incorporated between the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and J&K State Power Development Corporation Ltd (JKSPDC).
- The equity contributions of NHPC will be 51 per cent and for JKSPDC will be 49 per cent.
- The proposed JVC will have an authorised capital of Rs 1,600 crore with initial paid-up capital of Rs 100 crore.
- The 850 MW Ratle HEP will be developed at an estimated cost of Rs 5,281.94 crore.

Gol Forms Experts Committee For Startup India Seed Fund Scheme

- The government has constituted an experts advisory committee for the overall execution and monitoring of the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme. The committee would be chaired by H K Mittal from the Department of Science and Technology. The other representatives of the committee would include members from DPIIT, the department of biotechnology, science and technology, electronics and IT, Niti Aayog, and expert members from the startup ecosystem.
- The committee will evaluate and select incubators for allotment of funds under the scheme, monitor progress and take all necessary measures for efficient utilisation of funds towards the fulfilment of objectives of the scheme.
- The scheme has been approved for the period of the next four years starting from 2021-22, beginning from April 1, 2021.
- The government has earmarked Rs 945 crore corpus for the scheme, which will be divided over the next four years for providing seed funding to eligible startups through eligible incubators across India.

Hurun India Wealth Report 2020 announced

- The Hurun India Wealth Report, 2020 was released on March 16, 2020. The report identifies a novel household category in India called the 'New Middle Class' which accounts for an average savings of Rs 20-lakh per annum. The report highlights that these households have a major allocation towards physical assets like primary residential property and automobiles. As per the report, the total number of such cumulative households in India stands at 633,000.
- The report further states that there are around 4,12,000 dollar-millionaire households or affluent households across India which are having a net worth of Rs 7 crore. As per the report, the Hurun Rich Listers comprise a wealth of Rs 1,000 crore.
- This category of the report comprises 3000 number of cumulative households in India. The 'Indian middle class' has earnings of over Rs 2.5-lakh per annum while they have a net worth of less than Rs 7 crore. The 'Indian Middle Class' category accounts for 56400,000

families in India.

Nokia to Develop New 5G Radio Solutions

- The Finnish telecom equipment maker, Nokia has announced on March 16 that it has partnered with Microsoft, Amazon web services and Google so as to develop a new cloud-based 5G radio solution. This solution will be developed with its radio access network (RNA) technology. This partnership was gone with the objective of developing new business cases.
- RAN is part of a mobile telecommunication system. This system implements radio access technology. RAN resides between a device like a computer, mobile phone or any remotely controlled machine. It also provides a connection with the core network.
- Based on the standard mobile phones and other wireless connected devices are called user equipment, terminal equipment or mobile station etc. The functionality of RAN is typically provided by the silicon chip which resides in both the core network and the user equipment.
- The single handset or phone can be connected to multiple radio access networks simultaneously.
- The Handsets which are capable of this feature are called dual-mode handsets. For example, a handset can commonly support both GSM and UMTS or "3G" radio access technologies. Such devices also transfer the ongoing call across different radio access networks without any disruption to users.

Samsung sets up Innovation Lab at DTU

- Samsung India has announced that it has inaugurated a Samsung Innovation Lab at Delhi Technological University (DTU) to focus on collaborative research and training. It has set up the innovation lab under the Samsung Innovation Campus initiative as part of its new #PoweringDigitalIndia vision. With this addition, Samsung now has eight technical labs spread across the country as part of its Samsung Innovation Campus initiative, which was earlier called Samsung Digital Academy.
- As part of the lab, engineers at Samsung R&D Institute, Noida (SRI-N) will work with students and faculty at DTU on collaborative research projects on smartphone domains.
- The students and faculty at DTU will work on domains such as Application Framework, Multimedia, Health and Security, at the lab.
- Projects will focus on technology areas such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Computer Vision. So far, over 200 students have worked with SRI-N engineers on research projects and have received training.
- Collaborative research projects will be open to B.Tech, M.Tech and PhD students at DTU, who will receive certificates for their contribution at the end of each project. Samsung Innovation Campus is the company's global citizenship program that aims to bridge proficiency gaps by skilling students on cutting-edge technology.

First project Genome Mapping in Indian Ocean will be launched

- In the Indian Ocean, the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) will launch the first-of-its-kind project of Genome Mapping.
- Indian Ocean covers about 20% of the Earth's water surface and so is the third largest water body in the world.
- Its objective is to gather samples of genome mapping of microorganisms in the Indian Ocean.
- It is also necessary to understand the biochemistry and the response of the Ocean to climate change, nutrient stress and increasing pollution.
- The cost of the project and duration is Rs 25 crore and will take around three years to complete.
- Samples will be collected by the researchers from several stretches of the ocean at an average depth of about 5 km.
- It is just like gene mapping which is carried out on blood samples collected from humans, the scientists will map these in the bacteria, microbes found in the ocean.
- Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid (DNA) and Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) mapping shows the nutrients present in them and also those lacking in various parts of the ocean.

Odisha Farmer's Solar Car Gets Thumbs-Up Online

- An Odisha farmer gained attention of people on social media by generating electric four-wheeler that runs on a solar powered battery.
- Sushil Aggarwal from Odisha's Mayurbhanj district had built a four-wheeler powered by an 850 Watts motor and 100 Ah/54 Volts of battery.
- After fully charged the vehicle can travel up to 300 km. He told that he had built this car inside a workshop at his home during the COVID-19 lockdown.
- He told that the solar-powered battery took around 8 and a half hours to be fully charged. He further stated that "It is a slow charging battery. Such batteries have a long life, it will last 10 years."
- All the work on his vehicle including motor winding, electrical fitting and chassis work were done in my workshop with the help of two other mechanics and a friend who advised me on electric works," he added.

Kalanamak Rice Festival to be held in UP

- After the grand success of the Strawberry Festival in Jhansi and the Jaggery Festival in Lucknow, the Uttar Pradesh state government is organising a three-day 'Kalanamak Rice Festival' in Siddharthnagar district from March 13.
- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, in his sustained efforts of creating new income opportunities for the farmers, has stressed on promoting the localised production and providing them with a market.
- Kala Namak Rice, grown in this region, is One District One Product (ODOP) of some Eastern UP districts.

JK Govt. Approves Rs. 2 Lakh Interest-free Loan For Urban Housing (PMAY-U) Beneficiaries

- Manoj Sinha, approved the proposal of the Housing & Urban Development Department to provide interest-free loan up to Rs. 2 lakhs to the urban houseless economically weaker section beneficiaries under Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC) component of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna-Urban (PMAY-U).
- The beneficiaries under Beneficiary Led Construction component of PMAY (U) have experienced the difficulty in mobilizing their contribution as they come from economic weaker sections and have to contribute higher share as compared to other States/UT, as a result of which the construction of dwelling units under this component of PMAY(U) could not achieve the desired targets.
- The beneficiaries of this component have demanded enhancement of assistance in their favour so that they can complete their houses within the targeted date of the Mission. In view of practical difficulties faced by the beneficiaries in arranging financial resources, the Govt. agreed to provide interest subsidy to all the eligible beneficiary. The interest-free loan will be an additional benefit, over and above the financial assistance of Rs. 1.66 lakhs which is already being provided to the beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna-Urban, with this the beneficiaries can now avail Rs.3.66 lakh for construction of their dwelling units under this component of PMAY(U).

INS Jalashwa arrives in Comoros with 1,000 metric tonne rice

- Indian naval ship Jalashwa arrived at the port of Anjouan, Comoros on Sunday to deliver 1,000 metric tonne of rice.
- The consignment has come as a fulfilment of the grant announcement made during the visit of Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu to Comoros in October 2019, according to a statement by the Indian Embassy in Madagascar and Comoros.
- The 1000 metric tonnes of rice will be received by Foreign Minister of Comoros, Dhoiher Dhoulkamal, in a ceremony today which will be attended by Ambassador Abhay Kumar through a video conference.

Railways' parcel management system to be extended to 523 locations

- The Indian Railways (IR) new parcel management system (PMS) is adding a total of 523 locations in phases, from the present 84, to provide a "vast network of stations" for transportation of small consignments.
- In a statement, the transportation services are being used by small businesses and traders to move merchandise from production centres and bigger cities to place of business in a "fast, reliable and cheap manner."
- As per the statement, Phase II will take total locations to 143 and by Phase III, the computerised PMS will have 523 locations.

Centre announces new scheme for tourist vehicle operators

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has announced a new scheme, under which any tourist vehicle operator may apply for an "All India Tourist Authorisation/Permit" via online mode. It will be issued, after relevant documents are submitted and fees deposited,

in 30 days of submission of such applications.

- The new set of rules, to be known as, "All India Tourist Vehicles Authorisation and Permit Rules, 2021", will be applicable from April 1, 2021. All existing permits will continue to be in force during their validity.

Supreme Court seeks govt.'s response on plea against Places of Worship Act

- The Supreme Court has asked the government to respond to a plea challenging the Places of Worship Act enacted in 1991.
- A notice is issued by a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde to the Union Ministries of Home, Law and Culture on a plea filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay against various provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act of 1991.
- The petition said Sections of the Act that dealt with the bar on legal claims were against the principles of secularism.

About the law

- It was passed in 1991 by the P V Narasimha Rao-led Congress government. The law seeks to maintain the "religious character" of places of worship as it was in 1947 except law Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute case that was already in court. The law was brought in at the peak of the Ram Mandir movement after one year before the demolition of the Babri Masjid.
- Home Minister S B Chavan in introducing the law said in the Parliament that it was adopted to curb the communal tension.

India Chaired the First Meeting Of BRICS CGETI

- Under the chairship of India, the First Meeting of the BRICS Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues (CGETI) was held from 9th March 2021 to 11th March 2021. The 2021 theme of the BRICS is "BRICS@15: Intra BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation, and Consensus".
- India presented the calendar of events for BRICS CGETI 2021, this includes the priority areas for deliverables, schedule and scope of the MSME roundtable conference workshop on Services Statistics, and the BRICS Trade Fair. A series of presentations on the proposed deliverables during India's chairship under the BRICS CGETI track was made in a separate session by the concerned departments of the government of India.

The proposal delivered:

- Action plan based on the document "Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025" adopted during the Russian Presidency in 2020.
- BRICS Cooperation on Multilateral Trading system including cooperation for the TRIPS Waiver proposal at WTO;
- Framework for Consumer Protection in E-Commerce;
- Non-Tariff Measures (NTM) Resolution Mechanism;
- Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) Working Mechanism;
- Co-operation framework for the protection of Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge

- BRICS Framework on Co-operation in Professional Services.

Himachal CM inaugurates Swarnim International Shivratri Fair

- The famous Swarnim International Shivratri Fair has begun with Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur formally launching it at the historic Paddal ground, Himachal Pradesh. Thousands of people dressed in their traditional attire participated in the procession carrying their local deities dancing all the way up to Paddal ground.
- Over 150 deities participated in the 'Jaleb', the traditional Shobha Yatra from almost all parts of the district. Earlier, the Chief Minister participated in the Pagri Ceremony and performed Puja at Shri Raj Madhav Rai Temple. Chief Minister felicitated the people of the State on the auspicious occasion of International Shivratri festival, which was being celebrated this year as Swarnim International Shivratri Fair to mark glorious fifty years of Statehood.

DoT Launches Online Certificate Course on 5G Technology

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has launched a new online certificate course on 5G technology to be conducted by the National Telecommunications Institute for Policy Research, Innovation and Training (NTIPRIT), which is the training institute of DoT. The course, which will be conducted from 9 March 2021 onwards, is 36 hours long and will be conducted over a period of 12 weeks every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Participants will also be allowed to record the session if they happen to miss it.
- DoT hopes that this course would act as a capsule programme for learning overall 5G technology from the perspective of Policymaking. The following topics will be covered under the course:

Govt to launch "Atmanirbhar Niveshak Mitra Portal"

- The commerce and industry ministry has stated that the central government is working to develop a portal called "Atmanirbhar Niveshak Mitra Portal" for information dissemination, hand-holding, and facilitation of domestic investors. The portal Atmanirbhar Niveshak Mitra is currently in the testing phase. It will be launched by May 1, 2021. The ministry is also working on a webpage which will be available in regional languages and mobile app.
- This portal is being developed in order to strengthen efforts to promote domestic investments. It is being developed by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- The portal will help in providing daily updates on several things including the policies and new initiatives by the central and state governments, information regarding the approvals, licenses, clearances several schemes & incentives. It will also be providing information regarding the manufacturing clusters and land availability.
- The portal will provide its support to the investors throughout their business journey and will help them in getting all the information ranging from finding the investment opportunity, exploring incentives & taxes which are applicable to their businesses, raw

material availability, sources of funding, training, tender information and management requirement.

Karnataka CM unveils 'Xcelerator Bengaluru'

- Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Wednesday unveiled 'Xcelerator Bengaluru' to assist ladies entrepreneurs develop throughout the state.
- "The 'Xcelerator Bengaluru' initiative will assist 50,000 ladies entrepreneurs throughout the state to develop their enterprise over the following 3 years," mentioned Yediyurappa on the event.
- World Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship (GAME), Ubuntu Consortium and the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Business (FKCCI) have collectively developed the Xcelerator Bengaluru to concentrate on ladies entrepreneurship as the expansion driver within the southern state.

Union Cabinet approves Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidhi

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidhi (PMSSN), as a single non-lapsable reserve fund. This has been approved for the share of Health from proceeds of Health and Education Cess which is levied under the Section 136-b of Finance Act, 2007.
- This is a non-lapsable reserve fund for the Health in the Public Account. This fund will comprise of the proceeds from the share of health in the Health and Education Cess. This revenue in the fund will be used for the flagship schemes of the Health Ministry including the National Health Mission, Ayushman Bharat – Health and Wellness Centres, Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and for the emergency & disaster preparedness and responses in cases of health emergencies.

Cabinet Approves Amendments in Insurance Act 1938

- The Union Cabinet has given its nod for amendments in the Insurance Act, paving way for 74 per cent foreign direct investment in the sector. Currently, the permissible FDI limit in life and general insurance stands at 49 per cent with ownership and management control with Indian. According to sources, the Cabinet in its meeting has approval for amendments in the Insurance Act, 1938. It was in 2015 when the government hiked the FDI cap in the insurance sector from 26 per cent to 49 per cent.
- The majority of directors on the board and key management persons would be resident Indians, with at least 50 per cent of directors being independent directors, and a specified percentage of profits being retained as a general reserve.
- An increase in FDI will help improve life insurance penetration in the country. Life insurance premium as a percentage of GDP is 3.6 per cent in the country, way below the global average of 7.13 per cent, and in the case of general insurance, it is even worse at 0.94 per cent of GDP, as against the world average of 2.88 per cent.
- The government has earlier allowed 100 per cent foreign direct investment in insurance intermediaries.

J&K celebrates festival of Shivratri 'Herath'

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the festival of Shivratri 'Herath' is being celebrated across Jammu and Kashmir. Festival Mahashivratri locally known as Herath in Kashmir is being celebrated across J&K by Kashmiri Pandit Community with religious fervour by offering "Watak Nath Pooja".
- The festival assumes colossal importance among the Kashmiri Pandit Community who celebrate it to mark the wedding of "Lord Shiva with Goddess Parvati". This festival symbolizes the values of devotion and harmony, which are the hallmarks of the glorious tradition & cultural ethos of Jammu and Kashmir.

India-Uzbekistan joint military exercise DUSTLIK II commences in Ranikhet

- The India – Uzbekistan joint military exercise DUSTLIK II has commenced in Foreign Training Node Chaubatia, Ranikhet in Uttarakhand. This is the Second Edition of the annual bilateral joint exercise of both armies. It will continue till the 19th of this month. The first edition of the exercise was held in Uzbekistan in November 2019. 45 Soldiers each from Uzbekistan and the Indian Army are participating in the exercise.
- Both contingents will be sharing their expertise and skills in the field of counter-terrorist operations in mountainous or rural or urban scenarios under UN mandate. The validation exercise will be a testbed for the soldiers of both armies as they would be undergoing the challenges of actual operations in such scenarios. The joint exercise will definitely provide impetus to the ever-growing military and diplomatic ties between the two nations and also reflects the strong resolve of both nations to counter-terrorism.

ISRO Develops Joint Earth Observation Satellite Mission Radar With NASA

- ISRO has completed the development of a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) capable of producing extremely high-resolution images for a joint earth observation satellite mission with the US space agency NASA. NASA-ISRO SAR (NISAR) is a joint collaboration for a dual-frequency L and S-band SAR for earth observation.
- NISAR will be the first satellite mission to use two different radar frequencies (L-band and S-band) to measure changes in our planet's surface less than a centimetre across.
- The mission is targeted to launch in early 2022 from ISRO's Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district, about 100 km north of Chennai.
- NASA is providing the mission's L-band SAR, a high-rate communication subsystem for science data, GPS receivers, a solid-state recorder and payload data subsystem.
- ISRO is providing the spacecraft bus, the S-band radar, the launch vehicle and associated launch services for the mission, whose goal is to make global measurements of the causes and consequences of land surface changes using advanced radar imaging.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates 'Maitri Setu' between India and Bangladesh

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has inaugurated the 'Maitri Setu' bridge between India and Bangladesh through a video conference, to strengthen the connectivity between both

countries and especially with the north-eastern region of India. Maitri bridge will also make Tripura the 'Gateway of North East' with access to Chittagong Port of Bangladesh, which is just 80 km from the Sabroom.

- The Maitri Setu bridge has been built on the Feni river, which lies between the Indian boundary in Tripura and Bangladesh.
- The 1.9 Kilometres long bridge will connect Sabroom in India with Ramgarh in Bangladesh.
- The bridge has been constructed by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited at a project cost of around Rs. 133 Crore.

Jammu and Kashmir launches Super-75 Scholarship Scheme

- The Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has launched "Super-75" scholarship schemes for meritorious girls, on the occasion of International Women's Day 2021. The basic aim of this scholarship scheme is to facilitate the education and entrepreneurship of women.
- The super-75 scholarship scheme will support the education of meritorious girls from poor families, so that they can excel in streams like medicine, engineering, ITI (Industrial training institutes) and humanity and contribute to nation-building.
- Apart from this, Lt Governor Sinha also announced a new scheme named 'Tejaswini'. This scheme has been launched under 'Mission Youth-J&K'.
- Under Tejaswini, financial assistance of Rs 5 lakhs will be provided to the girls between the age group of 18 to 35 years to start their business.

Koneru Humpy is BBC's Indian sportswoman of the year

- World rapid chess champion Koneru Humpy has won the BBC Indian Sportswoman-of-the-Year award. BBC director-general Tim Davie, hosting the virtual awards ceremony. The Lifetime Achievement award went to veteran athlete Anju Bobby George.
- English cricket star Ben Stokes announced the 19-year-old Indian Shooter, Manu Bhaker as the winner of the Emerging Player-of-the-Year award category. Bhaker, won two golds at the ISSF World Cup in 2018, followed by gold at the Youth Olympics and a Commonwealth Games gold with a record to boot.

Ashwin, Beaumont Win ICC Player of Month Awards for February

- India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin was awarded the ICC Player of the Month award for February, the International Cricket Council (ICC). Ashwin beat England captain Joe Root and West Indies' Kyle Mayers to the award. Ashwin played a crucial role with bat and ball as India raced to a 2-1 lead over England in their four-match Test series in February before eventually winning the series 3-1 in March. He was the highest wicket-taker in the series with 32 scalps and scored a century in the second Test in Chennai.
- Meanwhile, England opener Tammy Beaumont won the ICC Women's Player of the Month for February. Beaumont was the overwhelming winner after she played three ODIs in February against New Zealand where she passed fifty in each of these, totalling 231 runs. She beat her teammate Natalie Sciver and New Zealand's Brooke Halliday to the award.

India-New Zealand World Test Championship final in Southampton

- India will play their inaugural World Test Championship final against New Zealand at Southampton's Ageas Bowl Stadium, England from June 18-22.
- Initially, the final was supposed to be held at the Lord's but Southampton, with a five-star facility inside the stadium, will make it easier for both the ICC and the England and Wales Cricket Board to create a bio-bubble for the two teams.

President of India Inaugurates conservation works at Singorgarh Fort in MP

- The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind has laid the foundation stone for the conservation works of Singorgarh Fort in Singrampur village of Damoh district, Madhya Pradesh. He also inaugurated the newly carved Jabalpur Circle of Archaeological Survey of India.
- Apart from this, President Kovind addressed the State Level Tribal Conference 'Janjatiya Sammelan' at Singrampur village in Damoh. The program was organized jointly by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and the Tribal Affairs Department of Madhya Pradesh.

Google Launched "Women Will" Web Platform

- Google has launched a new web platform 'Women Will' on March 8, 2021, on the occasion of "International Women's Day". This platform will provide its support to 1 million rural women in India in order for them to become entrepreneurs with the help of accelerator programmes, business tutorials and mentorship.
- This web portal can be accessed in English and Hindi languages. It will offer guidance to the aspiring women in villages to turn their interest or a hobby like beauty services, tailoring, home tuition, food processing, etc. into the business.
- It will also be providing guidance to manage and promote the business. The Women Will platform is designed for women aspiring to explore entrepreneurship.
- To begin with, Google will work with 2,000 'Internet Saathis' to help other women with this resource to start their entrepreneurial journey.
- Google also announced a \$500,000 Google.org grant to Nasscom Foundation to train 100,000 women Agri workers in Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh on digital and financial literacy. The Foundation will set up a helpline where the women can get counselling on their entrepreneurship-related queries.

Indian Railways install Mobile Train Radio Communication system

- Indian Railways' Western Railway zone has introduced a mobile train radio communication (MTRC) system to facilitate direct and continuous communication between the train crew and the control centre and station master. Through effective communication, this technologically advanced system will help in averting train accidents. This new communication system has already been deployed in 105 rakes, operating between Churchgate to Virar over Mumbai's suburban segment.
- This system uses the lowest time to connect calls i.e. 300 milliseconds and it is the first time

that MTRC is commissioned in India.

- The MTRC acts in a similar way to that of air traffic control (ATC) for aircraft.
- The system will monitor, track and aid in communication between the trains and the control room thereby ensuring smooth movement of rakes, as well as help in preventing adverse events.
- The current conventional VHF-based communication system, named Mobile and CUG, lacks the capability of enabling interaction between the train crew and the controllers. The new system can also provide real-time information on train operation during the monsoon season.
- With a two-year warranty and five years of annual maintenance charges (AMC), the new digital MTRC system has been supplied at a cost of approximately \$820,000.

Rajnath Singh Attends 3-day Combined Commanders' Conference

- Defence minister Rajnath Singh has attended the three-day Combined Commanders' Conference (CCC) along with top defence officials at Kevadia, Gujarat. Theaterisation of armed forces, self-reliance in the defence sector and evolving threats in the region will be the focus. It is a premier brainstorming event of the Military Commanders from the three Services.
- Defense Minister, Rajnath Singh held deliberations on Day 2. In a first, valedictory session on the third and final day chaired by PM Narendra Modi. The last CCC was held in 2018 at the Air Force Station, Jodhpur.
- The combined apex level military leadership of the country is reviewing the security situation and defence preparedness of the Armed Forces, and deliberating pertinent organisational issues for evolving a joint military vision for the future. In a major deviation from the past, the scope of the conference this year has been expanded to make it a multi-layered, interactive, informal and informed event with the added participation of about 30 Officers and soldiers of various ranks from the three Services.

Delhi govt approves formation of separate board in city

- Delhi government has approved the formation of a separate school board for nearly 2,700 schools in the city. There are around 1,000 Delhi government schools and about 1,700 private schools, most of them affiliated to the CBSE, in the city. The new Board will have a governing body headed by the Education Minister of the Delhi government and an executive body headed by a chief executive officer.
- The DBSE will be aimed at imparting such education that prepares "fiercely patriotic" and self-dependent students who serve the society and the country in a selfless manner. The Board will bring in best international practices and high-end techniques in school education. It will impart education as per the aptitude of the students.

Dr Harsh Vardhan addresses the inaugural session of Techbharat 2021

- Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan has addressed the inaugural session of TechBharat 2021. Laghu Udyog Bharati and IMS Foundation have organized the

2nd edition of the conclave bringing together stakeholders from the HealthTech & Edutech sector on a virtual platform.

- Techbharat is facilitating interactions & deliberations between thousands of domestic & global participants, including policymakers, government representatives, industry members, investors & start-ups to nurture resourceful partnerships and boost growth in the sectors.
- The Pradhan Mantri Aatmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana, with a massive outlay of over 64 thousand crore rupees over the next six years, will develop capacities of primary, secondary and tertiary care, health care systems.

India's first 'Transgender Community Desk' opens in Telangana

- The Cyberabad Police has launched India's first-ever Transgender Community Desk' at the Gachibowli Police Station in Hyderabad, Telangana. This desk is the first-of-its-kind gender-inclusive community policing initiatives in the country. The desk was formally inaugurated on Saturday by Cyberabad Police chief VC Sajjanar in a ceremony that was attended by over 200 transgender people.
- Earlier in 2014, the Supreme Court recognised the transgender community as a third gender along with male and female and ruled that they have equal privilege over the fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Transgender Community Desk:

- It is the world's first-ever help desk for the transgender community and it will be managed by a Police Liaison Officer and a member of the transgender community who is designated as a community coordinator.
- It will also be the focal point for all grievance redressal among the transgender community in Cyberabad Commissionerate.

Benefits of the Desk:

- The transgender desk will provide support to file cases in offences related to violence or discrimination against any transgender person.
- Among other services, the desk will also provide counselling, legal aid, life-skills, soft skills training, job placements, and referral linkages to welfare schemes in partnership with the Department of Women & Child Welfare and District Legal Services Authority.
- The Society for Cyberabad Security Council will organise monthly employability training and life-skill training and facilitate access to job opportunities. Prajwala will assist the desk to facilitate safe space for any transgender person who needs an emergency transit stay.

Two-day Gur Mahotsav underway in Lucknow

- In Uttar Pradesh, a Gur Mahotsav or jaggery festival is underway in Lucknow. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the two-day event yesterday. Speaking on the occasion, Mr Yogi said that the state government aims to provide maximum benefit of their products to the farmers and for the purpose, the Mahotsav is being organised.
- The sugar cane farmers in state have been paid one lakh 25 thousand 600 crore rupees for their sugar cane crops, he added.

- At the jaggery festival, farmers are exhibiting and selling different types of jaggery and jaggery products. The aim of this event is to motivate the jaggery producers to make high-quality jaggery and its products and create awareness about health benefits of jaggery.

Gol Sets up 259-Member panel to Commemorate 75 Years of India's Independence

- The Government of India has set up a 259-member high-level national committee, to be headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to commemorate 75 years of India's independence. The committee will provide policy direction and guidelines for the formulation of programmes for the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence, at the national and international levels.
- The celebrations are proposed to be launched 75 weeks prior to August 15, 2022, on March 12, 2021, which is the 91st anniversary of the historic Salt Satyagraha led by Mahatma Gandhi. The celebrations will be held at the national and international level in the form of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. The high-level committee will hold its first meeting on March 8, 2021.
- The members of the panel include former president Pratibha Patil, Chief Justice of India SA Bobde, NSA Ajit Doval, 28 chief ministers, artistes like Lata Mangeshkar, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, senior BJP leader LK Advani, almost all Union ministers and several governors.
- Opposition leaders like Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, NCP leader Sharad Pawar, TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and former Uttar Pradesh chief ministers Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mayawati are also part of the committee.

Ramesh Pokhriyal Inaugurates New Delhi World Book Fair 2021

- The Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal has inaugurated the New Delhi World Book Fair 2021-Virtual Edition, through video-conferencing. The program has been organized by the National Book Trust (NBT). The New Delhi World Book Fair 2021 is the 29th edition of the annual event and for the first time, the fair will be held virtually due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.
- The theme of the 2021 New Delhi World Book Fair is 'National Education Policy-2020'. The NEP 2020 was passed by the Union Cabinet last year, which proposes several significant changes in the existing education policy.

First-ever White Water Rafting Festival organised in J&K's Doda

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the first-ever adventure sports event, Chenab White Water Rafting Festival organised by the Doda District Administration in coordination with Bhardwah Development Authority (BDA) and J&K Adventure group culminated today at Premnagar Shibnote in Doda amid overwhelming response from the people.
- 1,500 people from across the district especially, youth attended the festival on day 2 and over 150 participated in the rafting trip from Premnagar Shibnote to Karara. DDC, Doda Sagar Doifode along with CO 10 Rashtriya Rifles, besides youth from various areas of the

district participated in the event on the 2nd day and also took a rafting ride.

- The event also witnessed multifarious activities at the venue for the enjoyment of the locals which includes volleyball matches, kabaddi, free-style wrestling and dance performances.

Digital platform 'Jagrut Tripura' launched by CM to boost e- governance

- The Tripura government has come up with a digital platform 'Jagrut Tripura' to help people get benefits from various schemes of the Centre and the state government. At least 102 schemes of various departments of both governments are available on the platform. The 'Jagrut Tripura' will empower citizens of the northeastern state. The digital platform is one of the many proactive initiatives undertaken by the state government to spur a technology-led innovation ecosystem to make 'Atmanirbhar' (self-reliant) Tripura.
- The project was developed by EasyGov, a Jio Group company, and it will be available to all the residents of Tripura. "With 'Jagrut', we want to empower people to get the benefits they deserve, and the focus is on building a family-centric, progressive model having 'one data one source' and privacy at the core.

India downgraded from 'free' to 'partly free' in democracy report

- India's status as a democracy and free society has been downgraded to "partly free" in the latest annual report on global political rights and liberties by Freedom House, a US government-funded NGO that studies political freedom around the world. The report titled "Freedom in the World 2021 – Democracy under Siege". India's fall "from the upper ranks of free nations could have a particularly damaging impact on global democratic standards".
- India had been rated as "free" in Freedom House's reports for 2018, 2019 and 2020, though its scores on a scale of 100 had declined during this period from 77 to 71. In the latest report, India had a score of 67 out of 100.
- In 1973, Freedom House launched the Freedom in the World report, which assessed the level of freedom in each country and ranked them with a numerical score and declared them as "free", "partly free" or "not free".
- The annual report is perceived as one of the oldest quantitative measures of democracy. The latest report said political rights and civil liberties in India had deteriorated since 2014 because of increased pressure on human rights organisations, rising intimidation of academics and journalists, and a "spate of bigoted attacks, including lynchings, aimed at Muslims".

DRDO successfully flight test SFDR technology

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted a successful flight test of Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) technology from the integrated test range (ITR), Chandipur, off Odisha coast. The SFDR technology will help DRDO with the technological advantage to develop long-range air-to-air missiles (AAMs). DRDO began developing SFDR first in 2017 and had conducted successful tests in 2018 and 2019 as well.
- The SFDR is a missile propulsion system being developed primarily by the Defence Research

- and Development Laboratory (DRDL) and Research Centre Imarat (RCI) in Hyderabad.
- The High Energy Material Research Laboratory (HEMRL) has developed the nozzle-less booster while the ramjet engine is being developed with Russian assistance.
 - The performance of the missile was monitored using the data captured by Electro-Optical, Radar and Telemetry instruments deployed by ITR and confirmed successful demonstration of the mission objectives.

UNGA adopts India-led resolution declaring 2023 as Int'l Year of Millets

- The UN General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution sponsored by India and supported by over 70 nations declaring 2023 as the International Year of Millets. The International Year of Millets is aimed at raising awareness about the health benefits of the grain and its suitability for cultivation under changing climatic conditions. India's Permanent Mission to the UN also distributed savoury millet snack murukku to all UN Member States.
- The 193-member General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution, declaring 2023 as the International Year of Millets.
- The resolution titled International Year of Millets 2023' was initiated by India with Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Russia and Senegal and was co-sponsored by over 70 nations.
- The resolution considers the urgent need to raise awareness of the climate-resilient and nutritional benefits of millets and to advocate for diversified, balanced and healthy diets through the increased sustainable production and consumption of millets.

SpaceX successfully tests Starship SN10 prototype rocket

- Elon Musk owned private rocket company, SpaceX successfully tested its Starship prototype rocket "SN10 " after two recent failed attempts. SpaceX launched the rocket prototype, to an altitude of 10,000 kilometres and then landed back on the ground. However, the rocket exploded about six minutes after landing. But this test launch is deemed successful because the goal of this launch was to gather information on how the flaps work to control the rocket when it is horizontal as it is falling back to earth.
- The SN10 is an early prototype of the Starship Mars rocket of SpaceX which aims to get people and payloads to the moon, Mars and other distant destinations.
- This rocket is also a part of the company's strategy to phase out its other flight hardware including, the Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy rockets and Dragon cargo and crew capsules, and let Starship shoulder the entire load.

Ease of Living Index 2020 released

- Bengaluru emerged as the top city on the government's Ease of Living Index 2020 that was released by Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri. Pune was second and Ahmedabad was ranked third among 111 cities. A total of 111 cities under the Smart Cities Program, participated in the assessment exercise that was conducted in 2020.

The Ease of Living Index 2020 ranked cities in the following two categories:

- Million+ populated cities – those with a population of more than a million.
- Less than Million populated cities – those with a population of less than a million.
- No city has been included from West Bengal because of the “data challenge”.

Million+ category

- Bengaluru emerged as the top performer in this category.
- This was followed by Pune, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Surat, Navi Mumbai, Coimbatore, Vadodara, Indore, and Greater Mumbai respectively.

Less than Million category

- In this group, Shimla was ranked the highest in ease of living.
- This was followed by Bhubaneswar, Silvassa, Kakinada, Salem, Vellore, Gandhinagar, Gurugram, Davangere, and Tiruchirappalli.

Udaipur Science Centre inaugurated at Udaipur in Tripura

- The Governor of Tripura, Ramesh Bais has inaugurated the Udaipur Science Centre, at Udaipur, Tripura. The Udaipur Science Centre has been developed at a cost of Rs 6 crore funded jointly by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and Department of Science, Technology and Environment, Tripura Government and with this; the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) has now set-up science centres in all the northeastern states.
- Science Centres play a vital role in developing a scientific temper in society and inculcating a culture of Innovation among the masses, particularly among students.
- The role of NCSM and the Ministry of Culture for the spread of scientific awareness. Udaipur Science Centre is the 22nd Science Centre which has been developed by NCSM and handed over to the State Governments under the Ministry of Culture's Scheme for Promotion of Culture of Science.
- NCSM will open 4 more new science centres in different parts of India during 2021.

Indigenously developed “Spectrograph” commissioned in Nainital

- Indian Scientists at Aryabhata Research Institute of observational sciences (ARIES), Nainital, have indigenously designed and developed a low-cost optical Spectrograph named as Aries-Devasthal Faint Object Spectrograph & Camera (ADFOSC). It has been commissioned on the 3.6-m Devasthal Optical Telescope (DOT), in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand.
- The ADFOSC spectrograph is the largest of its kind among the existing astronomical spectrographs in India.
- The ADFOSC spectrograph can locate sources of faint light from distant quasars and galaxies in a very young universe, regions around supermassive black-holes around the galaxies, and cosmic explosions.
- So far, spectroscopes were imported from abroad at high costs. The ‘Made in India’ optical spectrograph is about 2.5 times less costly compared to the imported ones and can locate sources of light with a photon-rate as low as about 1 photon per second.
- The ARIES is an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India. It is the largest reflecting telescope in India, as well as in Asia.

Government amends Insurance Ombudsman Rules 2017

- The Government of India has notified comprehensive amendments to the Insurance Ombudsman Rules, 2017, for better resolution of policyholders' complaints regarding insurance service deficiencies, in a timely, cost-effective and impartial manner. This will help in facilitating the resolution of the complaints with respect to the deficiencies in insurance services in a cost-effective and impartial manner on time.
- The Ombudsman mechanism was administered by the Executive Council of Insurers. This has now been renamed as the Council for Insurance Ombudsmen.
- Earlier, the scope of complaints to Ombudsmen was limited to only disputes, but now it has been enlarged to include deficiencies in service on the part of insurers, agents, brokers and other intermediaries.
- The insurance brokers have also been brought within the ambit of the Ombudsman mechanism. The Ombudsmen has been empowered to pass awards against insurance brokers as well.
- To strengthen the timeliness and cost-effectiveness of the mechanism, policyholders will now be enabled for making complaints electronically to the Ombudsman.
- A complaints management system will be created to enable policyholders to track the status of their complaints online.
- The rules also provide that, the ombudsman can use video-conferencing to hear the cases.

Uttarakhand CM launches "Gharoki Pechan, Chelik Naam" scheme

- Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat has launched "Gharoki Paachan, Chelik Naam" (daughter's name is a home's identity) programme and development schemes worth Rs 42 crore in Nainital. Initially, the scheme has been launched in Nainital and later is set to be extended to the entire Uttarakhand.
- The government is working towards women empowerment and 32,000 women groups of the state are being linked with self-employment to make them self-reliant. The state government is also set to implement many public welfare schemes for the benefit of the youth.
- As part of the development works, the catchment area of Sukha tal Lake will be revitalized & will undergo a beautification process. The works on the Sukha tal lake will serve as a recharge to Nainital Lake & also add towards tourist attraction at Nainital

Thaawarchand Gehlot launches "Sugamya Bharat App"

- Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Thaawarchand Gehlot has launched the "Sugamya Bharat App", through a video conference in New Delhi. The minister also launched a handbook entitled "Access – The Photo Digest". The App and the handbook have been developed by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- It is a Crowdsourcing Mobile Application to enable people with disabilities and even the elderly to register accessibility-related problems

- The aim of the app is to sensitising and enhancing accessibility in the 3 pillars of the Accessible India Campaign which includes the built environment, transportation sector and ICT ecosystem in India.
- This handbook is a collection of photographs from across different States and UTs, to act as a tool and guide for stakeholders, to sensitise them about 10 basic features of accessibility and related good-bad practices in easy to understand pictorial form.

Lok Sabha TV and Rajya Sabha TV merged into Sansad TV

- The Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha Television channels that broadcast the proceedings of the upper and lower Houses of Parliament, respectively, have been merged into a single entity. The new channel has been named the 'Sansad Television'. This change is effective from March 01, 2021.
- Ravi Capoor, a retired IAS officer of the 1986 batch, has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Sansad TV for one year. The decision to change the name was jointly taken by Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

International Yoga festival begins in Rishikesh

- The International Yoga Festival was inaugurated by the Agriculture Minister of Uttarakhand Subodh Uniyal, head of Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad (ABAP) Narendra Giri and Patanjali Yogpeeth chairman Acharya Balakrishna in Rishikesh. The festival is being jointly organised by Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) and Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam (GMVN).
- Yoga has played a very vital role in boosting immunity especially during the time of Covid. The regular practice of Yoga has helped in keeping the diseases away from the body. Yoga is also a cure for many diseases that are hard to treat using medical science." The aim of Yoga is not only to keep us fit but also to end the negativity within human beings.

India describes Sri Lanka 'Priority One' partner in defence

- Indian High Commission in Colombo has described the island nation of Sri Lanka as its "Priority One" partner in the defence sphere and reiterated the assurance of fullest cooperation in the field of defence and security. The assertion comes at a time when the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) is gearing up for the celebration of its 70th anniversary on 2 March.
- The SLAF is celebrating its 70th Anniversary on March 2 and to commemorate the historical event, a Fly Past and an Aerobatic Display are being organised for the first time in the country at a grand scale. A total of 23 Indian Air force (IAF) and Indian Navy aircraft will also partake in the event. Indian High Commission has called the participation indicative of the growing cooperation, camaraderie and friendship between the armed forces of the two nations.

Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurates Global Bio India 2021

- The Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Health & Family Welfare Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurated the second edition of Global Bio-India-2021 in New Delhi

through virtual mode. The three-day event will be held from March 01 to 03, 2021, on a digital platform. The purpose of the event is to showcase the strength and opportunities of the biotechnology sector of India at the national as well as international level. The Government of India has a target of building a USD 150 billion bio-economy by 2025.

- The theme of Global Bio-India-2021: “Transforming lives” with the tag line “Biosciences to Bio-economy”.
- The event is co-organised by the Department of Biotechnology under the Ministry of Science & Technology along with its Public Sector Undertaking, and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) in partnership with industry association Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (ABLE) and Invest India.

39th Agartala International Book Fair begins at 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 has inaugurated the fair in presence of Bangladesh Assistant High Commissioner Md. Jobayed Hossain and other state cabinet ministers and MLAs.
- This 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.

Saras Aajeevika Mela opens at Noida Haat

- The Saras Aajeevika Mela 2021 is underway at Noida Haat. The fair was inaugurated by Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar. Narendra Singh Tomar while inaugurating the event highlighted that the Ministry of Rural Development is working to include more women under the Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- SHGs played a vital role in increasing family income and improving quality of life. More than 300 rural self-help groups and craftsman from 27 states are participating in the Mela which is being run by the Ministry of Rural Development.

ISRO's PSLV-C51 launches Brazil's Amazonia-1 satellite

- India's Polar rocket has successfully launched Amazonia-1 of Brazil and 18 other satellites from the spaceport here, in the first mission of the year for space agency ISRO. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C51 lifted from the first launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR) and first injected into orbit primary payload Amazonia-1. The 637-kg Amazonia-1 which became the first Brazilian satellite to be launched from India is an optical earth observation satellite of the National Institute for Space Research (INPE).
- After a gap of over one-and-half hours, the co-passenger satellites, including one from Chennai- based Space Kidz India (SKI), which is engraved with a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, were launched subsequently one after another in the space of ten minutes in a textbook launch. SKI's Satish Dhawan Satellite (SD-SAT) also carried Bhagavad Gita in a

Secured Digital card format.

Nirmala Sitharaman attended G20 Central Bank Governors' meeting

- The Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman has attended the G20 Central Bank Governors' meeting. This was the first-ever G20 Central Bank Governors' meeting that was held under the Italian Presidency. The main aim of the meeting was to discuss policy actions for transformative and equitable recovery along with other issues on the agenda including the global economic outlook, financial sector issues, financial inclusion and sustainable finance. This meeting is a follow-up for the upcoming 2021 G20 Summit, the sixteenth meeting of Group of Twenty, scheduled to take place in Rome, Italy, on 30–31 October 2021.
- During the meeting, the finance minister highlighted India's policy response with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic and the world's largest inoculation drive with their G-20 counterparts. The G20 Finance Ministers and the Central Bank Governors also held a discussion regarding the implications of climate change on global growth and financial stability.

India deploys Sindhu Netra satellite for keeping eye over Indian Ocean

- In a major boost for the country's surveillance capabilities in the Indian Ocean Region, India on Sunday successfully deployed the Sindhu Netra satellite in space which will help the Navy and security agencies to monitor suspicious ships operating there.
- "The Sindhu Netra has been developed by the DRDO and has been deployed in space successfully by the ISRO rocket launched on Sunday. The capability will allow us to keep an eye on the areas of our interest from the African region to South China Sea," top government sources told India Today.
- Sindhu Netra is one of the first in the series of satellites that would help the nation in enhancing its surveillance capabilities on land in areas such as the Ladakh region with China and the border areas with Pakistan.
- Seeking to keep a closer eye on the activities of the Chinese military both near the Indian territory as well as in its depth areas all along the 4,000 kilometre Line of Actual Control (LAC), the Indian security agencies feel there is a requirement of four to six dedicated satellites which can help them keep a check on the adversary's moves.

PM Modi inaugurates first-ever India Toy Fair 2021

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the first-ever Indian Toy Fair 2021 via video conference during which he urged the country to become 'Atmanirbhar' in the toy manufacturing sector. The Ministry of Textiles, in collaboration with other ministries, including the Ministry of Education, has organised the virtual event with an aim to provide joyful learning to children by including them in teaching and learning as well as promoting the indigenous toy industry. The toy fair is divided into five stages — pre-school to Class II, primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary.
- The idea of a toy fair emerged from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Mann Ki Baat address

on August 30, 2020, where he highlighted the huge potential of the toys market and the opportunities that can be tapped to promote indigenous toys.

- Aimed at providing a platform to states to develop toys reflecting the history, culture and social milieu specific to the states and also to revive traditional and indigenous toys in the lives of children, the national toy fair claims to also boost the economy by supporting local toy industry under 'Atamirbhar Bharat'.

SPORTS

India tops the medals tally with 15 gold at Delhi ISSF Shooting World Cup

- India finished at the top of the medals table at the 2021 ISSF World Cup New Delhi, held from 18 to 29 March 2021 at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range in New Delhi. India secured 30 medals which included 15 gold, 9 silver and 6 bronze. The USA came second with eight medals including four gold, three silver and one bronze.

Winners of Gold Medal

1. Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar: Men's 50-metre rifle three positions
2. Saurabh Chaudhary, Shahzar Rizvi and Abhishek Verma: Men's 10-metre air pistol team event
3. Swapnil Kusale, Chain Singh and Neeraj Kumar: Men's 50-metre rifle three positions team event
4. Gurjoat Khangura, Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Mairaj Ahmad Khan: Men's Skeet team event
5. Kynan Chenai, Prithviraj Toidaiman, Lakshay: Men's Trap team event
6. Chinki Yadav: Women's 25-metre pistol
7. Yashaswini Singh Deswal: Women's 10-metre air pistol
8. Yashaswini Singh Deswal, Manu Bhaker, Shri Nivetha Paramanantham: Women's 10-metre air pistol team
9. Rahi Sarnobat, Manu Bhaker, Chinki Yadav: Women's 25-metre pistol event
10. Rajeshwari Kumar, Shreyasi Singh, Manisha Keer: Women's Trap event
11. Saurabh Chaudhary/Manu Bhaker: 10-metre air pistol Mixed Team event
12. Divyansh Singh Panwar/Elavenil Valarivan: 10-metre air rifle Mixed Team
13. Tejaswini/Vijayveer Sidhu: 25-metre rapid-fire Pistol Mixed Team
14. Sanjeev Rajput/Tejaswini Sawant: 50-metre rifle three positions Mixed Team
15. Angad Vir Singh Bajwa/Ganemat Sekhon: Trap Mixed Team

'Girl Gang' Announced Official Song Of ICC Women's World Cup 2022

- Girl Gang, a track by New Zealand singer Gin Wigmore, has been announced as the official song of the 2022 ICC Women's World Cup.
- The tournament is set to be hosted in New Zealand from March 4 to April 3, 2022. Originally scheduled to be held from February 6 to March 7, 2021, the World Cup was postponed by a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rahi Sarnobat, Chinky Yadav and Manu Bhaker clinch Gold at ISSF Shooting World Cup

- In Shooting, India won gold in the women's 25m Pistol Team event at the ISSF World Cup in Delhi. India beat Poland in the final to win the country's 10th gold. The Indian women's team of Rahi Sarnobat, Chinki Yadav and Manu Bhaker beat Poland's Joanna Iwona Wawrzonowska, Julita Borek and Agnieszka Korejwo 17-7 in the gold medal match.
- Earlier in the day, the Indian women's team in the 50m Rifle 3 Positions event had to settle for a silver as they lost 43-47 to Poland in the gold medal match. India is dominating the standings with 21 medals, including 10 gold medals.

Khelo India Scheme extended till 2025-26

- Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has decided to extend the Khelo India scheme from 2021-22 to 2025-26. The Ministry has furnished an Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) memorandum to the Ministry of Finance for extension/continuation of the Khelo India Scheme from 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- An amount of Rs 8750 crore has been estimated as the financial implication of the new Khelo India Scheme (2021-22 to 2025-26) in the EFC memorandum furnished to the Ministry of Finance. An amount of Rs 657.71 crore has been allocated in the Budget Estimate (B.E.) for the year 2021-22 under the Khelo India Scheme.

ISSF World Cup: India's Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar Wins Gold

- India's Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar won gold in the men's 50m Rifle 3 Positions event at the ISSF World Cup in New Delhi. The 20-year-old became the youngest in history to win a shooting World Cup gold in the 3 Positions event. The two other Indian shooters in the final, Sanjeev Rajput finishing sixth and Niraj Kumar came at the last position.
- This was India's 8th gold medal in the ongoing World Cup. India continues to dominate the medal tally with 15 so far. India has won three silver medals and four bronze to go with the eight gold medals.

Shreyas Iyer Signs Up With Lancashire For Royal London Cup 2021

- English county Lancashire has announced the overseas signing of India batsman Shreyas Iyer for the 2021 Royal London Cup. Iyer becomes 6th Indian to sign for Lancashire. Iyer will arrive at Old Trafford on July 15 ahead of the start of the 50-over tournament and will remain with Lancashire for the duration of the month-long group stage. The top-order batsman is regarded as one of the most attacking and fluent stroke players in Indian cricket and he has played in 21 ODIs and 29 T20 Internationals for his country.
- The signing of Shreyas Iyer signals the latest step in Lancashire's long association with Indian cricket, which stretches back more than 50 years when India wicketkeeper-batsman Farokh Engineer joined the county in 1968. He would go on to become a Lancashire legend and now serves as a vice-president of the club. Since Engineer retired, four other Indian players -- Murali Kartik, Dinesh Mongia, VVS Laxman, and Sourav Ganguly -- have represented Lancashire.

India's Singhraj wins gold in Para Shooting World Cup 2021

- Indian para-athlete Singhraj won the gold medal in the 2021 Para Shooting World Cup at Al Ain in the UAE. He defeated Uzbekistan's Server Ibragimov to get the top honour in the P1 – Men's 10m Air Pistol SH1 final.
- Singhraj pipped Rio 2016 bronze medallist Ibragimov by a thin margin of 2.8 points. The final score read 236.8-234. Turkey's former Paralympic champion Muharrem Korhan Yamaç took the bronze with 214.4 points. With this, India has moved to third place in the medals table. India has now two medals on its list – one gold and one bronze.

India Legends wins 2020-21 Road Safety World Series T-20

- In Cricket, India Legends defeated Sri Lanka Legends by 14 runs to clinch the Road Safety World Series final title, held at Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium in Raipur, Chhattisgarh.
- India Legends put up a total of 181/4 but Sri Lanka's Legends could manage 167/7. Sachin Tendulkar was the captain of the India Legends.

Nozomi Okuhara bags women's singles titles at All England Open

- Japan's Nozomi Okuhara has won the All England Badminton Championships women's title as she defeated Pornpawee Chochuwong 21-12, 21-16 in the finals. In the men's category, Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia has won the All England Badminton Championships title as he defeated Denmark's Viktor Axelsen in the summit clash. With this win, Malaysia's title drought came to an end and it is after four years, that someone from the country has managed to win the All England Open. Lee Chong Wei had last won the All England Open for Malaysia in 2017.

List of winners: All England Badminton Championships 2021:

Sl. No.	Category	Winner
1.	Men's singles	Lee Zii Jia (Malaysia)
2.	Women's singles	Nozomi Okuhara (Japan)
3.	Men's doubles	HiroYuki Endo and Yuta Watanabe
4.	Women's doubles	Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara
5.	Mixed doubles	Yuta Watanabe and Arisa Higashino

ISSF WC: Yashaswini wins first gold for India

- Yashaswini Deswal bagged the first gold medal for India in the Women's 10M Air Pistol final of the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun. Deswal accumulated 238.8 points to lead in her category. Another Indian shooter Manu

Bhaker won a silver medal with 236.7 points.

- World number one shooter Divyansh Singh Panwar clinched the bronze medal in 10m Air Rifle (men's category) and opened India's medal account in the competition.

Athlete Avinash Sable Sets New National Record In Men's 3000m Steeplechase

- The Indian athlete Avinash Sable set a new national record in the men's 3000m steeplechase event in the ongoing Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championships in Patiala, with timing of 8:20.20. With this, the 26-year-old Avinash broke his own record of 8:21.37 which he set in 2019, after finishing 13th in the final of the World Athletics Championships in Doha.
- The army man from the arid Beed district of Maharashtra broke the national record for the fifth time in his career. Sable has already secured a berth in the Tokyo Olympics 2020 in men's 3000m steeplechase during the 2019 World Athletics Championships.

Hashmatullah Shahidi becomes 1st afghan player to score Test double century

- Afghanistan's Hashmatullah Shahidi became the first batsman from the country to register a double hundred in Test cricket. He got his first double century on Day Two of the second Test against Zimbabwe in Abu Dhabi. He made 200 not out off 443 balls with 21 fours and one six as Afghanistan put up a mammoth 545 for 4 in their first innings.
- Shahidi has played five Tests and 42 ODIs for Afghanistan since making his international debut in an ODI against Kenya. He made his Test debut in Afghanistan's first-ever Test, against India in Bengaluru in 2018. The 26-year-old left-handed batsman has 347 runs from five Tests and 1155 runs from 42 ODIs to his name thus far.

Upstox as official partner for IPL 2021

- IPL GC(Indian Premier League Governing Council) announced Upstox, one of India's leading and fastest-growing digital brokerage firms, as an official partner for IPL, which will begin on April 9th, 2021. This will be a multi-year partnership.
- Founded with the vision of making financial investing easy, equitable, and affordable to all Indian investors, Upstox provides online investments in Stocks, Mutual funds, Digital Gold, Derivatives, and ETFs for both investors and traders. Backed by marquee investors such as Tiger Global, Upstox currently has over 2.8 million customers.

Dhanalakshmi beats Dutee Chand to win Federation Cup gold

- Sprinter S Dhanalakshmi beat national record holder Dutee Chand to win women's 100m sprint final in the Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championships in Patiala. The 22-year-old Dhanalakshmi of Tamil Nadu clocked 11.39 seconds to become the fastest woman of the championships. Odisha-based Dutee clocked 11.58 seconds to be placed in second place.
- Another Tamil Nadu runner Archana Suseendran was third in 11.76 seconds. Hima Das was disqualified after a false start. In men's 100m final category, Gurindervir Singh of Punjab won gold in 10.32 seconds, while Elakkiyadasan Kannada of Tamil Nadu (10.43) and

Maharashtra's Satish Krishnakumar (10.56) were second and third respectively.

Virat Kohli becomes first player to score 3000 runs in men's T20

- Indian captain Virat Kohli has breached the 3000-run mark in Twenty20 Internationals with his last shot in the second T20I against England. Kohli's knock of 73 runs, which came off 49 balls, also helped India to level the five-match T20I series.
- He also became the third captain in international cricket to score 12000 runs as a captain. He joined legendary captains Ricky Ponting and Graeme Smith in the elite list.

UAE's Mohammad Naveed, Shaiman Anwar banned for 8 years from all cricket

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) has imposed eight years ban on former UAE players Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman Anwar Butt from all cricket, for trying to fix matches during the T20 World Cup qualifiers in 2019. The ICC Anti-Corruption Tribunal had found them guilty of breaching the Anti-Corruption Code in January 2021.
- The bans are backdated to 16 October 2019, when they were provisionally suspended for attempting to corrupt matches of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2019 in the UAE. Naveed was the captain and leading wicket-taker. Anwar was the opening bat. Both had long international careers and were well versed in the threat from match-fixers.
- Both have been charged with two breaches each, the first of which is Article 2.2.1, which stands for 'contriving, or being party to an agreement or effort to fix or contrive or otherwise influence improperly, the result, progress, conduct or any other aspect of matches in the upcoming ICC World T20 Qualifiers 2019.'

Bhavani Devi becomes first ever Indian fencer to qualify for Olympics

- Bhavani Devi became the first-ever Indian fencer to qualify for the Olympics. The sabre fencer secured an Olympic spot due to events in the ongoing Fencing World Cup. Hosts Hungary lost in the quarterfinals of the team event, allowing Korea to progress to the semis.
- Therefore, Bhavani Devi qualifies through the Adjusted Official Ranking (AOR) Method. Currently, she is ranked 45th in the world. In 2017 She won India's 1st international gold medal in fencing.

Mumbai City FC beat ATK Mohun Bagan to win their maiden ISL title

- Mumbai City FC has defeated ATK Mohun Bagan 2-1 in the ISL 2020-21 final to lift yet another trophy this year. Mumbai had earlier secured the ISL Shield along with a spot in the AFC Champions League group stage by finishing first in the standings in the regular season.
- Golden Ball Award (Best Player of ISL 2020-21): ATK Mohun Bagan forward Roy Krishna.
- Emerging Indian Player of the Year: NorthEast United midfielder Lalengmawia.
- Golden Boot Award (Top goal-scorer): FC Goa striker Igor Angulo for 14 goals.
- Golden Glove Award (Best Goalkeeper): ATK Mohun Bagan custodian Arindam Bhattacharya for ten clean sheets.

Vijay Hazare Trophy: Prithvi Shaw Becomes First Player to Score 800 Runs

- Mumbai skipper and opening batsman Prithvi Shaw answered his critics in a strong fashion as he became the first player to register more than 800 runs in a single edition of the Vijay Hazare Trophy – the domestic one-day tournament of India. Shaw, who was dropped from India's Test squad after his twin failures in Australia, achieved the feat in the ongoing final between Mumbai and Uttar Pradesh at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi.
- Carrying his blistering form, Shaw played a blinder of a knock – 73 off 39 balls – in the final to provide Mumbai dominant start in the 313 chase against UP. In eight matches of Vijay Hazare Trophy, the 21-year-old scored 827 runs at a staggering average of 165.40 and strike-rate of 165.40.

Ultimate Battle Founder- An Online eSports Platform

- Founder of Ultimate Battle is Tarun Gupta. It is an online eSports platform where gamers can test their mettle against others without paying a fee. India is still small in this segment, gamers need platforms that can give them competitive exposure to improve their skills.
- Therefore, Ultimate Battle invites and encourages players to try popular eSports titles of all kinds against other players. It is a complete product of India and it does not charge players money to participate in competitive gaming through the platform.

eSports titles of today and tomorrow

- Ultimate Battle consists of PC gaming titles like DOTA 2, FIFA 20, CS:GO (Counter Strike: Global Offensive) and the PC version of PUBG. Also, mobile titles like Garena Free Fire and Doodle Army 2: Mini Militia.
- According to Tarun Gupta, "With Ultimate Battle, our vision was to bring eSports to the forefront, organise events and celebrate gaming in all its glory." He also added that "the platform also serves as a go-to platform to kickstart one's career in the competitive circuit. All the eSports athletes will get essential exposure and a platform where they can enhance their tactical skills, strategies & coordination".
- This platform provides players multiple avenues to win rewards or recognitions in the form of eSports Tournaments. Rewards are in the form of cash prizes and 'UB Coins'. These coins that players win are then redeemable as in game items, Google play credits, merchandise and more.
- He also said that the involvement of upcoming technologies like AR and VR and their role in shaping the future of eSports. Hopefully in the near future VR-based competitive games will be developed and hit the mainstream.

Rashid Khan creates record for bowling most overs in a Test

- Afghanistan spinner Rashid Khan on Sunday created the record for bowling the most number of overs in a single Test in the 21st century.
- The spinner bowled a total of 99.2 overs in the second Test between Zimbabwe and Afghanistan at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi. Rashid Khan bowled 596 balls in the match.

- This is the most number of overs bowled by a bowler in a Test since 1998. In 1998, Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan had bowled 113.5 overs (683 balls) against England at The Oval.
- In the first innings against Zimbabwe, Rashid returned with the figures of 4-138 from 36.3 overs while in the second innings, the spinners bowled 62.5 overs. The second innings saw Rashid Khan at his best as he returned with seven wickets and conceded 137 runs.

Mithali Raj Becomes First Indian Woman Cricketer To Score 10,000 International Runs

- Mithali Raj on Friday became the first Indian woman to score 10,000 runs in international cricket across all formats. Mithali reached the milestone in the ongoing third One-day International (ODI) against South Africa in Lucknow. The Indian ODI skipper scored 36 runs before being dismissed by Anne Bosch. Mithali has scored 6974 runs in ODIs while in the T20Is, she has 2,364 runs to her name. The 38-year-old right-handed batter has also scored 663 runs from 10 Test matches.
- Mithali is now the second international cricketer to score 10,000 runs across formats. England's Charlotte Edwards is the only other woman cricketer who has achieved this feat.

PV Sindhu wins silver in BWF Swiss Open Super 300

- India's ace shuttler PV Sindhu has won a silver medal in the BWF Swiss Open Super 300 in the final of the women's singles event held at Basel, Switzerland. The World No. 7 Sindhu lost to World No. 3 and reigning Olympic champion Carolina Marin.

Swiss Open 2021 Winners

- Men's Singles : Viktor Axelsen (Denmark) beat Kunlavut Vitidsarn (Thailand).
- Women's Singles: Carolina Marin (Spain) beat PV Sindhu (India).
- Men's Doubles: Kim Astrup and Anders Skaarup Rasmussen (Denmark) beat Mark Lamsfuss-Marvin Seidel (Germany).
- Mixed Doubles: Thom Gicquel-Delphine Delrue (France) beat Denmark pair, Mathias Christiansen-Alexandra Boje.

India qualify for ICC World Test Championship Final

- Indian Cricket Team have qualified for the inaugural ICC World Test Championship final after beating England in an innings and 25 runs in the fourth and final Test in Ahmedabad on 6th March.
- New Zealand had already qualified for the WTC final with 420 points from 11 Tests with 7 wins and 4 losses. The World Test Championship final will be played at the Lord's Cricket Ground in London from June 18.

Bajrang Punia bags gold in Matteo Pellicon World ranking series

- In wrestling, the World Championship bronze medallist Bajrang Punia won a gold medal at the Matteo Pellicone ranking series held in Rome, Italy. He defeated Mongolia's Tulga Tumur Ochir 2-2 by criteria in the 65kg freestyle event final. It is the second successive gold medal for 27 years Haryana wrestler, who had won the previous gold at this competition in

2020 by beating Jordan Oliver of the USA in the final.
Apart from this, the ace India woman wrestler Vinesh Phogat won the gold medal in the 53kg title. The 26-year-old Vinesh beat Canada's Diana Weicker 4-0.

Bajrang Punia takes gold and number one rank in Rome, bronze

- Tokyo-bound Indian wrestler Bajrang Punia pulled off a two-pointer in the last 30 seconds of the gold medal bout to defend his title at the Matteo Pellicone Ranking Series event, a result that pushed him back to world number one rank.
- Up against Mongolia's Tulga Tumur Ochir, Bajrang was trailing 0-2 till the final moments of the 65kg final but managed to level the scores, 30 seconds from the whistle.
- Since the last scoring point came from the Indian he was declared the winner on criteria on Sunday night.
- Bajrang seemed to have improved upon his leg defence in the one-year break, forced by the coronavirus pandemic.

J&K tops medals tally at Khelo India Winter National Games

- Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir topped the medals tally in the second edition of the Khelo India Winter National Games. J&K won 11 gold, 18 silver and 5 bronze medals. The five-day mega sports event which began on the 26th of February concluded in the famous ski resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. The event was e-inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The second edition of the Khelo India winter games is a major step towards making Jammu and Kashmir a hub of the winter games.
- In the event, more than 1,000 athletes from 27 states and union territories took part.
- The event was organised by the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in collaboration with the J&K Sports Council and the Winter Games Association of Jammu and Kashmir.

Kieron Pollard becomes 3rd Man to Hit 6 Sixes in an over

- Kieron Pollard hit six sixes in an over to guide West Indies to a comprehensive four-wicket win against Sri Lanka in the first game of their three-match T20 series. Pollard joins former India batsman Yuvraj Singh as the only other player to hit six sixes in an over in T20 cricket, and just the third man to hit six sixes in an international match, emulating Herschelle Gibbs (South Africa) and Yuvraj Singh (India).
- Pollard achieved the feat when he hit Sri Lanka's Akila Dananjaya out of the park 6 times in the 6th over of West Indies' successful chase in the first T20I at the Coolidge Cricket Ground in Antigua. Sri Lanka leg-spinner Akila Dananjaya (3-62) was the unfortunate bowler, pummelled in all directions by Pollard, and this coming after he had taken a hat-trick in his previous over.

Virat Kohli becomes first cricketer to have 100 million followers on Instagram

- India captain Virat Kohli became the first cricketer in the world to have 100 million followers on the social media platform Instagram. The 32-year-old Kohli is also the fourth

most followed sportsperson on Instagram.

- Portugal football star Cristiano Ronaldo tops the chart with 265 million followers, ahead of Argentina football captain and FC Barcelona legend Lionel Messi and Brazil's Neymar, who are second and third in the list with 186 million and 147 million followers respectively. The others in 100 million club are Hollywood actor and former pro-wrestler Dwayne (The Rock) Johnson, American singer-songwriter Beyonce, and Ariana Grande.

Mumbai City FC win ISL League Football Winners Shield

- Mumbai City FC has scripted a 2-0 triumph over ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) at the GMC Stadium in Goa to bag the ISL League Winners Shield and the coveted AFC Champions League spot that comes with it.
- Mumbai and ATKMB finished level on 40 points, but the former claimed first place with a better head-to-head record. Mumbai City FC became the second-ever Indian club to qualify to the group stages of the AFC Champions League.

Indian shuttlers Varun, Malvika win Uganda International titles

- India's Varun Kapur and Malvika Bansod clinched the men's and women's singles titles respectively at the 2021 Uganda International Badminton tournament in Kampala.
- Varun beat compatriot Sankar Muthusamy 21-18, 16-21, 21-17 in the men's singles final. Malvika beat compatriot Anupama Upadhyaya in the women singles summit clash 17-21, 25-23, 21-10.

Indian Women's League 2020-21 to be hosted in Odisha

- All India Football Federation confirms Odisha as the venue for the forthcoming Hero Indian Women's League 2020-21 edition. This is the fifth edition of IWL, the top division women's league in India. The Odisha government is a strategic partner of the AIFF (All India Football Federation) as it provides the necessary infrastructure to various men and women age-group teams.
- AIFF appreciates Odisha Government's longstanding partnership with Indian Football wherein the latter have been providing its stadia and State of the Art training facilities to National Teams across various age groups and genders – all in an effort to take Indian Football forward together.

Vinesh Phogat beats Vanesa Kaladzinskaya to win gold in Ukraine wrestling event

- India's star wrestler Vinesh Phogat defeated 2017 world champion V Kaladzinskaya to win the gold medal at the Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers and Coaches Memorial tournament.
- Up against the world number seven Belarusian, it was not an easy bout for the world number three Indian as the two grapplers kept testing each other with consistent attacks in the sea-saw battle in which Vinesh prevailed.
- Vinesh opened up a 4-0 lead in the 53kg final with a throw which she initiated with a left-leg attack but Kaladzinskaya made it 4-4 with her brilliant move.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Vajra' commissioned to the Indian Coast Guard

- L&T-built Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) ICGS Vajra was commissioned into the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) by General Bipin Rawat, Chief of Defence Staff, at Chennai. ICGS Vajra is the sixth vessel in the series of seven OPVs being built by L&T under a Ministry of Defence contract signed in the year 2015. Like the five OPVs in the series, ICGS Vajra was also delivered ahead of the contractual schedule.
- OPVs are long-range surface ships, capable of operation in maritime zones of India, including island territories with helicopter operation capabilities.
- Their roles include coastal and offshore patrolling, policing maritime zones of India, control and surveillance, anti-smuggling and anti-piracy operations with limited wartime roles. It can attain a sustained speed of up to 26 knots.
- The entire design and construction process has been certified by the American Bureau of Shipping as well as the Indian Registrar of Shipping and overseen by the ICG's resident team at Kattupalli.

India conducts first-ever joint patrol in Madagascar EEZ

- In a first, the navies of India and Madagascar undertook joint patrolling of Madagascar's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and also conducted a Passage Exercise (PASSEX). The first-ever joint patrol between the navies reflects the growing defence ties between the two Indian Ocean neighbours aimed at the common objective of ensuring maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Indian Naval Ship INS Shardul made a port call at Antsiranana, Madagascar as part of the First Training Squadron's (1TS) Overseas Deployment. INS Shardul and Malagasy Navy ship MNS Trozona carried out a Passage Exercise (PASSEX). The Joint exercise bears testimony to the growing bonds between the maritime forces of both the nations and aimed at common objectives of ensuring mariti

ISRO Demonstrates India's First Free-Space Quantum Communication

- In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully demonstrated free-space Quantum Communication over a distance of 300 metres, with several technologies developed within the country. The demonstration included live video conferencing using quantum-key-encrypted signals, at Space Applications Centre (SAC), Ahmedabad, between two line-of-sight buildings within the campus.
- The experiment was done at night to ensure that there is no interference from the direct sunlight. This is a major milestone achievement for unconditionally secured satellite data-communication using quantum technologies.

Defence Ministry deal with BDL to acquire 4,690 anti-tank guided missiles

- The Defence Ministry has sealed a deal with the public sector undertaking Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) to acquire 4,960 MILAN-2T anti-tank guided missiles at a cost of ₹ 1,188 crores for the Indian Army. The missiles, having a range of 1,850 metres, are being

produced by BDL under license from French defence major MBDA Missile Systems. These missiles can be fired from the ground as well as vehicle-based launchers and can be deployed in the anti-tank role for both offensive and defensive tasks.

- The missile is being produced by BDL under license from MBDA Missile Systems, France. These missiles can be fired from the ground as well as vehicle-based launchers and can be deployed in Anti-Tank Role for both offensive & defensive tasks and will further enhance the operational preparedness of the Armed Forces.

INS Jalashwa Arrives at Port Anjouan as part of Mission Sagar-IV

- As part of Mission Sagar-IV, Indian Naval Ship Jalashwa arrived at Port Anjouan, Comoros to deliver 1,000 Metric Tonnes of rice. An official ceremony for handing over the food aid from the Government of India to the Government of Comoros. INS Jalashwa, the largest amphibious ship of the Indian Navy, has been specially sent to Comoros due to its large carrying capacity.
- This consignment of 1000 metric tonnes of rice as food assistance was flagged off to Comoros in the light of a promise made by the Vice President of India, Venkaiah Naidu during his brief visit to Comoros in the month of October 2019. This is the second visit of an Indian Navy ship to the island country within a span of one year. Earlier, as part of Mission Sagar-I, in May-June 2020, the Indian Navy had delivered essential medicines to the nation and had also deployed a specialist medical team to work alongside their counterparts and to render assistance for dengue fever-related emergencies.
- 'Mission Sagar', builds on the excellent relations existing between the two countries and deployment also resonates with the vision of our Prime Minister of Security and Growth for All in the Region 'SAGAR' and highlights the importance accorded by India to relations with the countries of the IOR. The operation is being progressed in close coordination with the Ministries of External Affairs, and other agencies of the Government of India.

ISRO launches sounding rocket RH-560 to study attitudinal variations

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched the sounding rocket (RH-560) to study attitudinal variations in the neutral winds and plasma dynamics, at Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota Range (SHAR). ISRO has developed a series of sounding rockets called Rohini series, important among them being RH-200, RH-300 and RH-560, number in the name indicating the diameter of the rocket in mm, according to the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency.
- Sounding rockets are one or two-stage solid propellant rockets used for probing the upper atmospheric regions and for space research. They also serve as easily affordable platforms to test or prove prototypes of new components or subsystems intended for use in launch vehicles and satellites.

Govt launches Mera Ration Mobile App

- In order to facilitate the 'One Nation-One Ration Card' system in the country, the government has launched 'Mera Ration' mobile app to benefit citizens in identifying the

nearest fair price shop. This app will benefit especially those ration card holders who move to new areas for livelihoods. The app is developed by the government in association with NIC "to facilitate various "One Nation-One Ration Card" related services among the National Food Security Act (NFSA) beneficiaries, particularly migrant beneficiaries, fair price shop dealers and other relevant stakeholders.

- With the help of the app, the beneficiaries can easily check details of food grain entitlement, recent transactions and the Status of their Aadhaar seeding.
- The migrant beneficiaries can also register their migration details with the help of the application. Beneficiaries can also enter their suggestions or feedback.
- Implementation of the One Nation-One Ration Card system ensures availability of ration to beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and other welfare schemes, especially the migrant workers and their families, at any fair price shop (FPS) across the country.

Indian Navy's 'silent killer' INS Karanj commissioned

- The Indian Navy got its third Scorpene submarine, commissioned as INS Karanj, of Project P-75 in Mumbai. With the delivery of Karanj, India further cemented its position as a submarine-building nation. Mazagon Dock Ltd (MDL), one of India's leading shipyards with the capacity and the capability to meet the requirements and aspirations of the Indian Navy. Before Karanj, INS Kalvari and INS Khanderi have been commissioned in the Indian Navy in 2017 and 2019, respectively.
- Karanj is seen as a small submarine having a length of 60 metres.
- It's equipped with the best sensors in the world.
- Weapon package includes sufficient wire-guided torpedoes and sub-surface to surface missiles to neutralise a large enemy fleet. For self-defence, it has a state-of-the-art torpedo-decoy system.
- It is fitted with an integrated platform management system to provide centralised propulsion and machinery control. The powerful diesel engines can quickly charge batteries for a stealthy mission profile.
- It is fitted with a permanent magnet synchronous motor, making it one of the quietest submarines in the world.
- Its modular construction enables up-gradation to air-independent propulsion in future.

OBITUARY

1971 Battle of Basantar hero, Lt Gen Pinto (retd) passes away

- Lieutenant General, Walter Anthony Gustavo 'WAG' Pinto (Retd), a military hero who led an infantry division to a legendary victory in the 1971 India-Pakistan War has passed away at the age of 97.
- He led the 54 Infantry Division in the Battle of Basantar in the war that gave birth to Bangladesh, leading his troops from the front with the motto he coined "bash on regardless".

Noted journalist and author Anil Dharker passes away

- Noted journalist and author Anil Dharker passed away. He was the founder and director of the Mumbai International Literary Festival. He was in his mid-70s, was the editor of several publications including Mid-Day and The Independent and played a vital role in opening the Akashwani Auditorium in south Mumbai as an art movie theatre.
- Dharker had been the editor of a variety of publications, starting with 'Debonair', 'Mid-Day', 'The Independent' and 'The Illustrated Weekly of India'.
- He was a columnist for The Indian Express newspaper and has authored 'The Romance Of Salt', a book on Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March. He had also worked as a TV show producer and anchor.
- He was also a member of the Advisory Boards of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the Children's Film Society of India.

Former RBI Deputy Governor KC Chakrabarty passes away

- Former Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor, KC Chakrabarty passed away. He was the deputy governor of the central bank between 15 June 2009 and 25 April 2014 when he demitted office three months before his term was to end. Prior to the stint, he had served as the chairman and managing director (CMD) of Punjab National Bank (2007-2009), and CMD of Indian Bank (2005-2007).
- Chakrabarty started his career as a banker with the Bank of Baroda where his last assignment was to head the UK operations of the bank between 2001 and 2004. Chakrabarty, who had spent nearly four decades across multiple public sector banks, often spoke his mind on critical issues concerning the banking sector. He was also famous for his wit and sharp retorts.

Noted Odissi dancer Laxmipriya Mohapatra passes away

- Noted Odissi dancer Laxmipriya Mohapatra, the wife of legendary classical dancer Kelucharan Mohapatra, passed away.
- She started her dancing career at the Annapurna Theatre in Puri in 1947. She has also acted in four Odia movies. Though he was an expert in Odissi and Gotipua dance forms, Kelucharan was then performing as a tabla player in the theatre.

Acclaimed Polish Poet Adam Zagajewski passes away

- Renowned Polish poet Adam Zagajewski has passed away. He was a leading figure in Poland's New Wave or Generation '68, a literary movement of the late 1960s that called for a simple language to relate directly to reality.
- Zagajewski's "Try to Praise the Mutilated World," was translated into English by Clare Cavanaugh and published in The New Yorker.

Acclaimed Egyptian feminist Nawal Saadawi passes away

- Nawal Saadawi, a renowned Egyptian feminist, psychiatrist and novelist, whose writings have stirred controversy for decades in an overwhelmingly conservative society passed

away. She was a fierce advocate of women rights in Egypt and the Arab world.

- In 2005, she was awarded the Inana International Prize in Belgium, a year after she received the North-South prize from the Council of Europe. In 2020, Time Magazine named her on their 100 Women of the Year list. She was the founder and head of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association and co-founder of the Arab Association for Human Rights.

Former Sebi chairman GV Ramakrishna passes away

- Former Sebi chairman GV Ramakrishna passed away. He was appointed as the chairman of markets regulator Sebi in 1990 when it lacked legal status.
- He headed that body till 1994 and then became the first chairman of the Disinvestment Commission in 1996.

Tanzanian President John Magufuli passes away

- The President of Tanzania, John Magufuli has passed away following a heart ailment. Popularly nicknamed the "Bulldozer", Magufuli served as the fifth President of Tanzania from 2015 until his death in 2021.
- He first won the presidential election in October 2015 and was sworn in on 5 November 2015. He was re-elected in 2020.

Former Bangladesh PM Moudud Ahmed passes away

- Barrister Moudud Ahmed, who held various political offices for short stints in the Government of Bangladesh, has passed away. He had served as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh (1988–1989), Vice President of Bangladesh (1989–1990), Deputy Prime Minister (1976–1978 and 1987–1988), and Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (2001–2006).
- He was also a standing committee member of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Audio cassette tape inventor Lou Ottens passes away

- The Dutch inventor of audio cassette tapes, Lou Ottens passed away. Dutch engineer credited with inventing the cassette tape and playing a major role in the development of the first CD. In 1963, Ottens presented the first cassette tape at the Berlin Radio Show electronics fair. After the fair deal signed between Sony and Philips to patent his creation that gained worldwide popularity. Ottens also worked on the CD development project.
- The device that he made was equipped with a directional antenna which he termed as "Germanenfilter" because it was resistant to the jammers used by the Nazi regime. In 1960, Ottens with his team developed the first portable tape recorder and two years later, he invented CDs.

Former Union Minister Dilip Gandhi passes away

- Former Union Minister and BJP leader, Dilip Gandhi passed away, due to coronavirus. He had served as the Union Minister of State, Ministry of Shipping from 29 January 2003 to 15 March 2004.

- He won the Lok Sabha elections three times since 1999 from Ahmednagar South constituency in Maharashtra. First in 1999 in 13th Lok Sabha, followed by 15th Lok Sabha in 2009 and then 16th Lok Sabha in 2014.

Renowned Padma Bhushan winning painter Laxman Pai passed away

- Renowned Indian artist and painter Laxman Pai has passed away. The Goa-based painter was a recipient of the Padma Bhushan, India's third-highest civilian honour.
- The former principal of the Goa College of Art had several laurels under his name including Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri, Nehru Award, and Lalit Kala Akademi Award.

Former Boxing Champion 'Marvelous' Marvin Hagler Passed Away

- The former undisputed middleweight boxing legend "Marvelous" Marvin Hagler has passed away. Hagler, the American legend, ruled as the undisputed middleweight champion from 1980 to 1987.
- He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame and the World Boxing Hall of Fame in 1993.

Noted Kathakali Dancer Chemancheri Kunhiraman Nair passed away

- Veteran Kathakali artist Chemancheri Kunhiraman Nair has passed away in Kozhikode, Kerala. He was 105-year old. He was awarded Padma Shri in 2017 for his contributions to the dance form of Kathakali.
- Besides this, Chemancheri was also the recipient of several other awards like the Kerala Sangeeta Nataka Award in 1979, the Kerala Kalamandalam award in 2001, Kalaratnam award in 2009, Mayilpeeli award and Sangeet Natak Akademi Tagore award.

Ivory Coast Prime Minister Hamed Bakayoko passes away

- The incumbent Prime Minister of Ivory Coast, Hamed Bakayoko, has passed away due to cancer. He was named prime minister in July 2020 following the sudden death of his predecessor, Amadou Gon Coulibaly. President of Ivory Coast, Alassane Ouattara, has named Patrick Achi as interim prime minister in place of Bakayoko.
- Patrick Achi was serving as the chief of defence staff of the country.

Veteran Marathi Actor Shrikant Moghe Passes Away

- The Marathi stage and film actor, Shrikant Moghe has passed away. He was popular for his work in both Marathi and Hindi languages. He was born at Kirloskarwadi in the Sangli district of Maharashtra.
- He is known for his performances in Marathi films like Madhuchandra, Sinhaasan, Gammat Jammatt and Umbaratha, and plays such as Varyavarchu Varaat and Tuze Aahe Tujapashi.

Former Rajasthan Governor Anshuman Singh Passes Away

- Justice Shri Anshuman Singh, the former Governor of Rajasthan & Gujarat, has passed away.

- Anshuman Singh was a retired Justice who served as the Governor of Rajasthan from January 1999 till 2003. Prior to that, he was appointed as the Governor of Gujarat state in 1998.

Dhyan Chand Awardee Veteran Indian Athlete Ishar Singh Deol passes away

- Dhyan Chand National Sports Award-winning veteran Indian athlete Ishar Singh Deol, has passed away. Punjab-based Deol won the Dhyan Chand National Award in 2009 for his lifelong contribution towards sports.
- He was specialised in the field sports of discus and shot put. He had competed in the first three Asian Games and won a bronze medal in the second Asian Games held in Manila, the Philippines in 1954.

Renowned Kannada poet Lakshminarayana Bhatta passes away

- Noted Kannada poet, critic and translator NS Lakshminarayana Bhatta has passed away. Popularly known as 'NSL' in the Kannada literary world, he was born in 1936 in the Shivamogga district. A was recipient of the Karnataka Sahitya Akademi award and Kannada Rajyotsava Award among others, his popular works include Thaye Ninna madilali.
- Bhatta had translated about 50 famous sonnets of William Shakespeare (Suneeta), the poetry of TS Elliot and works of the noted poet William Butler Yeats (Chinnada Hakki) into Kannada. He had also translated several other prominent English literary works into Kannada. He served as a Professor at Bengaluru University, working in the Kannada Literature department, and is revered for popularizing the works of saint-poet Shishunala Sharif.

Veteran Marathi actor Shrikant Moghe passes away

- Veteran Marathi stage and film actor Shrikant Moghe passed away at his residence in Pune on Saturday. He was 91. He was suffering from age-related ailments.
- Moghe was born on November 6, 1929, at Kirloskarwadi in Sangli district. He had acted in several hit Marathi plays and films such as 'Sinhasan' (1979).

Muthoot Group Chairman M G George Muthoot passes away

- M G George Muthoot, the Chairman and Whole Time Director of The Muthoot Group, has passed away. He was the mentor and visionary leader who played a pivotal leadership role through his long career in building one of the most trusted financial powerhouses in the country.
- Mr George became the managing director of Muthoot Group in 1979 and its chairman in 1993. Muthoot Finance Ltd is one of the largest gold loan NBFCs in India, headquartered in Kochi, Kerala.

Lok Sabha MP Nandkumar Singh Chauhan passes away

- Nand Kumar Singh Chauhan, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP from Khandwa in Madhya Pradesh, has passed away.

- He was a six-term MP, who was elected as the Lok Sabha MP for the first time in 1996 and got re-elected in 1998, 1999, 2004, 2014 and 2019.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

SAIL Chairperson Soma Mondal appointed Chairperson of SCOPE

- Soma Mondal, the chairperson of the state-owned Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), was on March 26, 2021, elected the new chairperson of the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE).
- Mondal will have a two-year term starting April; she took SCOPE is an apex professional organization representing the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs). It promotes excellence in organisations where public investment is involved, in order to enable them to be globally competitive.

Nilam sawhney is new State Election Commissioner of Andhra Pradesh

- Nilam Sawhney, former chief secretary and adviser to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, will be State Election Commissioner of AP after the retirement of the incumbent, Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar at the end of the month.
- Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan approved Sawhney's name for the post on Friday.

Saurabh Garg appointed as new CEO of UIDAI

- Senior bureaucrat, Saurabh Garg has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) as part of a bureaucratic reshuffle effected by the Centre. Mr Garg is at present serving in his cadre state Odisha. He is a 1991 batch IAS officer.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Mr Garg as the CEO, UIDAI in the rank and pay of Additional Secretary, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry.

Atish Chandra appointed as CMD of Food Corporation of India

- Atish Chandra has been appointed as Chairman and Managing Director, Food Corporation of India in the rank and pay of Additional Secretary.
- Mr Chandra, a 1994 batch IAS officer of Bihar cadre, is currently Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare.

Anish Shah to take over as M&M's Managing Director, CEO

- Anish Shah who is set to take over as the managing director and CEO of Mahindra and Mahindra from 2 April will become the first professional executive to oversee the entire business of the \$19.4 billion Mahindra Group. Pawan Goenka will retire as MD and CEO and member of the board effective April 2.
- Group chairman Anand Mahindra will be taking on a non-executive role. The markets regulator Sebi has mandated that from April 2022 the chairperson of the board of top 500

listed entities must be a non-executive director and not be related to the MD or CEO.

Sanjeev Kumar appointed as Chairman of Airports Authority of India

- IAS Sanjeev Kumar has appointed as Chairman of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) under the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- Kumar is a 1993-batch IAS officer of Maharashtra cadre. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved his appointment.

Principal Scientific Advisor K. VijayRaghavan gets extension

- The government has extended the term of Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA) K. VijayRaghavan by a year. He was appointed PSA in 2018 after retiring as Secretary of, Department of Biotechnology. His contract ends on April 2 but has now been extended until April 2022.
- Since the pandemic began, the Office of the PSA has been among the key coordinating agencies with industry, research bodies, health and science ministries to accelerate the development of diagnostics, drugs and vaccines. The PSA office has also been instrumental in formulating the National Science Innovation and Technology Policy as well as the forthcoming National Research Foundation.

CJI SA Bobde recommends Justice NV Ramana as his successor

- Chief Justice of India (CJI) SA Bobde has recommended Justice NV Ramana's name as his successor after he retires next month. CJI Bobde is set to retire on 23 April. In a letter to the Law Ministry, CJI SA Bobde recommended Justice Ramana as his successor. Justice NV Ramana is the most senior judge in the apex court after CJI Bobde. On appointment, Justice NV Ramana will be the 48th Chief Justice of India and he will have a long tenure as CJI for over 16 months.
- The Centre had last week asked CJI Bobde to recommend his successor. Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had reportedly sent a letter to Justice Bobde, seeking his recommendation, as is the practice under the Memorandum of Procedure for Appointment of Chief Justice of India. The recommendation letter has to come around a month before the vacancy arises.

Arindam Bagchi takes charge as MEA spokesperson

- Arindam Bagchi, an officer of the 1995 batch of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), has assumed charge as the new spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). He is replacing Anurag Srivastava, an officer of the 1999 batch of IFS.
- Before this, Bagchi was serving as the joint secretary (north) at the MEA headquarters. He was an Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer from the 1995 batch. In past, he has served as India's ambassador to Croatia from November 2018 to June 2020. He was also India's deputy high commissioner to Sri Lanka.

NeoGrowth appoints Ajinkya Rahane as brand ambassador

- NeoGrowth Credit Pvt. Ltd, a lender to small businesses, has announced the appointment of cricketer Ajinkya Rahane as its brand ambassador. The agreement is for a year which can be extended further.
- Rahane will feature in a campaign slated to be released in the first week of April, which will talk about the ease of procuring loans through NeoGrowth for small businesses. The campaign "Keeping it simple" will show the day-to-day struggles of small businesses while scaling up and how NeoGrowth can help them overcome them.

Dr Harsh Vardhan appointed as chairman of 'Stop TB Partnership Board'

- Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan has been appointed as the Chairman of the international body Stop TB Partnership Board. He was appointed in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the movement to eradicate Tuberculosis from India by 2025. He will serve a three-year term, commencing from July this year.
- The Stop TB Partnership is a unique international body with the power to align actors all over the world in the fight against TB.
- The participation of a wide range of constituencies gives this global body the credibility and the broad range of medical, social and financial expertise needed to defeat TB.
- The Partnership's vision is a TB-free world.
- The appointment of Dr Harsh Vardhan as the Chair of this prestigious global body is a proud recognition of India's political commitment to the eradication of TB.
- Established in the year 2000, the 'Stop TB Partnership' is mandated to eliminate Tuberculosis as a public health problem.

Ajay Mathur takes over as Director General of International Solar Alliance

- Dr Ajay Mathur has assumed office as the Director-General of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) with effect from March 15, 2021. He has been appointed for a period of four years which can be renewed for an additional term. Dr Ajay Mathur has replaced Upendra Tripathy, who completed his term on March 15, after serving as the Director-General since 2017.
- Mathur brings a wealth of leadership and expertise across all key areas of the energy transition, from policy, research, and technology commercialisation to financing, international cooperation and institutional development.
- He is a member of the Prime Minister's Council on climate change.
- He had also served as the Director-General of TERI and also a key Indian climate-change negotiator. He was also the spokesperson for India during the 2015 climate negotiations in Paris.

M. A. Ganapathy appointed Director General of National Security Guard

- Senior IPS officer, M. A. Ganapathy was on March 16, 2021 appointed Director General of National Security Guard. Ganapathy, a 1986 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Uttarakhand cadre, is currently Director General, Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS).

- He has been appointed the Director-General, National Security Guard (NSG), from the date of joining the post and up to February 29, 2024 i.e. date of his superannuation.

Lt Gen DP Pandey takes over as new commander of 15-Corps

- Lt General DP Pandey has taken over the command of strategic Kashmir-based 15 Corps from Lt Gen BS Raju, who has been appointed as the new Director-General of Military Operations (DGMO) of the Indian Army.
- An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, General Pandey was commissioned into the Sikh Light Infantry Regiment in December 1985 from Indian Military Academy, Dehradun.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Principal Advisor P K Sinha resign

- Former Cabinet Secretary and Principal Advisor in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) P.K. Sinha has relinquished his high-profile position on personal grounds. He was appointed in the PMO first as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) briefly and then as Principal Advisor, a specially created position for him, in September 2019 after the 2019 parliamentary polls. Besides him, two senior officials are serving as Advisors in the PMO: Bhaskar Khulbe and Amarjit Sinha, both 1983 batch retired IAS officials.
- Mr. Sinha is a retired 1977 batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre and served in various capacities during the UPA and the NDA regimes. His is the second high profile exit from the PMO after PM's Principal Secretary Nripendra Misra had resigned after the last Lok Sabha polls. Earlier, he was Secretary, Ministry of Power in the government of India and served as Cabinet Secretary for four years from 2015.

Pallav Mohapatra appointed MD & CEO of ARCIL

- Asset Reconstruction Company (India) Ltd (Arcil) has announced the appointment of Pallav Mohapatra as its Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director. Prior to the appointment, Mohapatra was the MD and CEO of the Central Bank of India. Before being elevated as MD and CEO of CBol, he was Deputy Managing Director, Stressed Assets Management Group, State Bank of India.
- Vinayak Bahuguna headed Arcil as MD and CEO for five years till June 2020. Arcil, which was set up in 2002, currently has assets under management (in non-performing loans) of ₹12,000 crore.

Union Minister Anurag Thakur promoted as Captain in Territorial Army

- Union Minister Anurag Thakur has become the first serving MP to be appointed as Captain in the Territorial Army. Thakur has been promoted to the rank of Captain at 124 Infantry Battalion Territorial Army (Sikh).
- The four-time BJP MP from Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur was commissioned into the Territorial Army as a Lieutenant by then Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Dalbir S Suhag TA in July 2016.

Gol appoints Dr. GP Samanta as new Chief Statistician of India

- The Central Government has appointed Dr G P Samanta as the new Chief Statistician of India (CSI) for a period of two years. He is India's fourth CSI. He will replace Kshatrapati Shivaji who was holding an additional charge of the post since September 2020.
- Currently, Dr Samanta was serving as an adviser in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Department Of Statistics and Information Management. Dr Samanta will also serve as the Secretary of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

Tirath Singh Rawat becomes new Chief Minister of U'khand

- The Bharatiya Janata Party's member of Parliament from Pauri Garhwal, Tirath Singh Rawat, will be the next chief minister of Uttarakhand. This was announced by outgoing chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, who resigned. Tirath Singh Rawat will be sworn in as the new chief minister of Uttarakhand.
- Tirath Singh Rawat was the chief of the party in Uttarakhand in 2013-15 and also an MLA from the state in the past. His name was picked over prominent candidates including Union Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and Uttarakhand Minister Dhan Singh Rawat.

Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat resigns

- Trivendra Singh Rawat has resigned as the chief minister of Uttarakhand, a year before the hill state is scheduled to go to polls. Rawat, who became the CM after the BJP swept the assembly elections here in early 2017, tendered his resignation after meeting governor Baby Rani Maurya. According to reports, the party is mulling bringing in a deputy chief minister, the frontrunners for the post include State Education Minister Dhan Singh Rawat, MP Ajay Bhatt and Satpal Maharaj.
- The central BJP leadership had recently sent two observers, party vice president Raman Singh and general secretary Dushyant Kumar Gautam, to Uttarakhand to get feedback from the party's core group in the state amid reports of discontent against the chief minister.

NABARD's Chintala takes charge as chairman of APRACA

- NABARD chairman, G R Chintala has assumed charge as the chairman of APRACA (Asia Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association). He has taken over from DPK Gunasekera, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of Bank of Ceylon. Chintala, in his address as APRACA Chairman, appreciated the role of the members of APRACA in promoting the development of rural finance in Asia Pacific.
- APRACA, established in 1977, is an association of institutions involved in agricultural, rural and microfinance policy and development, representing 21 countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Naureen Hassan appointed as 1st VP & COO of Federal Reserve Bank

- Indian-origin Naureen Hassan has been appointed as the first Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the New York-based Federal Reserve Bank, by the Board of

Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Hassan, whose parents had immigrated from India, is a 25-year veteran of the financial services industry with expertise in strategy, digital transformation, cybersecurity and regulatory/risk management.

- With this new role, Hassan will become the second-highest-ranking officer of the New York Fed as well as an alternate voting member of the Federal Open Market Committee. Prior to this, she was the Chief Digital Officer for Morgan Stanley Wealth Management (MSWM). She will take over the new role with effect from March 15, 2021.

Ligia Noronha appointed UN Assistant Secretary-General

- UN chief Antonio Guterres has appointed leading Indian economist Ligia Noronha as Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the New York Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Prior to joining the UNEP, Noronha worked at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in New Delhi as Executive Director (Research Coordination) and as Director of the Division on Resources, Regulation and Global Security.
- Noronha is an economist with over 30 years of international experience in the field of sustainable development.
- She has worked since 2014 as Director of UNEP's Economy Division based in Nairobi, leading UNEP's work on climate mitigation and energy transitions; on inclusive green economies, sustainable consumption and production, as well as on trade and sustainable finance, and the nexus of environment, pollution and health.

Tarun Bajaj to take additional charge of Revenue Secretary

- Department of economic affairs secretary, Tarun Bajaj has been given the additional charge of revenue secretary. Present revenue secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey retires on February 28. The Centre has decided to not grant an extension to finance secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey who was also holding additional charge of the revenue department in the finance ministry.
- Tarun Bajaj, an old hand at the Finance Ministry, assumed charge as Economic Affairs secretary last May, at a time when India saw the worst growth contraction in history on account of the C-19 pandemic.
- Prior to taking over this post, he was Additional Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office.
- Bajaj, a 1988-batch Haryana-cadre IAS officer, is not new to the functioning of the finance ministry as this is his third stint in the ministry.

Mary Kom appointed chairperson of AIBA's champions and veterans committee

- Six-time world champion boxer Mary Kom has been appointed as the Chairperson of the International Boxing Association's (AIBA) Champions and Veterans Committee. The 37-year-old was voted to the post by AIBA's board of directors on March 03, 2021.
- The Committee was formed in December 2020. It consists of the most respected worldwide boxing veterans and champions who have achieved significant results and who are ready to share their experience.

Manpreet Vohra Appointed India's High Commissioner To Australia

- Senior diplomat, Manpreet Vohra has been appointed as India's next High Commissioner to Australia. Vohra, a 1988-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, is presently Ambassador of India to Mexico.
- He is expected to take up the assignment shortly. Mr Vohra's appointment comes at a time India-Australia ties are at an upswing and the two countries are stepping up cooperation particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

Kuldip Singh takes additional charge as CRPF DG

- IPS officer Kuldip Singh has given an additional charge of CRPF director general (DG) after incumbent chief A P Maheshwari retires. Kuldip Singh is working as the special DG of its central zone, will hold the additional charge of the CRPF head till "the appointment and joining of the successor or until further orders.
- The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is the country's largest paramilitary with an estimated strength of about 3.25 lakh personnel. It is designated as the lead internal security force with its main operational theatres being Left Wing Extremism affected states, counter-terrorist combat in the Kashmir valley and counter-insurgency operations in the northeast.

Matam Venkata Rao assumes Charge as MD & CEO of Central Bank Of India

- Matam Venkata Rao has taken charge as the new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Central Bank Of India. Rao till now held the position of Executive Director at Canara Bank. His appointment is for a period of 3 years with effect from the date of assumption of office on or after March 1, 2021, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.
- Rao is a Certified Associate of the Indian Institute of Bankers. He is a post-graduate in agriculture from Sri Venkateshwara Agriculture College, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh takes over as ENC chief

- Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh took over as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) of Eastern Naval Command (ENC). He replaces Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain. Atul Kumar Jain has been transferred to New Delhi to assume charge as the Vice Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC).
- Vice Admiral A.B. Singh inspected the ceremonial guard and reviewed platoons of naval personnel drawn from various ships and establishments of the ENC. He was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal in 2011 and Ati Vishisht Seva Medal in 2016.

Tenure of PC Mody as CBDT Chairman extended for 3 months

- The re-appointment of Pramod Chandra Mody as Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has been extended for a further period of three months. He is a 1982-batch Indian Revenue Service officer, was appointed as the CBDT chief in February 2019.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved an extension for a period of three months with effect from March 1, 2021, to May 31, 2021. Earlier, Mr Mody's tenure

was last extended in August last year for six months.

Arun Kumar Singh takes charge as Bihar chief secretary

- Kumar, a 1984-batch officer, was due to retire on February 29, 2020 but, the central government had granted him extension twice for two terms of six months each on the state government's recommendation.
- Kumar had assumed charge as chief secretary of Bihar from May 31, 2018 following the retirement of Anjani Kumar Singh, who is currently the advisor to the chief minister(CM) Nitish Kumar.
- The state government had to appoint Arun Kumar Singh after the Centre, which beached the convention by granting six month extension for successive terms, declined giving fresh extension to Deepak Kumar.
- Kumar will join as principal secretary to the CM on contract, the post of which was created under the cabinet secretary department (CSD) in 2002, from March 1. As per the notification issued by the CSD, terms and condition of his appointment would be notified later.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Earth Hour 2021: 27 March

- Every year, the Earth Hour is celebrated worldwide on the last Saturday of March month to show support for the fight against climate change and commitment towards a better planet. Earth Hour 2021 is being marked on March 27, 2021. The Earth Hour 2021 theme will focus on "Climate Change to Save Earth."
- The Day is a worldwide movement organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), encouraging individuals, communities, corporates, and households to turn off their lights for one hour, from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. It was started as a lights-off event in Sydney, Australia, in 2007 to raise awareness for energy consumption and its effects on the environment.

World Theatre Day: 27 March

- World Theatre Day is observed globally on 27th March every year. World Theatre Day was initiated in 1961 by the International Theatre Institute (ITI), France. It is celebrated annually on the 27th March by ITI Centres and the international theatre community. This day is a celebration for those who can see the value and importance of the art form "theatre", and acts as a wake-up-call for governments, politicians and institutions which have not yet recognised its value to the people and to the individual and have not yet realised its potential for economic growth.
- Every year the Executive Council of ITI chooses an outstanding theatre personality to write the message for World Theatre Day. The author of the Message of World Theatre Day 2021 is Helen MIRREN, United Kingdom. The first World Theatre Day Message was written by Jean Cocteau in 1962.

World TB Day 2021: Kerala's TB eradication programme bags national honour

- Kerala's tuberculosis eradication programme had won national honour as the state bagged the Union government's award for reducing the prevalence of the disease through various systematic initiatives. Kerala is the only state had chosen for recognition in the state category.
- The southern state has reduced the TB prevalence rate by 5 per cent in the last five years as part of achieving sustainable development goals. The nation has set an ambitious goal to achieve "End Tuberculosis" by reducing the incidence of new TB cases by 80% by 2025, five years ahead of UN Sustainable Development Goals.

International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

- International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is observed annually on 25th March every year. This day offers the opportunity to honour and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system. International Day also aims to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice today.
- 2021 Theme: "Ending Slavery's Legacy of Racism: A Global Imperative for Justice"
- International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is a United Nations international observance designated in 2007 to be marked on 25 March every year. The day honours and remembers those who suffered and died as a consequence of the transatlantic slave trade, which has been called "the worst violation of human rights in history", in which over 400 years more than 15 million men, women and children were the victims.

World Tuberculosis Day: 24 March

- World Tuberculosis Day is observed every year on 24 March to create awareness among the public about the global epidemic of tuberculosis (TB) and efforts to eliminate the disease. The date marks the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the bacterium that causes TB, which opened the way towards diagnosing and curing this disease.
- The theme of World TB Day 2021 – 'The Clock is Ticking' –conveys the sense that the world is running out of time to act on the commitments to end TB made by global leaders. This is especially critical in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that has put End TB progress at risk, and to ensure equitable access to prevention and care in line with WHO's drive towards achieving Universal Health Coverage.
- Tuberculosis (TB) is a potentially serious infectious disease that mainly affects your lungs. The bacteria that cause tuberculosis are spread from one person to another through tiny droplets released into the air via coughs and sneezes.
- Tuberculosis can also affect other parts of your body, including your kidneys, spine or brain. When TB occurs outside your lungs, signs and symptoms vary according to the organs involved. For example, tuberculosis of the spine may give you back pain, and tuberculosis in your kidneys might cause blood in your urine.

World Meteorological Day observed globally on 23 March

- The World Meteorological Day is celebrated every year on 23 March to commemorate the date of the establishment of the World Meteorological Organization in 23 March 1950. The day also highlights the contribution that the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services make to the safety and well-being of society.
- The World Meteorological Day theme is “The ocean, our climate and weather” celebrates WMO’s focus in connecting the ocean, climate and weather within the Earth System. It also marks the starting year of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

Shaheed Diwas Observed On 23 March

- Every year, March 23 is observed as Martyrs Day (Shaheed Diwas or Sarvodaya Day) to pay tribute on the death anniversary of the freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Shivaram Rajguru, who laid their lives for the freedom of India.
- It was on March 23 in 1931, in Lahore (Pakistan), that these three were hanged to death for assassinating John Saunders, a British police officer in 1928. They had mistaken him for British police superintendent James Scott, who had ordered lathi-charge, which eventually led to the death of Lala Lajpat Rai. Also, 30 January is observed as Martyr’s Day or Shaheed Diwas in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

- The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21 March to remind people about the negative consequences of racial discrimination. This year theme is “Youth standing up against racism”. It engages the public through #FightRacism, which aims to foster a global culture of tolerance, equality and anti-discrimination and calls on each and every one of us to stand up against racial prejudice and intolerant attitudes.
- The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on the day the police in Sharpeville, South Africa, opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid “pass laws” in 1960.
- In 1979, the General Assembly adopted a programme of activities to be undertaken during the second half of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. On that occasion, the General Assembly decided that a week of solidarity with the peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination, beginning on 21 March, would be organized annually in all States.

World Poetry Day: 21 March

- World Poetry Day is celebrated on 21 March every year to promote the reading, writing, publishing and teaching of poetry throughout the world. The Day celebrates one of humanity’s most treasured forms of cultural and linguistic expression and identity. Practised throughout history – in every culture and on every continent – poetry speaks to

our common humanity and our shared values, transforming the simplest of poems into a powerful catalyst for dialogue and peace.

- UNESCO first adopted 21 March as World Poetry Day during its 30th General Conference in Paris in 1999, with the aim of supporting linguistic diversity through poetic expression and increasing the opportunity for endangered languages to be heard.

Ustad Bismillah Khan birth anniversary

- Known for his impeccable art, Ustad Bismillah Khan was one of the gems of the country. He was the third classical musician to receive this highest civilian award the Bharat Ratna after M S Subbalakshmi and Ravi Shankar.
- The veteran musician was born on March 21, 1916, and passed away on August 21, 2006. This is 105th birth anniversary of Ustad Bismillah Khan.

Bihar Diwas 22 March : 2021

- Bihar Diwas, or Bihar Day is being observed 22nd March. This marks the formation of the state of Bihar when the state was carved out from the Bengal Presidency by the British in the year 1912.
- This day is observed as a public holiday for all state and central government offices and companies as well as for schools.
- This day is not only celebrated in Bihar but its observed in other countries as well by the Bihari diaspora.

World Water Day observed globally on 22 March

- World Water Day is observed globally on 22nd March every year. World Water Day celebrates water and raises awareness of the 2.2 billion people living without access to safe water. It is about taking action to tackle the global water crisis. A core focus of World Water Day is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.
- The theme of World Water Day 2021 is "Valuing water". The value of water is much more than its economic value – water has enormous and complex value for our households, food, culture, health, education, economics and the integrity of our natural environment.

World Down Syndrome Day: 21 March

- The World Down Syndrome Day is observed globally on 21 March each year, to raise public awareness for the rights, inclusion and well being of people with Down syndrome. This year, the theme for World Down Syndrome Day is "We Decide." This day was first observed in the United Nation in the year 2012. The 21st day of March (the 3rd month of the year) has been selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication (trisomy) of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome.
- Down Syndrome is a condition in which the child is born with an extra 21st chromosome. It comes in the category of a genetic disorder, and it also causes developmental disabilities. The child born with this condition is likely to suffer thyroid or heart-related problems.

International Day of Forests: 21 March

- The International Day of Forests (also known as World Forestry Day) is celebrated every year on March 21. The day is to celebrate to raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests, and trees outside forests, for the benefit of current and future generations as well as to increase the public awareness among communities about the values, significance and contributions of the forests to balance the life cycle on the earth.
- The theme for International Day of Forests 2020 is "Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being". This year's theme fits into the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), a call for the protection and revival of ecosystems around the world.
- The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21 March the International Day of Forests in 2012 to celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests. Countries are encouraged to undertake local, national and international efforts to organize activities involving forests and trees, such as tree-planting campaigns.

UN French Language Day Observed Globally on 20 March

- The UN French Language Day is observed annually on 20 March. The day was established by the UN's Department of Public Information in 2010, to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as well as to promote equal use of all six official languages throughout the Organization. March 20 was chosen as the date for the French language since it coincides with the 40th anniversary of the International Organization of La Francophonie, representing countries and regions where French is a customary language.
- The date of French Language Day was chosen symbolically in reference to March 20, 1970, which marks the creation of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation (ACCT), which became the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF).

World Oral Health Day is observed on 20 March

- World Oral Health Day is observed every year on 20th March. It focuses on highlighting the benefits of good oral health, spreads awareness about oral diseases and promotes maintenance of oral hygiene. The theme for the next three years, 2021-2023 is: Be Proud Of Your Mouth. The day is an initiative of FDI World Dental Federation; an organization that brings together the world of dentistry with the aim of achieving optimal oral health for everyone.
- Oral health is as important as general health. It helps you maintain a healthy mouth, teeth and gums. It also helps to improve your appearance. Poor oral health can not only lead to oral diseases but also major health problems like heart disease, diabetes mellitus, stroke, respiratory problems and premature births in pregnant women.

International Day of Happiness: 20 March

- International Day of Happiness is celebrated on March 20 to promote happiness as a fundamental human right for all human beings across the world. The 2021 International Day of Happiness campaign theme is 'Keep Calm. Stay Wise. Be Kind'.

- Since 2013, the United Nations has celebrated the International Day of Happiness as a way to recognize the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world. The day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on 28 June 2012.

World Sparrow Day: 20 March

- World Sparrow Day is celebrated every year on March 20 to raise awareness about the House Sparrow and other common birds to urban environments, and of threats to their populations. The theme of 2021 World Sparrow Day “I LOVE Sparrows”. The day was initiated by the Nature Forever Society of India in collaboration with the Eco-Sys Action Foundation (France) and numerous other national and international organisations across the world. The first World Sparrow Day was celebrated in 2010.
- The sparrows are known to live in the backyards and green patches in urban areas but “in the last two decades, their population is on the decline in almost every city,” according to the wwfindia.org.

Ordnance Factories’ Day in India: 18 March

- The Ordnance Factories’ Day is observed on the 18th of March every year. The production of India’s oldest Ordnance Factory, which is at Cossipore of Kolkata, was started on the 18th of March, 1802. OFB is the 37th largest defence equipment manufacturer in the world, 2nd largest in Asia, and the largest in India.
- The day is celebrated by displaying the rifles, guns, artillery, ammunition etc in exhibitions all over India. The celebrations start with a parade and the exhibition will also display the photographs of various mountaineering expeditions.
- OFB is referred to as the “Fourth Arm of Defence” and the “Force Behind the Armed Forces” of India.
- OFB is functioning under the Department of Defence Production of the Ministry of Defence.
- The Indian Ordnance Factories supplies products to all three Indian Armed Forces. ie the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Air force.
- The Arms and Ammunition, Weapon Spares, Chemicals & Explosives, Parachutes, Leather and Clothing items are being exported to more than 30 countries worldwide.

Global Recycling Day 2021: 18 March

- Global Recycling Day is observed every year on March 18 to create awareness among the masses about the rapid pace at which our natural resources are being used. The day also promotes the concept and practice of recycling. Every year, events are organised by environmentalist and activists to promote the cause.
- In 2021, the theme of Global Recycling Day is “Recycling Heroes”. Its main aim is to recognise the people, places and activities that showcase the importance of recycling in preserving natural resources. Recycling has helped in reducing carbon emissions by over 700 million tonnes every year. Notably, over 1.6 million people are employed around the world in the recycling industry. In this decade, the yearly contribution of recycling will increase up to \$400 billion.

World Consumer Rights Day 2021

- It is celebrated on 15 March across the world annually to spread awareness about the rights of consumers and their needs.
- A special message was sent by President John F Kennedy to the US Congress on 15 March, 1962 and so the day was inspired by him. In the message he formally addressed the issue of consumer rights. To do so, he was the first leader.
- The history behind the World Consumer Rights Day is that the first consumer movement was observed in 1983 and since then every year it is observed to mobilize an action on important issues and campaigns.
- The theme of World Consumer Rights Day 2021 is 'Tackling Plastic Pollution'. It will raise awareness and engage consumers globally to adopt and promote more sustainable practices. The last year theme was 'The Sustainable Consumer'. This year the campaign will also focus on the central role that consumer advocates governments and businesses can play in tackling the global plastic pollution crisis.

National Vaccination Day: March 16

- The National Vaccination Day, (also called the National Immunization Day), is celebrated every year on March 16 in India, to convey the importance of vaccination to the entire nation. The prime purpose behind the celebration of National Vaccination Day is to make all people aware of arming against polio and eradicating it completely from the world. In 2021, the National Vaccination Day is important as the country has started its biggest Covid-19 immunization programme.
- The day was first observed in the year 1995. It was in 1995 that India started the Pulse Polio Programme and the first dose of Oral Polio Vaccine was given. According to the World Health Organization, immunization is a process through which an individual's immune system becomes fortified against foreign harm causing agent.

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2021 Dandi March to mark 75 years of Independence

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has flagged off the 91st anniversary of Dandi March on March 12 in Ahmedabad to celebrate the 75th anniversary of India's Independence. The Salt March, which took place from March to April 1930, was an act of civil disobedience led by Mahatma Gandhi to protest the British rule in the country. The event is kicked off from Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram and this event is also the part of the State government's programme to mark "Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav."
- The Dandi March or Salt March as part of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent protest against the British monopoly on the production of salt. Led by Gandhi, 78 people started the 24-day march on March 12 and reached Dandi on April 5, 1930. After making salt at Dandi, Gandhi headed to Dharasana Salt Works, 40 km south, but was arrested on May 5.

World Kidney Day observed globally on 11th March 2021

- World Kidney Day is observed globally on the second Thursday of March every year. This year World Kidney Day is observed on 11th March 2021. The theme of the 2021 World Kidney day is "Living Well with Kidney Disease". World Kidney Day is a global campaign aimed at raising awareness of the importance of our kidneys. World Kidney Day aims to raise awareness of the importance of our kidneys to our overall health and to reduce the frequency and impact of kidney disease and its associated health problems worldwide.
- Raise awareness about our "amazing kidneys" Highlight that diabetes and high blood pressure are key risk factors for Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD).
- Encourage systematic screening of all patients with diabetes and hypertension for CKD.
- Encourage preventive behaviours.
- Educate all medical professionals about their key role in detecting and reducing the risk of CKD, particularly in high-risk populations.
- Stress the important role of local and national health authorities in controlling the CKD epidemic. On World Kidney Day all governments are encouraged to take action and invest in further kidney screening.
- Encourage Transplantation as a best-outcome option for kidney failure, and the act of organ donation as a life-saving initiative.

Central Industrial Security Forces Celebrates its 52nd Raising Day

- The Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF) – Raising Day (CRD) is observed on March 10 in India every year. In 2021, the nation is celebrating the 52nd Raising Day of CISF. The basic objective of the CISF is Better "protection and security" of industrial undertakings in both government and private sectors in the country.
- CISF was set up under an Act of the Parliament of India on 10 March 1969, for the better protection and security of industrial undertakings in the country.
- Eventually, it was made an armed force of the Republic of India by another Act of Parliament passed on 15 June 1983.
- CISF is one of six paramilitary forces in India and functions under the Ministry of Home

Affairs with its headquarters in New Delhi.

- The CISF has 12 reserve battalions and 8 training institutes.

PM Modi addresses 'Janaushadhi Diwas' celebrations

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed 'Janaushadhi Diwas' celebrations through video conference. He dedicated to the nation the 7500th Janaushadhi Kendra at NEIGRIHMS, Shillong during the event. He interacts with beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana and also gives awards to stakeholders by recognizing their excellent work. Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers will also be present on the occasion.
- 1st March to 7th March is celebrated as 'Janaushadhi Week' across the nation with the theme of "Jan Aushadhi – Seva Bhi, Rozgar Bhi" for creating awareness about the use of generic medicines. Various functions across the country are organized like health checkup camps, Jan Aushadhi Paricharcha, Teach Them Young, panel discussions with doctors, etc. this week.
- Janaushadhi Yojana is becoming a big friend of poor and middle-class families. It is becoming the medium of both service and employment. There were not even 100 centres in India six years ago and we hope to achieve the target of 10,000 centres. Poor and middle-class families are saving about ₹3,600 crores every year on expensive medicines.

International Women's Day: 8 March

- International Women's Day is celebrated on the 8th of March every year. This day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women, who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities.
- This year's theme for International Women Day, "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a C-19 world", celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the C-19 pandemic. Women stand at the front lines of the C-19 crisis, as health care workers, caregivers, innovators, community organizers and as some of the most exemplary and effective national leaders in combating the pandemic. The crisis has highlighted both the centrality of their contributions and the disproportionate burdens that women carry.
- The United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day in the International Women's Year, 1975. In 1977, the United Nations General Assembly invited member states to proclaim March 8 as the UN Day for women's rights and world peace.

India to commemorate 'Chabahar Day' on 4 March

- The Ministry of External Affairs India had commemorate 'Chabahar Day' on March 4 on the sidelines of the Maritime India Summit 2021 being held in New Delhi. The virtual event had see the participation of ministers from Afghanistan, Armenia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and

Uzbekistan. The Summit is being held from March 2-4, 2021.

- The ministerial-level opening session would be followed by two webinar sessions namely the 'Boosting Business through Trade Promotion and Regional Connectivity' and 'Development of Port Infrastructure: Unleashing Opportunities'.
- It is a seaport in Chabahar which is located in south-eastern Iran in the Gulf of Oman. The port serves as the only oceanic port of Iran.
- The port comprises two separate ports namely the Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari. The port was first proposed by the last shah of Iran in the year 1973. The first phase was opened in 1983.

National Safety Day: 04 March

- The National Safety Day (NSD) is celebrated every year on 4 March by the National Safety Council (NSC) of India. In 2021, we are observing the 50th National Safety Day. The purpose of the day is to instil a sense of safety awareness among people by providing them with safety, health and environment-related support services.
- The National Safety Day Theme 2021 is "Sadak Suraksha (Road Safety)".
- The day is also celebrated to mark the foundation of the National Safety Council, which was set up on 4th March 1966 by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India. The first National Safety Day was observed in 1972. Additionally, the National Safety Week is celebrated from 4 March to 10 March by organizing week-long safety campaigns.

National Security Day: 04 March

- In India, March 4 is celebrated as National Security Day (Rashtriya Suraksha Diwas) every year, in the honor of the Indian Security Forces. The day aims to show gratitude to all the security forces, including policemen, para-military forces, commandos, guards, army officers, and other persons involved in security, who sacrifice their life in maintaining the peace and security of the people of the country.
- 4 March also marks the day when the National Security Council (NSC) of India was established, in 1966 by the Ministry of Labour under the Government of India. The first National Security Day (NSD) was held in 1972.

World Hearing Day: 3 March

- World Hearing Day is held on 3 March each year by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to raise awareness on how to prevent deafness and hearing loss and promote ear and hearing care across the world.
- The theme of World Hearing Day 2021 is Hearing care for ALL!: Screen, Rehabilitate, Communicate. World Hearing Day 2021 will mark the launch of the first-ever World Report on Hearing.

World Wildlife Day observed globally on 3rd March

- World Wildlife Day is observed globally on the 3rd of March every year to celebrate the beautiful and varied forms of wild fauna and flora present on earth. World Wildlife Day also

raise awareness about the benefits that the conservation of wild fauna and flora provides to people living on earth. The day also reminds us of the need to fight against wildlife crime and human-induced reduction of species causing various wide-ranging economic, environmental and social impacts.

- World Wildlife Day will be celebrated in 2021 under the theme “Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet”, as a way to highlight the central role of forests, forest species and ecosystems services in sustaining the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people globally, and particularly of Indigenous and local communities with historic ties to forested and forest-adjacent areas.

45th Civil Accounts Day celebrated on 01 March 2021

- The Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS) observes the “Civil Accounts Day” every year on March 01, 2021, since its inception in 1976. The year 2021 marks the 45th Civil Accounts Day celebrations. ICAS is one of the Civil Services of India, under the Department of Expenditure, Union Ministry of Finance.
- Initially, the ICAS was carved out from the Indian Audit & Accounts Service (IA & AS), through the promulgation of an Ordinance amending the C & AG’s (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Amendment Act, 1976.
- Later, the Departmentalisation of Union Accounts (Transfer of Personnel) Act, 1976 was enacted and came into force on 01 March 1976, following which the ICAS celebrates March 1 every year as the “Civil Accounts Day”.
- ICAS helps in the delivery of financial management services for the Government of India, such as payment services, supports the tax collection system, performs government-wide accounting, financial reporting functions, preparation of budget estimates and carries out Internal Audit in civil ministries of the Union Government.

Zero Discrimination Day: 01 March

- Zero Discrimination Day is an annual day celebrated on 1 March each year by the United Nations and other international organisations. Zero Discrimination Day is celebrated to promote and celebrate everyone’s right, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, skin colour, etc. Zero Discrimination Day aims to raise the voice for the right to live life with dignity, despite one’s choices, beliefs, profession, education, disability or even illness.
- Theme of Zero Discrimination Day 2021: “End Inequalities”.
- A butterfly is the symbol of Zero Discrimination Day and it is widely used by people to share their stories and photos as a way to end discrimination and work towards positive transformation. Zero Discrimination Day was first celebrated on March 1, 2014, and was launched by UNAIDS Executive Director at Beijing after UNAIDS launched its Zero Discrimination Campaign on World AIDS Day in December 2013.

National Science Day: 28 February

- National Science Day is celebrated all over India on 28th February. On this day, Sir CV

Raman had announced the discovery of the Raman Effect for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1930. The government of India designated 28 February as National Science Day (NSD) in 1986.

- The theme for this year's National Science Day is 'Future of STI: Impact on Education Skills and Work'. The National Science Day 2021 aims to motivate the students to gain hands-on experience in the field of science.
- Dr CV Raman was a renowned scientist who had a bachelors' and masters' in Physics from the Presidency College in Madras. He took part in numerous science competitions along with the government job. Afterwards, he received a scholarship from the Indian government.

Rare Disease Day: February 28, 2021

- Rare Disease Day is observed every year on the last day of February. This year in 2021 it falls on February 28, 2021. The day is observed to raise awareness for rare diseases and improve access to treatment and medical representation for individuals with rare diseases and their families.
- Rare Disease Day was first launched by European Organisation for Rare Diseases (EURORDIS) and its Council of National Alliances in 2008.

India observes Second Protein Day on 27 February

- In India, February 27th is celebrated as the National Protein Day, to create awareness about protein deficiency and encourage people to include this macronutrient in their diet. The day was launched by the 'Right to Protein', a national-level public health initiative on February 27, 2020. This year theme of National Protein Day is "Powering with Plant Protein".
- 2021 marks the second year for this nutritional awareness milestone in India by 'Right to Protein'.

SUMMITS AND MOU'S

India & Bangladesh inks 5 MoU to Boost Cooperation

- India and Bangladesh have signed five Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) to further boost bilateral cooperation. The signing of the MoUs took place on 27 March 2021, between Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi in Dhaka. Indian PM Narendra Modi was on a two-day official visit to Bangladesh to join the twin celebrations of Bangladeshi Founding Father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth centenary and the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence in 1971. This is the first trip of PM Modi to a foreign country since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

MoUs signed in the following areas

- Disaster management, resilience, and mitigation.
- Cooperation between Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC) and National Cadet Corps of India (INCC).
- Establishment of a framework of cooperation in the area of trade remedial measures

between Bangladesh and India.

- Supply of ICT equipment, courseware, and reference books and training for Bangladesh-Bharat Digital Service & Employment and Training (BDSET) Centre.
- Establishment of sports facilities in Rajshahi College field and surrounding areas.

India and US agree to revamp SEP

- India and the US on Monday decided to revamp the existing energy cooperation framework to focus more on clean energy keeping advanced American technology and the rapidly growing Indian energy market in mind to reflect new priorities set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joe Biden.
- Petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan and US energy secretary Jennifer Granholm have decided to revamp the India-US Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP) accordingly and convene the third meeting of the revamped SEP at an early date, requesting anonymity.
- “Earlier, two SEPs were [held under the Trump Administration], where the focus of energy cooperation was more on supply of fossil fuels from America rather than cooperation in reducing carbon footprints. While the import of fossil fuel from the US will continue, Washington will support India’s efforts for clean energy,” the official said. The inaugural SEP, a ministerial meeting, was first held on April 17, 2018. Its second meeting took place on July 17, 2020.

India, South Korea agree on joint production, export of military hardware

- In a significant move, India and South Korea have agreed to go for joint production and export of military hardware, enhance intelligence sharing and boost cooperation in cyber and space domains as part overall expansion of defence and security ties.
- The decisions were taken during delegation-level talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his South Korean counterpart Suh Wook on Friday with both sides resolving to give a major push to ramp up ties.
- The South Korean minister was on a three-day visit to India from Thursday last that was focused on boosting bilateral defence and military cooperation.

7th annual summit of NATHEALTH

- Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan, addressed the 7th annual summit of NATHEALTH. The summit focused on ‘Indian Health system expansion in post-COVID era’. While addressing the summit the minister reiterated the commitments of the government for fulfilling the goal of Health for all.
- The primary vision of the policy-framework is to attain highest possible level of health and well-being for all irrespective of all age groups. To attain this vision, the policy emphasizes on preventive & promotive aspects of health and providing universal access to good quality healthcare services. Government also launched Ayushman Bharat program with the objective of providing Universal Free Access to primary health care, promoting health and wellbeing.

About Health Union Budget 2021-22

- Union Budget 2021-22 also identifies Health as one of the six main pillars to drive growth.
- It has adopted a holistic approach towards health and wellbeing with a financial allocation of Rs 2,23,846 crore in 2021-22.
- It accounts for an increase of 137% over 2020-2021.
- To achieve the objectives of the policy, the government is working towards increasing health expenditure by 2.5 % of GDP 2025.
- The government is also encouraging State Governments to increase State sector health spending to 8% of the State's GDP.

India, Japan agree for greater cooperation in patent verification

- India and Japan have agreed to recognize each other's offices to act mutually as competent International Searching and International Preliminary Examining Authority (ISA/IPEA) for any international patent application filed with them. This memorandum of cooperation on the industrial property was arrived at during the 4th review meeting between DPIIT and Japan Patent Office.
- India had approved an MoC between the Indian Patent Office (IPO) and the JPO for entering into a PPH on a pilot basis for three years. This is a reciprocal arrangement, so the JPO will also be able to accelerate the prosecution of a Japanese application using positive examination results received from the IPO. The IPO will only offer acceleration for patent applications in certain technical fields such as physics, computer science, IT, electronics, metallurgy and automobiles.

UP and MP sign agreement with Jal Shakti Ministry for 'Ken-Betwa Link' project

- On the occasion of World Water Day, the governments of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh signed an agreement with the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti to implement the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project. The main purpose of this project is to carry water from surplus regions to drought-prone and water-scarce region through the interlinking of rivers.
- The surplus water will be transferred from the Ken river in Panna district in Madhya Pradesh to the Betwa river in Uttar Pradesh.
- The project will benefit the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh, by resolving the water scarcity and thus bring prosperity to this region.
- The water will be transferred through the construction of the Dhaudan Dam and a 221 km-long canal.
- The Ken-Betwa Link Project will provide annual irrigation of 2.51 lakh hectares, 1,700 million cubic meters (mcm) of water to Uttar Pradesh and drinking water supply to about 62 lakh people and also generate 103 MW of hydropower.

6th India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Women's Forum held Virtually

- The Sixth India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Women's Forum meeting was held virtually. The Forum discussed key issues that contribute towards the transformation of women's lives. At the end of the conference, a joint declaration was also issued highlighting the shared IBSA

goals and commitments for achieving gender equality in all spheres of life.

- The India-Brazil-South Africa Trilateral Cooperation Forum is a unique platform that brings together India, Brazil and South Africa, three large democracies and major economies from three different continents.
- The meeting was led by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India.
- IBSA is committed to inclusive sustainable development, in pursuit of the well-being of its citizens and those from other developing nations.
- The principles, norms and values underpinning the IBSA Dialogue Forum are participatory democracy, respect for human rights, the Rule of Law and the strengthening of multilateralism. IBSA lays efforts in South-South cooperation beyond the conventional areas of exchange of experts and training.

Italy signs International Solar Alliance amended Framework Agreement

- Italy has signed the amended Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) with India. The framework agreement was signed by the Italian Ambassador to India Vincenzo De Luca. ISA is an alliance of over 121 nations that have been initiated by India.
- The European country signed the ISA framework agreement after an amendment to the Framework Agreement of the ISA entered into force on January 08, 2021, opening its membership to all member states of the UN. The amendments of the ISA framework agreement allows all the member states of the United Nations to join the ISA grouping, including those lying beyond the tropics.
- The International Solar Alliance was launched jointly by the Indian Prime Minister and the French President during the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, or COP21, in Paris. It aims to contribute to the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement through rapid and massive deployment of solar energy.

IBM signs MoU with U'khand Government to introduce STEM for Girls

- IBM has announced a collaboration with Samagra Siksha Uttarakhand, the Government of Uttarakhand's education mission, to introduce the 'IBM STEM for Girls' program in 130 secondary and higher secondary schools across five districts in the state. The collaboration is part of a three-year program between IBM and Uttarakhand State Government with the American India Foundation as the implementation partner to increase the participation of girls and women in STEM careers.
- The program will advance the skills and careers of close to 25,600 students in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields.
- The demand for a highly qualified workforce in India is quickly increasing with the acceleration of emerging technologies.
- The 'IBM STEM for Girls' program features a comprehensive approach that builds technical capabilities as well as life and self-actualization skills.
- 'STEM for Girls' is an IBM Corporate Social Responsibility initiative primarily aimed at improving education-to-work and career pathways for girls who are studying in Government

schools.

- The program includes imparting training in digital literacy, coding and technology skills, 21st-century skills, and career development to enable girls' empowerment and increase their interest in STEM education and careers.

Textiles Ministry & Agriculture Ministry sign MoU

- Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Agriculture on Sunday signed an MoU to amplify sericulture activities in the country in the presence of Textiles Minister Smriti Irani and Minister of State for Agriculture Parshottam Rupala. The MoU will focus on establishing tree based agroforestry models in sericulture and exploring possibilities of activities through Krishi Vigyan Kendras.
- Ms Irani said it will enhance training, boost technology and create sustainable livelihood for silk farmers or rearers. On the eve of International Women's Day today, Ms Irani distributed Buniyaad Reeling Machines to women silk reelers with an aim to eradicate unhygienic and obsolete Thigh Reeling practice.

Samsung Mastercard ink an Mou's

- Samsung Electronics' System LSI Business, Mastercard, Samsung Card, have signed a memorandum of understanding to develop a biometric card that features a built-in fingerprint scanner to authorize transactions securely at in-store payment terminals.
- Through this strategic collaboration, the companies aim to provide faster and more secure payment experiences. The biometric authentication capability allows safer interactions with reduced physical contact points by eliminating the need to enter a PIN on a keypad. It also adds an extra layer of security to currently available credit cards by verifying the cardholder's identity via a unique fingerprint.
- The biometric cards will adopt a new security chipset from Samsung's System LSI Business that integrates several key discrete chips, streamlining the overall component design and enabling more efficient development. These cards can be used at any Mastercard chip terminal or point of sale (POS) terminal.

India-Sweden Virtual Summit 2021

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has participated in the virtual India-Sweden summit, with the Prime Minister of Sweden, Stefan Lofven. The virtual summit was organised to exchange views on regional and global issues and to discuss the bilateral relations between the two countries. This was the fifth interaction between the two leaders since 2015.
- Both the leaders underlined that the longstanding close relations between India and Sweden were based on shared values of democracy, rule of law, pluralism, equality, freedom of speech, and respect for human rights.
- Prime Minister Modi welcomed Sweden's decision to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- The leaders also noted the growing member-ship of the India-Sweden joint initiative – the Leadership Group on Indus-try Transition (LeadIT) that was launched during the UN Climate

Action Summit in September 2019 in New York.

- The two leaders also discussed the Covid-19 situation including the vaccination drive and stressed the need for vaccine equity by providing urgent and affordable access to vaccines across all nations.

DU, Singapore Fine Arts Society sign MoU on collaboration in Indian music

- The Delhi University's Faculty of Music and Fine Arts and the Singapore Fine Arts Society (SIFAS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for "cultural, academic and research collaboration agreement in Indian music".
- The MoU was signed at a two-day international webinar, "Traditional Music in Different Cultures: Opportunities and Challenges in the Changing Global Scenario", hosted by the Delhi University's Department of Music on February 25 and 26.
- "The MoU will expand the cultural and institutional footprint of both the prestigious musical institutions with a rich historical background – SIFAS commencing its glorious music journey in 1949, and the Department of Music taking its first step towards musical excellence in 1960," an official statement.
- "The teachers and students of SIFAS will get an opportunity to perform at the University of Delhi, and vice versa".

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

66th Filmfare Awards 2021: Check Complete List of Winners

- The awards for the 66th annual Filmfare awards were announced. The event was hosted by actors Rajkummar Rao and Riteish Deshmukh. Despite the difficulties the film industry faced during 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, Filmfare decided it was important to commemorate the best of Indian cinema. Among the winners was the late Irrfan Khan, who won the award for best actor in a leading role (male) category, while Amitabh Bachchan bagged the best actor (critics) Award.

66th Filmfare Awards 2021:

1. Best Film: Thappad
2. Best Film (Critics): Prateek Vats (Eeb Allay Ooo!)
3. Best Director: Om Raut (Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior)
4. Best Actor in a Lead Role (MALE): Irrfan Khan (Angrezi Medium)
5. Best Actor (Critics): Amitabh Bachchan (Gulabo Sitabo)
6. Best Actor in a Lead Role (Female): Taapsee Pannu (Thappad)
7. Best Actress (Critics): Tillotama Shome (SIR)
8. Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Male): Saif Ali Khan (Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior)
9. Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Female): Farrokh Jaffar (Gulabo Sitabo)
10. Best Story: Anubhav Sushila Sinha and Mrunamayee Lagoo Waikul (Thappad)
11. Best Screenplay: Rohena Gera (SIR)
12. Best Dialogue: Juhi Chaturvedi (Gulabo Sitabo)
13. Best Debut Director: Rajesh Krishnan (Lootcase)
14. Best Debut Female: Alaya F (Jawaani Jaaneman)

15. Best Music Album: Pritam (Ludo)
16. Best Lyrics: Gulzar (Chhappak)
17. Best Playback Singer (male): Raghav Chaitanya – Ek Tukda Dhoop (Thappad)
18. Best Playback Singer (Female): Asees Kaur (Malang)
19. Lifetime Achievement Award: Irrfan Khan.

Mahinder Giri Wins International Ranger Award

- Mahinder Giri, a range officer who has been deployed at Motichur range of Rajaji Tiger Reserve (RTR) for the past few years, has become the only ranger from Asia to win the prestigious International Ranger Award.
- The award has been announced for 10 professionals across the globe by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), “based on their contribution towards conservation”.

Carmen Maria Machado wins The Rathbones Folio Prize 2021

- 'In The Dream House: A Memoir' by Carmen Maria Machado Wins The Rathbones Folio Prize 2021. In the 2019 book, the author outlines her experiences in a same-sex relationship with her former partner, and the abuse she was subjected to. It is at once an inventive and radical work, a true testimony to her narrative gift.
- The prize is open to all genres – fiction, non-fiction, and poetry- from writers from around the world. It is the only prize in which all the books considered for the prize are selected and judged by an academy of peers, though there are three main judges.

Asha Bhosle to be honoured with 'Maharashtra Bhushan'

- Legendary singer Asha Bhosle will be honoured with the prestigious Maharashtra Bhushan Award for the year 2020. A committee chaired by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray decided to select Ms Bhosle for the award for the year 2020. Ms Bhosle, whose sister Lata Mangeshkar won the award for 1997, said she got to know from Mr Thackeray that she has been selected for the award for 2020. Ms Bhosle received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for 2000.
- The award, instituted in 1996 by the State government to recognise distinguished work and achievements of eminent persons from the State, representing different walks of life, carries a cash prize of Rs.10 lakh and a citation.
- The first Maharashtra Bhushan awardee was Marathi writer P.L. Deshpande and the last winner of this award was historian Babasaheb Purandare who got it for the year 2015.

Hindi Writer Prof. Sharad Pagare Selected for Vyas Samman 2020

- Well known Hindi writer, Prof. Sharad Pagare will be conferred with the prestigious Vyas Samman – 2020. He will be awarded the 31st Vyas Samman for his novel “Patliputru Ki Samragi”.
- The Vyas Samman started in 1991, is given by KK Birla Foundation for an outstanding literary work in Hindi authored by an Indian citizen published during the last 10 years. It

carries an award of four lakh rupees along with a citation and plaque.

67th National Film Awards Announced

- The 67th National Film Awards are currently being announced in New Delhi. The awards are for films from the year 2019. The event is organised by the Directorate of Film Festivals, which comes under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The ceremony was supposed to be held in May last year but was delayed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

list of all the winners:

Feature Film Awards

- Best Feature Film: Marakkar: Lion of the Arabian Sea (Malayalam)
- Best Actor (shared): Manoj Bajpayee for Bhonsle (Hindi), and Dhanush for Asuran (Tamil)
- Best Actress: Kangana Ranaut for Panga (Hindi) and Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi (Hindi)
- Best Supporting Actress: Pallavi Joshi for The Tashkent Files (Hindi)
- Best Supporting Actor: Vijay Sethupathi for Super Deluxe (Tamil)
- Best Director: Sanjay Puri for Bahattar Hoorain (Hindi)
- Best Debut Film of a Director: Mathukutty Xavier for Helen (Malayalam)
- Best Child Artist: Naga Vishal for KD (Tamil)
- Best Action Direction: Avane Srimannarayana (Kannada), Vikram Mor
- Best Choreography: Maharishi (Telugu), Raju Sundaram
- Best Special Effects: Marakkar: Lion of the Arabian Sea (Malayalam), Siddharth Priyadarshan
- Special Jury Award: Oththa Seruppu Size 7 (Tamil), Radhakrishnan Parthiban
- Best Lyrics: Prabha Varma for Kolaambi (Malayalam)
- Best Music Direction: D. Imman for Viswasam (Tamil)
- Best Background Music: Prabuddha Banerjee for Jyeshthoputro (Bengali)
- Best Make-up Artist: Ranjith for Helen (Malayalam)
- Best Costumes: Sujith Sudhakaran and V. Sai for Marakkar: Lion of the Arabian Sea (Malayalam)
- Best Production Design: Anandi Gopal (Marathi), Sunil Nigwekar and Nilesh Wagh
- Best Audiography (Location Sound Recordist): lewduh (Khasi), Debajit Gayan
- Best Audiography (Re-recordist of the final mixed track): Oththa Seruppu Size 7 (Tamil), Resul Pookutty
- Best Screenplay (Original): Jyeshthoputro (Bengali), Kaushik Ganguly
- Best Screenplay (Adapted): Gumnaami (Bengali), Srijit Mukherji
- Best Screenplay (Dialogue Writer): The Tashkent Files (Hindi), Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri
- Best Cinematography: Jallikattu (Malayalam), Gireesh Gangadharan
- Best Editing: Jersey (Telugu), Navin Nooli
- Best Children's Film: Kastoori (Hindi)
- Best Film on Environment Conservation: Water Burial (Monpa)
- Best Film on Social Issues: Anandi Gopal (Marathi)

- Best Film on National Integration: Tajmahal (Marathi)
- Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment: Maharishi (Telugu)
- Best Female Playback Singer: Savani Ravindra for Bardo (Marathi)
- Best Male Playback Singer: B Praak for Kesari (Hindi)

Best Films in Each Language:

- Best Hindi Film: Chhichhore
- Best Telugu Film: Jersey
- Best Malayalam Film: Kalla Nottam
- Best Tamil Film: Asuran
- Best Paniya Film: Kenjira
- Best Mishing Film: Anu Ruwad
- Best Khasi Film: lewduh
- Best Chattisgarhi Film: Bhulan the Maze
- Best Haryanvi Film: Chhoriyan Chhoron Se Kam Nahi Hoti
- Best Tulu Film: Pingara
- Best Punjabi Film: Rab Da Radio 2
- Best Odia Film: Kalira Atita and Sala Budhar Badla (shared)
- Best Manipuri Film: Eigi Kona
- Best Marathi Film: Bardo
- Best Konkani Film: Kaajro
- Best Kannada Film: Akshi
- Best Bengali Film: Gumnaami
- Best Assamese Film: Ronuwa – Who Never Surrender
- Special Mentions: Biriyani (Malayalam), Jonaki Porua (Assamese), Lata Bhagwan Kare (Marathi) and Picasso (Marathi)

Non-Feature Film Awards

- Best Voice-over/ Narration: Sir David Attenborough for wild Karnataka (English)
- Best Music Direction: Bishakhjyoti for Kranti Darshi Guruji – Ahead of Times (Hindi)
- Best Editing: Arjun Gourisaria for Shut Up Sona (Hindi/ English)
- Best Audiography: Radha (Musical), Allwin Rego and Sanjay Maurya
- Best On-Location Sound Recordist: Rahas (Hindi), Saptarshi Sarkar
- Best Cinematography: Savita Singh for Sonsi (Hindi)
- Best Direction: Sudhanshu Saria for Knock Knock Knock (English/ Bengali)
- Best Film on Family Values: Oru Paathira Swapnam Pole (Malayalam)
- Best Short Fiction Film: Custody (Hindi/ English)
- Special Jury Award: Small Scale Societies (English)
- Best Animation Film: Radha (Musical)
- Best Investigative Film: Jakkal (Marathi)
- Best Exploration Film: Wild Karnataka (English)
- Best Educational Film: Apples and Oranges (English)
- Best Film on Social Issues: Holy Rights (Hindi) and Ladli (Hindi)
- Best Environment Film: The Stork Saviours (Hindi)

- Best Promotional Film: The Shower (Hindi)
- Best Arts and Culture Film: Shrikshetra-Ru-Sahijata (Odia)
- Best Biographical Film: Elephants Do Remember (English)
- Best Ethnographic Film: Charan-Atva The Essence of Being a Nomad (Gujarati)
- Best Debut Non-Feature Film of a Director: Raj Pritam More for Khisa (Marathi)
- Best Non-Feature Film: An Engineered Dream (Hindi)

Sahitya Akademi Award 2020

- The National Academy of Letters have announced the names for the “Sahitya Akademi Award 2020 on March 12, 2021. The names were announced during the opening of annual “Festival of Letters” event.
- The award will be bestowed upon the politician-writer M Veerappa Moily, poet Arundhati Subramaniam along with other 20 writers. Subramaniam have won the award for her poetry collection called “When God is a Traveller” in English. Veerappa Moily has been named for his epic poetry called “Sri Bahubali Ahimsa Digvijayam” in Kannada language. The list comprises of seven books of poetry, five short stories, four novels, two plays, and one memoir and one epic poetry in 20 Indian languages. The awards for Nepali, Malayalam, Odia and Rajasthani Languages will be announced later.

Gowsalya Shankar nominated for International Woman of Courage 2021 Award

- The U.S. Consulate honoured Tamil Nadu-based anti-caste activist and human rights defender Gowsalya Shankar with a nomination for the International Woman of Courage (IWOC) Award in the city.
- The IWOC Award Certificate of Nomination was handed over to her by U.S. Consul General in Chennai Judith Ravin at an event ‘Courageous Women Inspire a Better World’ held in the city. Ms. Gowsalya was U.S. Mission India’s nominee for the 2021 U.S. Secretary of State’s IWOC Award, which honours women who have demonstrated exceptional courage, strength, and leadership in acting to improve the lives of others.
- Malini Parthasarathy, Chairperson, The Hindu, and V. Suresh, National General Secretary of the People’s Union of Civil Liberties, also spoke on the theme of courageous women.

Grammy Awards 2021 Announced: Check the list of Winners

- The 63rd edition of the annual Grammy Awards ceremony was held in Los Angeles on March 14, 2021. The 2021 Grammy awards recognized the best recordings, compositions, and artists of the eligibility year, between September 1, 2019, to August 31, 2020. The award is presented by The Recording Academy to recognize achievements in the American music industry. Beyonce received the most nominations with nine, as well as the most awards with four.

Grammy Awards 2021:

Sl. No.	Category	Winner
1.	Album Of The Year	"Folklore" by Taylor Swift
2.	Record Of The Year	"Everything I Wanted" by Billie Eilish
3.	Best New Artist	Megan Thee Stallion
4.	Best Rap Album	"King's Disease" by Nas
5.	Best R&B Album Winner	"Bigger Love" by John Legend
6.	Best Rap Song	"Savage" by Beyoncé, Shawn Carter, Brittany
7.	Best Country Album	"Wildcard" — Miranda Lambert
8.	Song Of The Year	"I Can't Breathe" by Dernst Emile II, H.E.R. and Tiara Thomas
9.	Best Rock Album	"The New Abnormal" by The Strokes
10.	Best Rock Song	"Stay High" by Brittany Howard, songwriter (Brittany Howard)
11.	Best Dance/Electronic Album	Bubba by Kaytranada
12.	Producer of the Year, Classical	David Frost
13.	Best Music Video	Brown Skin Girl by Beyoncé, Blue Ivy & WizKid
14.	Best Country Song	Crowded Table by Brandi Carlile, Natalie Hemby & Lori McKenna
15.	Best Folk Album	All the Good Times
16.	Best Comedy Album	Black Mitzvah by Tiffany Haddish

President Ram Nath Kovind presents Baton of Honor to Kiran Bedi

- President Ram Nath Kovind has presented a baton of honour and a letter of appreciation to former Puducherry lieutenant governor Kiran Bedi at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The former Puducherry lieutenant governor received a Baton of Honor decorated with the emblem of the Indian Republic and the appreciation letter recognizing her service in the Union Territory of Puducherry.

- Kiran Bedi was removed as the Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry on February 16 by the President of India and Tamilisai Soundararajan took additional charge as the Lieutenant Governor on February 18.

Amitabh Bachchan to be honoured with 2021 FIAF Award

- Megastar Amitabh Bachchan will be honoured with an award by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF). The veteran actor will be the first Indian cinema personality to be bestowed with the FIAF Award for his dedication and contribution to the preservation of the world's film heritage.
- Amitabh Bachchan was nominated for the award by the FIAF affiliate Film Heritage Foundation which is a not-for-profit organisation founded by Shivendra Singh Dungarpur a filmmaker & archivist. This foundation is dedicated to preserve, restore, document, exhibit and study the film heritage of India.
- The FIAF is a worldwide organisation, comprising film archives and museums from across the world. Hollywood filmmakers and previous recipients of the FIAF Award — Martin Scorsese and Christopher Nolan — will present the award to Bachchan during a virtual showcase scheduled to take place on March 19.

Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou wins Africa's top prize

- Mahamadou Issoufou, the incumbent President of Niger has won the "2020 Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership", the world's largest leadership prize, worth \$5 million. He is the sixth winner of the Ibrahim Prize since it was introduced in 2006, by Sudanese billionaire Mo Ibrahim's foundation to promote good governance in the world's poorest continent.
- The 69-year-old Issoufou is stepping down as president of Niger in April 2021, after serving two terms in office. He first took office in 2011 and was then re-elected in 2016.

Bihari Puraskar 2020 to be awarded to Mohankrishna Bohara

- The 30th Bihari Puraskar for 2020 will be given to Mohankrishna Bohara for his Hindi book of Criticism, titled Taslima: Sangharsh aur Sahitya. The K.K. Birla Foundation announced this in New Delhi. The book was published in 2016.
- Bihari Puraskar carries award money of two lakh 50 thousand rupees, a Citation and a Plaque. The award is one of the three literary awards instituted by the K.K. Birla Foundation in 1991. Named after famous Hindi poet Bihari, the award is given every year for an outstanding work in Hindi or Rajasthani published in the last 10 years by a Rajasthani writer.

WAN-IFRA names The Hindu Group 'Champion Publisher of the Year 2020'

- The Hindu Group won two golds and two silvers at South Asian Digital Media Awards given by WAN IFRA (World Association of News Publishers), culminating in being named 'Champion Publisher of the Year', owing to the highest tally on the points table.
- The awards are presented in recognition of outstanding work done by news publishers, in digital media. The winners were honoured virtually at the Digital Media India 2021

Conference held on March 3, 2021.

Golden Globe Awards 2021 announced

- The Golden Globe Awards 2021 was held to recognise excellence in film, both American and international, and American television. This was the 78th edition of the annual event, which honoured the best in American television, as well as film in 2020 and early 2021, as chosen by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.
- American TV series "The Crown" won the most awards for the ceremony with four awards. Late American actor Chadwick Boseman won the Golden Globe award for Best Actor in Drama category, posthumously, for his portrayal of Levee Green in Ma Rainey's Black Bottom.

Winners in the Film category:

- Best Film – Drama: Nomadland
- Best Film – Musical/Comedy: Borat Subsequent Movie film
- Best Director: Chloe Zhao for Nomadland
- Best Actress – Drama: Andra Day for The United States vs. Billie Holiday
- Best Actor – Drama: Chadwick Boseman for Ma Rainey's Black Bottom
- Best Actress – Musical/Comedy: Rosamund Pike for I Care A Lot
- Best Actor – Musical/Comedy: Sacha Baron Cohen for Borat Subsequent Movie film
- Best Supporting Actress: Jodie Foster for The Mauritanian
- Best Supporting Actor: Daniel Kaluuya for Judas And The Black Messiah
- Best Screenplay: Aaron Sorkin for The Trial of the Chicago 7
- Best Foreign Language Film: Minari
- Best Animated Feature: Soul
- Best Original Score: Soul
- Best Original Song: 'Io Si (Seen)' from The Life Ahead

PM Modi to receive global energy and environment leadership award

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will receive the CERAWEEK global energy and environment leadership award during an annual CERAWEEK Conference-2021. The award is given to him for his commitment to sustainability in energy and the environment.
- The CERAWEEK Conference-2021 will be held virtually from March 1 to 5, 2021. It is an annual international conference that brings together the energy industry leaders, experts. Policymakers Government officials, leaders from the technology, energy technology innovators and financial & industrial communities.

RANKING

India slips to 56th rank in Global Home Price Index

- India has moved down 13 spots in the latest global home price index to finish last at 56th rank in the quarter ending December 2020. Against its 43rd rank a year ago, India saw a decline of 3.6% year-on-year (YoY) in home prices, leading to the drop in global position, showed Knight Frank's Global House Price Index. India was the weakest-performing country

during the fourth quarter of 2020, with a decline of 3.6% in home prices, followed by Morocco with a drop of 3.3%.

- According to the report, markets like New Zealand (19%), Russia (14%), the US (10%), Canada and UK (both 9%) have recorded accelerated growth in rankings in the last three months due to a growth in housing demand.
- The index tracks the movement in mainstream residential prices across 56 countries and territories worldwide using official statistics. In the 12-month percentage change for the period Q4 2019 – Q4 2020, Turkey continues to lead the annual rankings with prices up by 30.3% on-year, followed by New Zealand at 18.6% and Slovakia at 16.0%.

India ranks 139th in World Happiness Report 2021

- India has been placed at 139th position out of 149 countries in the UN World Happiness Report 2021 released. In 2019, India was ranked 140th. The World Happiness Report 2021 has been topped by Finland, for the fourth consecutive year. The 2021 report is the ninth World Happiness Report and focuses on the effects of COVID-19 and how people all over the world have fared.

Top 10 Countries

1. Finland
2. Iceland
3. Denmark
4. Switzerland
5. The Netherlands
6. Sweden
7. Germany
8. Norway
9. New Zealand
10. Austria

Bottom 5 Countries

1. Afghanistan (149)
2. Zimbabwe (148)
3. Rwanda (147)
4. Botswana (146)
- Lesotho (145)

New Delhi Ranked as World's most polluted capital city

- New Delhi has been adjudged as the world's most polluted capital city for the third straight year in the 2020 World Air Quality Report by Swiss organisation, IQAir. Globally, New Delhi is ranked as the 10th most polluted city in the world. The topmost polluted city in the world is Xinjiang in China. This is followed by nine Indian cities as the most polluted cities in the world, which are Ghaziabad, Bulandshahar, Bishakh Jalalpur, Noida, Greater Noida, Kanpur, Lucknow and Bhiwari.
- The IQAir report measures air quality levels based on the concentration of lung-damaging

airborne particles known as PM 2.5, which is measured by ground-based monitoring stations.

- As per the report, India was home to 35 of the world's 50 most polluted cities, spanning 106 countries, which means India continues to feature prominently at the top of the most polluted cities ranking.
- The IQAir report seeks to empower individuals, organizations and communities to breathe cleaner air through information, collaboration and technology solutions.

Indore and NDMC tops Municipal Performance Index (MPI) 2020

- The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has released the final rankings of the Municipal Performance Index (MPI) 2020. The ranking has classified municipalities into two categories based on their population which are: million-plus category and the less than million categories. The Municipal Performance Index will help Municipalities in better planning and management, filling the gaps in city administration, and improving the liveability of cities for its citizens.

Million plus population category

- Indore has topped this list, followed by Surat and Bhopal.

Less than a million category

- New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) emerged as the leader, followed by Tirupati and Gandhinagar.

Municipal Performance Index 2020

- The Municipal Performance Index 2020 has examined the sectoral performance of 111 municipalities. Delhi has been assessed separately for NDMC, and the three Municipal Corporations.
- They have been assessed across five verticals which comprise of 20 sectors and 100 indicators in all totality.
- The five verticals under the Municipal Performance Index are Services, Finance, Policy, Technology and Governance.

11th QS World University Rankings 2021 released

- The 11th edition of the QS World University Rankings was released on March 04, 2021. The QS World University Rankings 2021 ranks the top 1,000 universities from around the world, covering 80 different locations. There are 47 new entrants on the list. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the United States has retained its top position as the best university for the ninth year in a row. Stanford University, the United States and the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom are the second and third best University globally in QS World University Rankings 2021.

From India:

- The Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay has emerged as the best institution. It is placed at 172 positions. No institute in India is in the top 100.
- Indian Institute of Science (185), Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (193) are the only other universities from India to feature in the top 200.

- In terms of subject, twelve Indian universities and higher education institutions have made it to the top 100, with three Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) making it to the top 50 for their respective subject.
- The 12 universities are IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi, IIT Madras, IIT Kharagpur, IISC Bangalore, IIT Guwahati, IIM Bangalore, IIM Ahmedabad, JNU, Anna University, University of Delhi, and O.P Jindal University
- IIT Madras ranks 30th for Petroleum Engineering, IIT Bombay ranks 41st and IIT Kharagpur ranks 44th for Minerals and Mining Engineering, and the University of Delhi ranks 50th for Development Studies.

Elon Musk Tops Hurun Global Rich List 2021

- The 10th Edition of Hurun Global Rich List 2021 was released, which ranked 3228 billionaires from 2,402 companies and 68 countries. The report showed that despite the C-19 pandemic, the world added 8 billionaires every week in 2020 and 421 in a year, taking their total number to a record 3,288.
- The total wealth of all billionaires across the globe surged 32 per cent, an addition of \$3.5 trillion, to take their total wealth to \$14.7 trillion, during the period under review. The wealth calculations taken into account is as of January 15, 2021.
- Tesla chief Elon Musk bagged the top spot on the Hurun Global Rich List for the first time after adding a massive \$151 billion during the year 2020 to take his net worth to \$197 billion.
- Amazon.com Inc CEO Jeff Bezos ranked second with \$189 billion in net worth.
- Bernard Arnault, the chief executive of LVMH Moët Hennessy – Louis Vuitton SE, the world's largest luxury-goods company ranked third with a net worth of \$114 billion.

India in the list

- With 60 Billionaires from the Hurun India Global List 2021, Mumbai became the capital for India's rich followed by New Delhi (40) & Bengaluru (22).
- Asia's richest person and Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani is ranked eighth on the Hurun Global Rich List 2021. The total wealth of Ambani surged by 24% to \$83 billion (approximately Rs 6.09 lakh crore).
- Apoorva Mehta of Instacard & Nikhil Kamath of Zerodha (both 34 years) became the youngest Indian Billionaires with a net worth of USD 1.7 Billion.
- Gautam Adani of Adani Group (Global Rank – 48)
- Shiv Nadar of HCL (Global Rank – 58)
- Lakshmi N Mittal of ArcelorMittal (Global Rank – 104)
- Cyrus Poonawalla of Serum (Global Rank – 113)

ASIA:

- Zhong Shanshan (Founder of Chinese Bottle Water Maker – Nongfu Spring) with USD 85 Billion became Asia's Richest person, followed by Mukesh Ambani. He also broke into the Hurun Global Rich List 2021 for the 1st time with a rank of 7.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

PM Modi unveils new version of 'Exam Warriors'

- PM Modi unveils new version of 'Exam Warriors' to make them stress free before examinations.
- The new version of Exam Warriors written by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is now available with many new mantras for students as well as parents. It is available at retail stores as well as online. The Exam Warriors module is also available on the NaMo App.
- In a series of tweets, Mr Modi said, the new edition of the book has been enriched with valuable inputs from students, parents and teachers. Substantive new parts have been added that would especially interest the parents and teachers. He said the book reaffirms the need to remain stress free before an exam. The Prime Minister added that it has many interactive activities for students and parents.

A book titled 'My Experiments with Silence' authored by Samir Soni

- The book "My Experiments with Silence" is authored by Samir Soni on anxiety and self - discovery. Soni's book aims to be a personal account of his dialogues with himself during his growing-up years in Delhi, his stint at Wall Street and his time in Bollywood.
- The book will be published by OM Books International. Soni said his book will be an "ode to anyone who has fought or is fighting their inner demons".

A Book 'Battle Ready for 21st Century' released

- A book titled "Battle Ready for 21st Century" co-edited by Lt Gen AK Singh, Distinguished Fellow CLAWS and Brig Narendra Kumar, Visiting Fellow CLAWS was released by Gen Bipin Rawat. The book lays down the conceptual framework for the strategic management of future conflicts.
- The book "Battle Ready for the 21st Century" has endeavoured to postulate and define emerging areas of conflict, desired capabilities and doctrinal issues that need careful examination.
- The authors with hands-on experience and domain specialisation have endeavoured to define and suggest the ways and means necessary to secure India from emerging security challenges on land, air, sea, space, cyber domain and even cognitive domain.
- The book is dwelling on future conflicts that India may face and need to build capabilities to dissuade and prevent accidental wars.
- The foreword is written by former Naval Chief Admiral Arun Prakash. Former Chief of the Army Staff Gen NC Vij and Prof Gautam Sen have commented on the book for empirically identifying future security challenges and the need for building capabilities.

Maharashtra Governor releases e-book titled Dawn Under The Dome

- The Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari released a digital e-book titled Dawn Under The Dome. The digital book depicts the history of the Mumbai General Post Office building. It has been authored by Post Master General of Mumbai Swati Pandey in collaboration with Orchida Mukherjee.

- The book says that three types of Indian stones were used in the construction of the building: the grey basalt with buff trachyte and the Yellowstone from Mumbai's Kurla and Malad respectively and the white stone from Dharandhra.

PM Narendra Modi Launches Kindle Version Of Bhagavad Gita

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the Kindle version of Swami Chidbhavananda's 'Bhagavad Gita' via video conferencing. The event has been organised to commemorate the sale of over 5 lakh copies of the Swami Chidbhavanandaji's Bhagavad Gita. Swami Chidbhavanandaji is the founder of Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam Ashram at Thirupparaithurai, Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu.
- Chidbhavananda Ji was devoted to India's regeneration. He noted that Swami Vivekananda's Madras lectures inspired Swami Chidbhavananda Ji to put the nation above everything else and serve the people.

A book on Smriti Irani's victory in Amethi released soon

- The English translation of journalist-author Anant Vijay's book "Amethi Sangram: Aitihasik Jeet Ankahi Dastan" will be released on March 15. The book, titled "Dynasty to Democracy: The Untold Story of Smriti Irani's Triumph", traces Union Minister Irani's journey from her defeat in 2014 to her victory in the Congress stronghold of Amethi, Uttar Pradesh during the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The Hindi book was published in December 2020. The book can also be seen as a study of the RSS's working style, its strategies and exemplary execution that backed Smriti Irani's efforts from 2014 to 2019.
- The 44-year-old BJP leader had defeated the then Congress chief and MP Rahul Gandhi in his family bastion by a margin of 55,120 votes. It was the second time that Irani had contested against Rahul in Amethi. In 2014, Rahul got 4,08,651 votes against Irani's 30,0748 votes.

Frontier Gandhi's autobiography released in English

- The autobiography of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as the "Frontier Gandhi", titled "The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle" is set to be published in English by the publishing house Roli Books. This will be his first autobiography in English. The book was translated into English by Imitiaz Ahmad Sahibzada, the former Pakistani civil servant and author.
- The earlier account of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's life in English was a collection of his interviews and was not his autobiography. The foreword of the book is written by historian Rajmohan Gandhi, Grandson of Gandhi and the book was originally written in Pashto and published in 1983.

A book titled "Advantage India: The Story of Indian Tennis" by Anindya Dutta

- Anindya Dutta, a banker turned author, penned a new book titled "Advantage India: The Story of Indian Tennis", a chronicle of Indian Tennis. Advantage India is a well-researched account of the journey of Indian tennis, with a special section on the Doubles game and on

women's tennis in India. The book is published by Westland publications.

- The book provides an extensive history of Indian tennis on both men's and women's side.
- The book is the result of the detailed research of Anindya Dutta on the data from the archives of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and British newspapers from the past 200 years.
- The book features pre-independence players like Mohammed Sleem, the Fyzee brothers, S.M. Jacob and Ghaus Mohammed and tennis icons like Dilip Bose, Sumant Misra, Naresh Kumar and Ramanathan Krishnan. This also features Rohan Bopanna and Sania Mirza who transformed Women's Tennis in India.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

Deutsche bank's new investment Banking head

- Deutsche Bank has named Fabrizio Campelli to lead its investment bank — part of a raft of board changes — as the German lender's chief executive, Christian Sewing, steps back from managing the unit.
- Campelli, who has most recently served as its chief transformation officer, will take responsibility for Deutsche's corporate and investment bank, it said in a statement. The move is part of a series of changes at the bank, which include handing Sewing a renewed contract to keep him at the helm until 2026, in what it described as a "clear signal of continuity".

S&P raises India's FY22 GDP growth forecast to 11% from 10%

- S&P Global Ratings raised India's growth forecast for the financial year 2021-22 to 11% from 10% earlier, led by an expansionary fiscal policy aimed at boosting domestic private spending.
- It has also raised the 2021 growth forecast for China to 8% from 7% on stronger-than-expected exports and lingering momentum in the property market.

HDFC Bank Named India's Best SME Bank by Asiamoney

- HDFC Bank has adjudged the 'India's Best Bank for SMEs' at the Asiamoney Best Bank Awards 2021. In its evaluation, the magazine said on its website — "HDFC Bank's transformation of its micro, small and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) business over the past few years makes it a worthy winner of this award." The Annual Best Banks survey of the financial magazine based in Hong Kong aims to identify which banks in each market have excelled across a range of core banking activities over the past 12 months.
- Asiamoney's award decisions were made by a team of senior journalists after receiving detailed submissions from market participants and in conjunction with research into the banking and capital markets by our editorial committee. Senior editors also visited each country or territory to meet leading bankers and gather client and competitor feedback.

World Bank Releases "World Development Report 2021"

- The "World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives" was released by the World

Bank. The World Development Report focuses on how data can improve the lives of poor people and advance development objectives, to ensure no one is left behind. It highlights the tremendous potential of the changing data landscape to improve the lives of poor people, at the same time acknowledging its potential to open back doors that can harm individuals, businesses, and societies.

- Through this report, World Bank aims to support its client countries by identifying where public and private sector investments are the most critical, defining a rich program for policy reform and technical assistance, and highlighting areas in which global initiatives can help to convene and facilitate cross-border cooperation.

Indian Overseas Bank launches 'IOB Trendy' savings account

- Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has launched 'IOB Trendy', a savings account customised for the growing millennial population in the country by keeping their banking preferences in mind. IOB Trendy is a Savings Bank Account Scheme introduced by the bank towards this endeavour.

About the IOB Trendy account

- For opening an IOB Trendy account, a customer needs to be within the age bracket of 21 – 38 years.
- The account may be self or jointly operated. In the case of a joint account, the primary holder has to be a millennial at the time of account opening.
- There is no 'Opening Balance' requirement for IOB Trendy. So, no charges will be levied for the first month for non-maintenance of balance.
- However, IOB Trendy customers need to maintain a daily minimum balance of Rs.10,000 or a daily minimum balance of Rs.5,000 and a digital turnover (transactions using IOB ATM / CDM / IOB Mobile Banking or Internet Banking fund transfer / IOB UPI transactions or IOB Debit card POS transactions) of a minimum of Rs.20,000 per month.
- The millennial-focused account also offers features like an online application submission facility, free personalised accident (death) insurance cover of Rs.5 lakh if the quarterly average balance is Rs.1 lakh and above, auto-sweep facility when the balance exceeds Rs.50,000 among others.

RBI imposes Rs 15 lakh penalty on Fedbank Financial Services

- The Reserve Bank of India has imposed a penalty of Rs 15 lakh on Fedbank Financial Services Limited, Mumbai. The penalty has been imposed for non-compliance with "certain provisions of the directions issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) contained in 'Monitoring of Frauds in NBFCs (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2016'.
- The statutory inspection of the company with reference to its financial position as of March 31, 2019, revealed, inter alia, non-compliance with the directions issued by it. The inspection report of the Koyana Sahakari Bank based on its financial position as of March 31, 2019, revealed that it had exceeded the prudential inter-bank (single bank) exposure limit.

RBI sets up external advisory committee for evaluating banking applications

- The Reserve Bank of India has announced the names of the members of the Standing External Advisory Committee (SEAC) for evaluating applications for Universal Banks as well as Small Finance Banks. The committee has five members, with former RBI deputy governor Shyamala Gopinath as the chairperson. The panel will have a tenure of three years.
- Other members include Revathy Iyer, director, central board, RBI; B Mahapatra, former executive director, National Payments Corporation of India; T N Manoharan, former chairman, Canara Bank; and Hemant G Contractor, former MD, State Bank of India, and former Chairman, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority. According to guidelines, applications for universal banks and SFBs will first be evaluated by the RBI to ensure prima facie eligibility of the applicants, after which the newly formed committee will evaluate the applications.

PNB sets-up subsidiary to manage credit card business

- Punjab National Bank (PNB) has set up a wholly-owned subsidiary namely "PNB Cards & Services Ltd" to manage its credit card business. The PNB Cards & Services Ltd has been incorporated on March 16, 2021, by the Registrar of Companies, Delhi.
- The new subsidiary will undertake the non-financial support services related to the credit card business of the bank. The authorised capital of the company is Rs 25 crore and the paid-up capital is Rs 15 crore.

SBI and IOCL to ink India's First Libor Alternative Rate Deal

- The State Bank of India (SBI) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) will sign the first Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) linked external commercial borrowing (ECB) deal. The deal will be signed because the de facto international benchmark reference rate called the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) will no longer work as the benchmark after December 2021.
- The state bank of India highlighted that it will be arranging \$100 million linked to SOFR for 5 years.
- The LIBOR will no longer work as the benchmark after December 2021. Thus, the Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) and Sterling Overnight Interbank Average Rate (SONIA) are the most potential alternatives.
- But only a few swap deals are linked to these alternatives at the international level. Libor is still used extensively especially for loans that are getting matured within the year.

RBI Imposes Rs 2 Crore Fine on State Bank of India

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of 2 crores on the State Bank of India (SBI) for contravention of certain provisions of Section 10 of the Banking Regulation (BR) Act, 1949. The central bank's specific directions issued to the bank on payment of remuneration to employees in the form of commission. This penalty has been imposed in exercise of powers vested with RBI under the provisions of the BR Act. The penalty is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement

entered into by the bank with its customers.

- RBI said the statutory inspection of the bank with reference to its financial position as of March 31, 2017, and March 31, 2018, and the Risk Assessment Reports (RARs) pertaining thereto, and examination of the correspondence with the bank regarding payment of remuneration to its employees in the form of commission, revealed, inter alia, contravention of the provisions of the Act and aforesaid specific directions issued by RBI.

WEF honours ReNew Power named as Global Lighthouse Network

- ReNew Power has been named to the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Lighthouse Network, which recognises companies using new technologies to achieve environmentally sustainable, community supportive, profitable growth. ReNew Power is an Indian renewable energy company. It has an asset base of over 8 GW, with around 5 GW operational. ReNew Power is one of the two Indian companies to be recognised by the Global Lighthouse Network this year.
- The WEF Global Lighthouse Network is a group of 69 factories that serve as a platform to develop, replicate, and scale innovations, creating opportunities for cross-company learning and collaboration while setting new benchmarks for the global manufacturing community.

RBI: Image-based Cheque Truncation System in all branches by Sep 30

- The Reserve Bank of India has asked banks to implement the image-based Cheque Truncation System (CTS) in all branches by September 30 this year. The move is aimed at faster settlement of cheques resulting in better customer service. The Apex bank said that to leverage the availability of CTS and provide a uniform customer experience irrespective of the location of her/his bank branch, it has been decided to extend CTS across all bank branches in the country. To facilitate this, banks will have to ensure that all their branches participate in image-based CTS under respective grids by September 30.
- There's now a new way of clearing cheques more easily and quickly across the UK.
- The Image Clearing System allows banks and building societies to exchange images of cheques instead of moving paper around the country. This new approach means you can withdraw money much sooner.

NPCI launches UPI-Help on BHIM app for Grievance Redressal

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the umbrella entity for digital payments in India, has launched a new application named "UPI-Help" on BHIM UPI, which will act as a grievance redressal mechanism for the users of the BHIM application. Initially, UPI-Help has been made live on the BHIM app for the customers of State Bank of India, AXIS Bank, HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank. Users of other banks participating in UPI will also be added to UPI-Help soon.
- check the status of the pending transactions,
- raise complaints against transactions that have not been processed
- raise complaints against money that has not reached the beneficiary
- raise complaints against

merchant transactions

India holds world's 4th largest forex reserve

- India's foreign-exchange reserves surpassed Russia's to become the world's fourth largest, as the South Asian nation's central bank continues to hoard dollars to cushion the economy against any sudden outflows.
- Reserves for both countries have mostly flattened out this year after months of rapid increase. India pulled ahead as Russian holdings declined at a faster rate in recent weeks.
- India's foreign currency holdings fell by \$4.3 billion to \$580.3 billion as of March 5, the Reserve Bank of India said on Friday, edging out Russia's \$580.1 billion pile. China has the largest reserves, followed by Japan and Switzerland on the International Monetary Fund table.
- India's reserves, enough to cover roughly 18 months of imports, have been bolstered by a rare current-account surplus, rising inflows into the local stock market and foreign direct investment.

Tata Motors launches 'Wheels of Love' programme to support new parents

- Tata Motors has announced the launch of 'Wheels of Love', a Programme that supports new parents in their exciting journey both as a parent and also as a valued employee while promoting a progressive culture of care, inclusion and sensitization within the organization across levels.
- Also presented in the form of a curated book, 'Wheels of Love' puts forth various tenets to enable new and expectant parents to successfully manage the need to focus on their growing family while also fulfilling their career goals, according to a statement.

RBI removes PCA restrictions on IDBI Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India has removed IDBI Bank from its enhanced regulatory supervision or Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework. It was noted that as per published results for the quarter ending December 31, 2020, the bank is not in breach of the PCA parameters on regulatory capital, net NPA and leverage ratio.
- The bank has also provided a written commitment that it would comply with the norms of minimum regulatory capital, net NPA and leverage ratio on an ongoing basis and has apprised the RBI of the structural and systemic improvements that it has put in place which would help the bank in continuing to meet these commitments.
- The central bank had placed IDBI Bank under the PCA framework in May 2017 after it had breached the thresholds for capital adequacy, asset quality, return on assets and the leverage ratio
- The bank had reported a standalone net profit of Rs 378 crore for the December quarter of 2020-21 compared to a standalone net loss of Rs 5,763 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Axis Bank launches "Wear N Pay" contactless payment wearable devices

- Axis Bank has launched a range of wearable contactless payment devices under the brand

Wear 'N' Pay. These devices come in different forms of wearables like a band, key chain and watch loop and are available starting at Rs 750.

- The wearables are directly linked to the bank account of an Axis Bank customer and function like a regular debit card. It allows purchases at any merchant store which accepts contactless transactions.

MeitY released the list of "Digital Payment Scorecard"

- The Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) has released the list of "Digital Payment Scorecard". In the list, the State Bank of India (SBI) has topped for the third consecutive months. The digital payment scorecard tracks the performance of the Commercial Banks on several digital parameters. SBI maintained the top remitter bank by recording the highest UPI transaction volume which accounted for nearly Rupees 640 million.
- SBI has also emerged as the largest issuer of debit cards. It issued over 290 million debit cards with a 30% market share with respect to card spends and 29% share with respect to transaction volume. Bank has also made steady progress with respect to increasing payment acceptance infrastructure.

Delhi govt presents Rs 69000 Cr 'Deshbhakti' Budget

- The Delhi government presented a Rs 69,000-crore budget themed on 'patriotism' or 'Deshbhakti' for the financial year 2021-22. The budget was presented by the Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, Manish Sisodia. While presenting the budget, he announced that the government has decided to celebrate the 75th Independence Day of India. The Delhi government will hold programmes from March 12, 2021, which will last for 75 weeks.
- The government has proposed to allocate Rupees 45 crores in order to install high masts so as to hoist the national flag at 500 places in Delhi.
- An outlay of Rs 50 crores made under 'Aam Aadmi Nishulk COVID Vaccine Yojana'. It announced free Covid-19 vaccination to all in its hospitals in the coming phases of the ongoing inoculation drive.
- The budget highlights that the government seeks to increase the per capita income of Delhi in order to reach the level of Singapore by the year 2047.
- The government will also allocate rupees 10 crores for the programmes on Bhagat Singh's life during the Deshbhakti celebrations.
- This year's budget accounts for the budget outlay of more than 6.1 per cent than the budget presented for financial 2020-21.

HDFC Bank launches SmartUp Unnati programme

- HDFC Bank on the occasion of International Women' Day has announced the launch of a dedicated programme named "SmartUp Unnati" for mentoring women entrepreneurs by women leaders at the bank.
- Under the SmartUp Unnati programme, over the next one year, senior women leaders from HDFC Bank will mentor women entrepreneurs in helping them achieve their goals. This

programme is available only to exist customers and will initially target more than 3,000 women entrepreneurs associated with the bank's SmartUp programme.

Alliance Insurance launches insurance portal 'SMEInsure'

- Alliance Insurance has launched the insurance portal 'SMEInsure' in order to provide financial security to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), small shop and business owners Alliance. It is a portal to insure 5 crores Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) under the insurance category.
- Notably, the portal will provide insurance services in a phygital formate. physical, through individual personal assistance and digital insurance through the portal. The target of Alliance Insurance is to reach more than 5 crore SMEs in the first year and expect revenue of Rs 10 crore. Approximately 97% of the SMEs in India are not insured.

Important Points

- Its objective is to help SMEs in managing multiple risks through a single platform ranging from buying insurance, renewing cover to filing claims.
- This portal will provide options to choose and compare products from various well-known insurance services including HDFC Ergo, Bajaj Allianz, Iffco Tokio, Tata Aig, Liberty General Insurance, Raheja QBE, Reliance General Insurance, and SBI General.
- SMEs can get their businesses insured for professional indemnity, director and officers, marine, fire and burglary etc.

Sebi cancels Sahara India Financial Corp's registration as sub-broker

- Markets regulator Sebi has cancelled the certificate of registration of Sahara India Financial Corporation Ltd as a sub-broker citing its failure to fulfil the "fit and proper" criteria. The regulator had appointed a designated authority in 2018 to enquire whether Sahara India Financial violated provisions of Intermediaries Regulations.
- According to the designated authority's report, considering the antecedents of Subrata Roy Sahara and the various judicial pronouncements against him and other group companies of Sahara, it is determined that Sahara India Financial (noticee) is not a "fit and proper person" to continue as a sub-broker in the securities market.
- In the 12-page order passed, Sebi Whole Time Member G Mahalingam has mentioned actions taken against certain Sahara entities as well as about the case involving Sebi and two Sahara group firms: Sahara India Real Estate Corporation Ltd (SIRECL) and Sahara Housing Investment Corporation Ltd (SHICL), regarding funds raised from investors.

EPFO keeps interest rate unchanged at 8.5% for 2020-21

- The board of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has kept the interest rates on Provident Fund deposits for the financial year 2020-21 at 8.5 per cent. The rate has been kept unchanged, as in 2019-20. The decision was taken by the Central Board of Trustees, at the 228th meeting, under the chairmanship of Labour Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar.
- Last year, in March, EPFO had reduced the interest rate on provident fund deposits to a seven-year low of 8.5 per cent for 2019-20. For the financial year 2018-19, the interest rate

was fixed at 8.65 per cent. The EPFO had provided an 8.55 per cent interest rate to its subscribers for 2017-18 and an interest rate was 8.65 per cent for the financial year 2016-17.

Axis Securities' new platform to make investment in bond

- Axis Securities has announced the launch of 'YIELD' - an online platform to buy and sell bonds as well as debentures in the secondary market. By offering competitive rates and technical know-how, YIELD would empower the investors to make the right investment decision. The trades and settlement of transactions executed will be reported on the BSE NDS (new debt segment) platform.
- "YIELD is the first-of-its-kind initiative that allows retail investors direct access to the debt instruments," the brokerage house said in a statement.
- This new tool will remove the hassle of filling up physical forms or the need for separate KYC with the bond institutions, it added.
- To facilitate transactions only insecure options, it aggregates only 'AAA' to 'A' rated quality debt instruments available for investment in the secondary market.

Kotak Mahindra Bank tie-up with Indian army to handle salary accounts

- Private sector lender Kotak Mahindra Bank will handle the salary account of the Indian army personnel. The bank has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Army here for a salary account. The MoU enables Kotak to offer its salary account proposition, combined with exclusive benefits for the Indian Army, to all army personnel – both active and retired.
- Through the Kotak salary account, all personnel of the Indian army will get access to the full range of Kotak's products and services including a zero-balance salary account that earns up to 4 per cent interest per annum with free unlimited ATM transactions on all VISA ATMs and anywhere banking across the bank's network of 1,603 branches and 2,573 ATMs across India.
- The salary account will cover other benefits such as a bespoke salary account for the army personnel, enhanced complimentary personal accident insurance cover – for both on-duty and off-duty incidents.
- It covers accidental death for total or partial permanent disability. It will also offer special education benefit for children and additional girl child benefit by covering dependent children of up to 22 years in the event of an accident claim by the salary account holder.
- Among others, the account will also offer exclusive benefits on loans and credit cards by way of attractive rates and zero processing fees on personal, home and car loans and waiver on joining fees on credit cards.
- Zero-balance; family banking accounts, free online payment transactions, unlimited cheque books, best-in-class rates for dematerialised accounts (Demat) and best-in-class brokerage rates on trading accounts are the other benefits.

HDFC ERGO launches Business Kisht Suraksha cover

- HDFC ERGO General Insurance has launched the “Business Kisht Suraksha” cover. It is a unique cover that was launched with the aim of protecting the balance sheet of Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), financial institutions and banks if any catastrophe or a natural disaster occurs.
- This was launched with the aim of limiting the impacts on the balance sheet of financial institutions which occurs because of non-payment of EMIs by borrowers or because of several calamities like earthquakes, floods, cyclones.
- The Business Kisht can be customised as per the needs of the individual MFI or financial institution (FI). It can also be tailor-made based on the geographical presence of the borrower, MFI or any FIs.
- The MFIs or FIs would also be given the option to select the number of EMIs which might need insurance coverage.

NPCI Partners SBI Payments to launch “RuPay SoftPoS” for Merchants

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and SBI Payments have partnered to launch “RuPay SoftPoS” for Indian merchants. The RuPay SoftPoS solution will provide a cost-effective acceptance infrastructure to retailers at a nominal cost. This innovative solution has the capability to transform NFC enabled smartphones into merchant Point of Sale (PoS) terminals for the retailers.
- RuPay SoftPoS is expected to provide seamless, cost-effective acceptance infrastructure to retailers at a nominal cost, and help deepen the digital payment acceptance among millions of underserved Indian MSMEs.
- RuPay SoftPoS will enable merchants to use their near-field communication (NFC)-enabled smartphones as the point of sale (PoS) terminals and accept payment up to Rs 5,000 through a simple tap and pay mechanism.
- Merchants can convert their existing android smartphone devices into a payment terminal by simply downloading a supported app.
- This solution will revolutionise the way micro and small merchants receive payments and create a demarcated shift in their tendency to deal in cash to accepting secure, contactless digital payments instead.

World Bank plans \$100-mn guarantee scheme for solar rooftop projects

- The World Bank plans to introduce a \$100-million credit guarantee scheme to boost India’s rooftop solar programme, which has not gained enough traction. The scheme will allow micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to avail concessional debt financing for setting up rooftop solar units.
- The World Bank scheme, along with the State Bank of India (SBI) and the MSME ministry to accelerate the adoption of rooftop solar units, will help MSMEs access credit of around \$1 billion. The arrangement will be beneficial for the firms that often do not meet the lending criteria of banks and other financial institutions, with their financial woes been exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic.

SBI Mutual Funds Launches First Overseas Fund

- The State Bank of India (SBI) Mutual Funds has launched its first overseas offering on 1 March 2021. The fund titled SBI International Access — US Equity FOF is an open-ended fund of funds scheme investing in a mutual fund scheme/ETFs that invest in US markets, which are domiciled overseas. The scheme will invest 95-100 per cent of its net assets generally in Amundi Funds – US Pioneer Fund (including ETFs), which invest predominantly in the US markets.

The main features of the scheme include:

- International diversification: Provides international diversification to the portfolio and provides investors with the opportunity to invest in themes not available in the Indian market.
- Lower correlation: Aids in mitigating overall risk by investing in a market that has a lower correlation to Indian markets.
- Currency depreciation: Provide investors with the opportunity to benefit from any depreciation in the Indian currency against the currency of the underlying fund.

Minimum Investment Amount

- The customers interested in the scheme are required to invest at least Rs 5,000 for the first time. However, for additional purchase, the minimum application amount is Rs 1,000. There is no upper cap for the investment in this fund.

Fino Payments Bank upgraded to scheduled commercial bank status

- Reserve Bank of India has notified that it has included Fino Payments Bank in the Second Schedule of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. All banks which are included in the Second Schedule to the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 are Scheduled Banks. These banks comprise Scheduled Commercial Banks and Scheduled Co-operative Banks.
- Benefits of being a scheduled bank under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934:
- Becomes eligible for debts/loans at the bank rate from the RBI
- Automatically acquires the membership of clearinghouse
- Rediscount of first-class exchange bills from the RBI

Scheduled Commercial Banks in India are categorised into five different groups according to their ownership and/or nature of the operation. These bank groups are:

- State Bank of India and its Associates
- Nationalised Banks
- Regional Rural Banks
- Foreign Banks
- Other Indian Scheduled Commercial Banks (in the private sector).