

SUBSCRIBE NOW

www.toprankers.com
+91 767 656 4400

450+
Mock Tests
Prev. year paper
Current Affairs & Many more....

TOP RANKERS.COM
scoreup

Table of Contents

01. INTERNATIONAL NEWS
02. NATIONAL NEWS
03. SPORTS
04. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
05. OBITUARY
06. APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS
07. IMPORTANT DAYS
08. SUMMITS AND MOU'S
09. AWARDS AND RECOGNITION
10. RANKING
11. BOOKS AND AUTHORS
12. BANKING AND ECONOMY

TOPRANKERS.COM

scoreup

Get access to 100+ exams with 2000+ tests

**Sectional Tests & Topic wise Tests
*Monthly Current Affairs
Previous Year Questions

SUBSCRIBE NOW

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India-Vietnamese Navy conducts PASSEX-2020 in South China Sea

- The Indian Navy and Vietnamese Navy undertook the naval passage exercise PASSEX in the South China Sea. The two-day exercise was conducted as part of efforts to boost maritime cooperation between the two countries. The Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kiltan took part in the exercise.
- INS Kiltan, reached Vietnam's Nha Rong Port in Ho Chi Minh City, carrying humanitarian assistance to deliver 15 tonnes of relief material for flood-affected people under Mission Sagar-III. This mission of INS Kiltan is part of India's Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) assistance to Friendly Foreign Countries during the ongoing pandemic.

Myanmar commissions submarine gifted by India

- Myanmar on Saturday inducted into its navy a submarine it received from India, which of late stepped up its maritime security cooperation with its neighbours as well as other nations in the Indo-Pacific region amid growing belligerence of China.
- The INS Sindhuvir, a Kilo-class submarine of the Indian Navy, has been renamed as the UMS Minye Theinkhathu. It was commissioned by the Myanmar Navy on the occasion of its 73rd anniversary. It is the first submarine to be acquired by the Myanmar Navy.
- India handed over the INS Sindhuvir to Myanmar three years after China provided two submarines to Bangladesh in 2017.
- The INS Sindhuvir was in service of the Indian Navy since 1988. It was refitted by Hindustan Shipyard before being handed over to the Myanmar Navy earlier this year. The Indian Navy also made arrangements for the personnel of the Myanmar Navy to operate the submarine.

DFC to invest USD 54 million in India to support critical infrastructure projects

- The United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) has announced to invest \$54 million in India to support the development of critical infrastructure projects in the country in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The DFC will invest this \$54 million in equity for the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) in India.
- NIIF will use this capital to support economic growth and address critical development challenges in the country. This financing is part of NIIF's final round of fund-raising for the fund.
- DFC is the development finance institution of the United States federal government, primarily responsible for providing and facilitating the financing of private development projects in lower- and middle-income countries.

Donald Trump Honours PM Modi With Top US Honour 'Legion Of Merit'

- US President Donald Trump has presented America's highest military decoration, 'The Legion of Merit', to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The prestigious Legion of Merit was given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership in elevating strategic partnership of the two countries.

- The award was accepted by India's Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu on behalf of the prime minister from the US National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien at the White House on 21 December 2020.

PM Narendra Modi addresses 6th Indo-Japan SAMVAD Conference

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed the sixth edition of the India-Japan SAMVAD conference 2020, via virtual conferencing. The purpose of this Samvad Conference is to discuss the need to build the future of Asia on the positive influence of traditions of non-violence and democracy in Asia.
- During the conference, the PM proposed to create a library of traditional Buddhist literature and scriptures in India. This library will collect digital copies of Buddhist literature from across different parts of the world. The library will then translate these works and make them available for all scholars and monks of Buddhism.

20th IORA Council of Ministers Meeting Held in UAE

- The 20th edition of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting via video conferencing under the Chairmanship of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The theme of the meeting was "Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean". The Indian delegation was led by V. Muraleedharan, MoS, Ministry of External Affairs. Sri Lanka has assumed the charge of Vice-Chair of IORA for the period 2021-23.
- The COM-20 was inaugurated by Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the UAE.
- The UAE assumed the position of the IORA Chair in November 2019 during the 19th COM, for the period 2019-2021.
- All 22 Member States and 10 Dialogue Partners participated in the virtual meeting to discuss ways in coordinating efforts to achieve IORA's vision for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indian Ocean region as outlined in the Jakarta Concord and IORA Action Plan.
- During the 2020 COM, France was inducted as the 23rd member state of IORA.

Singapore's 'Hawker' Culture gets UNESCO recognition

- The Hawker Culture of street food in Singapore has been inducted by UNESCO in its prestigious 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'. The Hawker Culture is a popular Singaporean style of street dining and culinary practices in a multicultural urban environment.
- Hawker centres are naturally-ventilated premises with stalls selling food from various cultures like Chinese, Malay, Indian, among others. The Hawkers of Singapore are known to master a variety of cuisines which they serve at the 'community dining rooms' where people from across all walks of life gather and share their unique experiences.

Boris Johnson invites PM Modi to UK-Led G-7 Summit

- United Kingdom Prime Minister, Boris Johnson has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to

join the UK-hosted G-7 summit 2021. UK Prime Minister Johnson has also accepted the very generous invitation to attend India's Republic Day celebrations in January.

- PM Johnson will attend India's annual Republic Day parade in New Delhi.

35th Edition Of India-Indonesia CORPATs

- The 35th edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) between the Indian Navy and the Indonesian Navy is being conducted from 17 to 18 December 2020. The 35th IND – INDO CORPAT will contribute towards the Indian Navy's efforts to consolidate inter-operability and forge strong bonds of friendship across the Indo Pacific.
- Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kulish, an indigenously built missile corvette along with P8I Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) will undertake coordinated patrol with Indonesian Naval Ship KRI Cut Nyak Dien, a Kapitan Pattimura (Parchim I) class corvette and an MPA of the Indonesian Navy.
- To reinforce maritime links, the two navies have been carrying out CORPAT along their International Maritime Boundary Line since 2002, with the aim of ensuring safety and security of shipping and international trade in the region. CORPATs build up understanding and interoperability between navies and facilitate the institution of measures to prevent and suppress Illegal Unreported Unregulated (IUU) fishing, drug trafficking, maritime terrorism, armed robbery and piracy.

NASA selects Raja Chari as commander of SpaceX Crew-3 mission

- NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) have selected Indian-American Raja Chari to be the Commander of the SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station. Presently Raja Chari, is a colonel in the US Air Force. He will be the commander of SpaceX Crew-3 mission, while Nasa's Tom Marshburn will be pilot and ESA's Matthias Maurer will serve as a mission specialist. This mission is expected to be launched next year.
- When Chari, Marshburn, and Maurer arrive at the orbiting laboratory, they will become expedition crew members for the duration of their six-month stay. The crew will have a slight overlap with the Crew-2 astronauts, who are expected to launch in the spring of 2021.
- Chari was born in Milwaukee, but considers Cedar Falls, Iowa, his hometown. Raja Chari's father Srinivas Chari left for the US from Hyderabad at a young age for an engineering degree.
- He is a colonel in the US Air Force and joins the mission with extensive experience as a test pilot.
- For Raja Chari, this will be the first spaceflight. He became a Nasa astronaut in 2017.

India, Iran and Uzbekistan to hold talks today on joint use of Chabahar port

- India, Iran and Uzbekistan will hold the First Trilateral Working Group Meeting today on the joint use of the strategically located Chabahar port. The announcement regarding the meeting was made by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- The Meeting will be jointly chaired at Secretary Level by India and at Deputy Minister level

by Iran and Uzbekistan.

Joe Biden, Kamala Harris jointly named Time's 'Person of the Year' 2020

- US President-elect, Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have been jointly named Time magazine's 2020 "Person of the Year". The TIME magazine releases the annual list since 1927, to recognise a person or organisation who affected the news or impacted the country and world the most, for better or worse, during the calendar year.
- Apart from this, Time magazine has named the Korean pop group BTS as its Entertainer of the Year, and basketball star LeBron James as Athlete of the Year. Zoom founder Eric Yuan was aptly named Businessperson Of The Year, as the video communications company has come to define the way millions have connected with each other during the pandemic.

Sonu Sood tops 50 Asian Celebrities in The World list 2020

- Indian actor, Sonu Sood has topped the first-of-its-kind '50 Asian Celebrities In The World' 2020 list, published by UK based Eastern Eye newspaper. The 47-year-old talented Bollywood star has been honoured for his inspiring philanthropic work throughout the C-19, especially helping migrant workers reach their hometowns. Sonu Sood beat global stars, including from Hollywood, the music industry, television, literature and social media, to be named the number one Asian celebrity on the planet for 2020.
- Canadian YouTuber, social media star, comedian and TV personality Lilly Singh came in second for her "pathbreaking journey, remarkable output and entertaining audiences most when they needed it".
- Indian singer Armaan Malik came in fifth for his immense musical output that included barrier-breaking English language songs. Sixth-placed Priyanka Chopra Jonas remains the most famous Indian star in the world, while the rest of the top 10 includes pan-Indian star Prabhas (7).
- The top 50 list is based on those who did good work, made a positive impact, broke boundaries, shattered glass ceilings, gave hope, did philanthropic deeds or were just inspiring in their own unique way.

Mt Everest declared 86 cm taller by Nepal and China

- The world's highest mountain peak 'Mount Everest' has become taller by 86 cm, as per a survey conducted jointly by Nepal and China. The Government of Nepal and China jointly conducted an exercise to measure the world's highest peak. The new height of Mt Everest has been calculated at 8,848.86 metres, which is 0.86m more than the previous measurement done by India in 1954. In feet, the new elevation is about 29,031 ft, or about 3 ft higher than Nepal's previous claim. In Tibetan language, Mount Everest is known as Mount Qomolangma while in Nepalese language it is famous as Sagar-Matha.
- The common declaration meant that the two countries have shed their long-standing difference in opinion about the mountain's height — 29,017 feet (8,844 m) claimed by China and 29,028 ft (8,848 m) by Nepal.
- In 1955, the height of Mount Everest was measured at 8848 m (29,028 feet) by the Survey

of India.

- There was also a third estimate, even higher, in 1999, a US team put the elevation at 29,035 feet (nearly 8,850 m). This survey was sponsored by the National Geographic Society, US. The Society uses this measurement, while the rest of the world, except China, had accepted 8,848 m so far.

China becomes second nation to plant flag on the Moon

- China has become the second country in the world to unfurl its national flag on the moon surface. Earlier this feat was achieved only by the USA when it planted its flag on the Moon during the Apollo mission in 1969. China achieved the historic feat when 'Chang'e 5' probe of China, which was launched to collect soil and rock samples of the lunar surface, took off from the moon to return to earth after planting the national flag on 3rd December 2020.
- If the return journey concludes successfully, China becomes the only third country globally to have samples from the moon. Till date, this record is maintained only by the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s.

Gitanjali Rao becomes 1st-ever TIME's "Kid Of The Year"

- The Indian-American young scientist and inventor, Gitanjali Rao, has been named as the first-ever 'Kid of the Year' by the iconic TIME magazine. This is the first time that the TIME magazine has launched the Kid of The Year" award.
- The 15-year-old Gitanjali Rao was chosen from among more than 5,000 nominees, for her "astonishing work" using technology to tackle issues ranging from contaminated drinking water to opioid addiction and cyberbullying.
- She has created applications named 'Kindly' to help people, especially kids, fight opioid addiction and cyberbullying.
- TIME magazine had partnered with Nickelodeon and searched social media and school districts across the country to shortlist the most influential child of 2020.

New Zealand declares climate emergency

- New Zealand has declared a "climate emergency" and promised to make its public sector carbon neutral by 2025. New Zealand now joins 32 other countries that have declared a climate emergency. They include Japan, Canada, France and the United Kingdom.
- Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern told legislators that the climate emergency declaration was "an acknowledgement of the next generation – an acknowledgement of the burden that they will carry if we do not get this right and do not take action now".

India invites UK's Johnson as 2021 Republic Day chief guest

- United Kingdom Prime Minister, Boris Johnson is expected to be the chief guest at 2021 Republic day with Prime Minister Narendra Modi formally inviting him. Johnson, on his part, has invited PM Modi to the G-7 summit in the United Kingdom next year.
- The last British prime minister at the Republic Day parade was John Major in 1993.

Arab Gulf's first coal-based power plant being developed in Dubai

- The first coal-based power plant of Arab Gulf country is being developed in Saih Shuaib, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The 2,400MW Hassyan clean coal power station will be built at an estimated cost of \$ 3.4 billion.
- The project will comprise four units of 600MW each, which are expected to start operations in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively. The power plant is expected to produce sufficient electricity to power approximately 250,000 households.

NATIONAL NEWS

Harsh Vardhan nominated to the Board of 'GAVI', The Vaccine Alliance

- Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan has been nominated as the board member of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI). The seat is currently held by Myint Htwe of Myanmar. Dr Vardhan will represent the South East Area Regional Office (SEARO)/ Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) constituency on the GAVI Board. Dr Vardhan will assume the charge with effect from January 1, 2021, and serve till December 31, 2023.
- The vaccine alliance GAVI is an international organization, that provides a forum for balanced strategic decision-making, innovation and partner collaboration.
- It was created to improve access to new and underused vaccines for numerous vaccine-preventable diseases for children who live in the world's poorest countries.
- The GAVI board is responsible for the strategic direction and policy-making oversees the operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation.

Harsh Vardhan inaugurates India's highest meteorological centre at Leh

- Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurated the meteorological centre (MC) of the India Meteorological Department at Leh in Ladakh via video conferencing. The centre would provide localised weather forecasts in the region, which would result in strengthening the weather-related early warning system for the region.
- The meteorological centre at Leh is the second MC located in the Himalayas. The first such facility is based in Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The facility is located at a height of 3,500 metres, which makes it the highest meteorological centre in India.
- This new MC will provide short-range (three days,) medium-range (12 days) and long-range (one month) forecast for Leh and Kargil districts of the Union Territory.

Nitin Gadkari announces Multi-Model Logistics Park in Assam's Silchar

- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari has announced that a multi-modal logistics park in Assam. It will be constructed in Silchar and the Balacherra-Harengajao section of the Silchar-Saurashtra Highway will be completed in March 2022. Mr Gadkari made this announcement at a public meeting at Zero Point on the East-West Corridor at Madhurmukh at Rangpur.
- The Union Minister for Road Transport laid the foundation stone of 20 projects and

- inaugurated seven projects worth Rs 2,366 crores for Assam with a total length of 439 km.
- The logistics park will be constructed in Silchar and construction works of East-West Corridor would be expedited and two new bridges would come up over the Barak river.
 - Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to send a proposal for ₹ 250 crore project in the Corporate Social Responsibility Fund for the Barak Valley.
 - The water transport system of Brahmaputra would be strengthened, the Union Minister said that dredging work on Barak river has also been completed.

India's 1st hot air balloon wildlife safari launched in Madhya Pradesh

- India's first hot air balloon wildlife safari in a tiger reserve was launched in the world-famous Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve by Madhya Pradesh forest minister Vijay Shah. Now like Africa's forests, tourists in India will also enjoy hot air balloon wildlife safari. The state was planning to introduce this service in Pench, Kanha and Panna tiger reserves as well.
- The activity will be restricted to the buffer area and people can watch tigers, leopards, Indian sloth bear and other wild animals from a height. It is the first in any tiger reserve in the country. The service is being operated by Jaipur-based Sky Waltz and company.

Mumbai airport introduces express C-19 testing facility, gives results in 13 minutes

- The city's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) on Tuesday said it has introduced a new 24X7 C-19 testing facility, which gives test results in flat 13 minutes at a cost of ₹ 4,500.
- Since its launch on December 15, CSMIA has witnessed an average of 30-35 such tests per day, CSMIA said in a release.
- A total of 400 express tests have been carried out at the airport till December 28, which include passengers who had connecting flights to destinations outside Maharashtra.

Harsh Vardhan launches India's 1st indigenous pneumonia vaccine 'Pneumosil'

- The Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan launched India's first indigenously developed vaccine against pneumonia. The Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) named 'Pneumosil' has been developed by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and PATH, an international, nonprofit global health organization based in Seattle.
- The vaccine will provide protection against 10 variants of pneumococcus bacteria that causes pneumonia, meningitis, ear, and blood infections in children. Pneumococcal disease is the largest contributor to under-five mortality rate worldwide.

INCOIS launches "Digital Ocean" app for information sharing

- The Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Science & Technology, Dr Harsh Vardhan virtually inaugurated the web-based application "Digital Ocean". It has been developed by Hyderabad-based Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) an autonomous organization under M/o Earth sciences. Digital Ocean is a first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management.

- Digital Ocean is a step towards Prime Minister's vision of Digital India, to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
- Digital Ocean will serve as a one-stop-solution for all the data related to the ocean.
- It will help to share this knowledge about the ocean with a wide range of users including research institutions, operational agencies, strategic users, the academic community, maritime industry and policymakers, as well as general public and the common man that too free of cost.

PM Modi flagged off India's first driverless train on Delhi Metro

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has flagged off the country's first-ever fully-automated driverless train service on the Magenta Line of the Delhi Metro. Apart from this, PM also launched fully operational National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) on the Airport Express Line of Delhi Metro, to connect DMRC with the NCMC service.
- NCMC, also known as 'One Nation One Card', is an inter-operable transport card that allows the holders all in one service to pay for their travel, toll taxes, parking charges, retail shopping and even withdraw money.

ICF develops new high-speed Vistadome coaches

- Indian Railways' Integral Coach Factory(ICF) the coach manufacturing unit located in Chennai has successfully completed the speed trials of the new design Vistadome tourist coaches.
- The new design Vistadome tourist coach manufactured by ICF has successfully completed 180kmph oscillation trial.
- Squeeze test of the above coach were already completed in ICF in the current month.
- The Vistadome coach has large glass windows, glass roof, observation lounge and rotatable seats allowing passengers to experience breathtakingly beautiful locations and sites enroute the journey.

PM to inaugurate 'New Bhaupur- New Khurja section' of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC)

- 'New Bhaupur- New Khurja section' of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) will be inaugurated by the PM Narendra Modi on 29th December, 2020 at 11 AM through video conferencing.
- During the event, Prime Minister will also inaugurate EDFC's Operation Control Centre (OCC) at Prayagraj.
- On the occasion, Governor of Uttar Pradesh Shrimati Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Shri Yogi Adityanath and Union Minister Shri Piyush Goyal will also be present.
- New Bhaupur- New Khurja section of EDFC is 351 km and situated in Uttar Pradesh. It is built at a cost of Rs 5,750 crores. The section will open new vistas of opportunity for the local industries such as aluminium industry (Pukhrayan region of Kanpur Dehat district), dairy sector (Auraiya district), textile production/block printing (Etawah district), glassware

industry (Firozabad district), pottery products (Khurja of Bulandshahr district), asafoetida or 'hing' production (Hathras district) and locks and hardware (Aligarh district).

- The section will also decongest the existing Kanpur-Delhi mainline and will enable Indian Railways to run faster trains. A state-of-the-art Operation Control Centre (OCC) at Prayagraj will act as the command centre for the entire route length of the EDFC.
- Globally, the OCC is one of the largest structures of its type. It consists of modern interiors, ergonomic design and best-in-class acoustics. The building is environment-friendly with a Green Building rating of GRIHA4 and is built as per norms of the 'Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan'.
- The EDFC is 1856 route km and starts from Sahnewal near Ludhiana (Punjab). It will pass through the states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand to terminate at Dankuni in West Bengal.
- It is being constructed by Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL), that has been set up as a special purpose vehicle to build and operate Dedicated Freight Corridors.
- DFCCIL is also constructing the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (1504 route km) that connects Dadri in Uttar Pradesh to Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Mumbai and will traverse through the states of UP, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

PM Narendra Modi to flag off 100th Kisan Rail via video conference

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off the 100th "Kisan Rail" from Maharashtra's Sangola to Shalimar in West Bengal via video conferencing on Monday.
- "Kisan Rail has been a game changer in ensuring fast transportation of agriculture produce across the nation. It provides a seamless supply chain of perishable produce," the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.
- The multi-commodity train service will carry vegetables such as cauliflower, capsicum, cabbage, drumstick, chilli and onion as well as fruits like grape, orange, pomegranate, banana and custard apple, it said.
- There will be no bar on the size of consignment and Loading and unloading of perishable commodities will be permitted at all stoppages en route, the PMO said.

Jammu gets its first woman bus driver

- Pooja Devi of Kathua district has become the first woman passenger bus driver in Jammu and Kashmir. Mother of three children, Pooja Devi ferried passengers on Jammu-Kathua route for the first time on Thursday.

History of Sikh Gurus to be included in school syllabus: Yogi Adityanath

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, at a Kirtan held in his residence on Sunday, announced that the history of Sikh gurus will now be included in the school curriculum in the state to educate students about the origins of the religion.
- CM Yogi made this announcement at a Gurbani Kirtan held at his residence on the occasion of 'Sahibzada Diwas', which marks the martyrdom of four 'sahibzada' (sons) of 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh and his mother Mata Gujri.

PM Modi launched Ayushman Bharat scheme for Jammu & Kashmir

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi today launched Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) SEHAT scheme for the residents of Jammu and Kashmir, via video conferencing. Talking about the Jammu and Kashmir Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY SEHAT scheme, PM Modi said that getting free treatment up to 5 lakh rupees under this scheme would improve the ease of living. About 6 lakh families of the state are getting the benefit of Ayushman Bharat Scheme. All 21 lakh families will now get the same benefits after the SEHAT scheme, PM Modi said.
- The prime minister further said that another benefit of this scheme would be that treatment is not limited to government and private hospitals in Jammu and Kashmir only. Rather, treatment can be availed from thousands of hospitals empanelled under this scheme in the country.

Kovind Inaugurates, Lays Foundation Stone Of Developmental Projects In Diu

- Daman and Diu/Dadra and Nagar Haveli, President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated and laid foundation stones for several projects on Saturday, according to the President's Secretariat.
- These included the inauguration of -- first academic session of IIIT Vadodara-International Campus Diu; and Kamleshwar School, Ghoghla; laying of the foundation stone for -- the construction of a school at Saudwadi; improvement of 1.3 kilometers heritage walk-way on Diu City Wall; conservation and facade restoration of heritage precincts (Zampa and market precinct); up-gradation of fruits and vegetable market at Fort Road; and development of integrated municipal solid waste management system for entire urban and rural areas of Diu.

Himachal CM unveils 18-feet statue of Vajpayee in Shimla

- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has unveiled an 18-feet tall statue of late former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the occasion of his 96th birth anniversary at the historic Ridge in the state capital.
- The statue has been built at a cost of Rs 1.08 crore. The Ridge Maidan also houses statues of Mahatma Gandhi and former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launches E-Sampada web portal

- Housing and Urban Affairs Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri has launched E-Sampada, a new web portal and mobile app on Good Governance Day. The new application provides a single-window for all the services including an allotment for over one lakh government residential accommodations, office space allotment to government organisations in 45 office complexes in 28 cities and booking of 1,176-holiday homerooms.
- The portal provides online facility to users across India to lodge complaints, submit documents and appear for the virtual hearing.
- This is a significant step towards the promotion of e-governance to enhance transparency and accountability in providing various estate services like allotment, retention,

- regularisation and no dues certificate.
- The real-time information on utilisation of assets and delivery of service will facilitate optimum utilisation of resources.
- The automated processes will minimize human intervention and will lead to greater transparency.

Punjab Govt launches mobile app and web portal 'PR Insight'

- Punjab Chief Minister Captain, Amarinder Singh has launched Mobile Application and web portal called 'PR Insight', to improve the delivery of citizen-centric services, based upon the feedback of its citizens on government policies. The basic objective of PR Insight is to re-orient the existing schemes and programmes of the state government to the people's satisfaction after meticulously monitoring their feedback.
- PR Insight application has been developed by the Information & Public Relations Department to provide a single repository & dashboard of all the news articles & social media posts of the State.
- This single repository of news articles and social media posts are then analysed using advance analytics and sentiment analysis tools to understand citizen feedback on Government policies and perception of Governance by the citizens.
- As many as 31 leading Newspaper agencies/portals have been integrated online with PR Insight application & portal and all the State Departments' news articles are fetched from these newspaper agencies on a real-time basis.
- The app will monitor the citizen's feedback and subsequently ensure responsive and transparent administration in the State.

India's first Lithium refinery to be set up in Gujarat

- India's first Lithium refinery is soon going to be set up in Gujarat. Manikaran Power Limited, one of the country's largest power trading and renewable energy company will invest around Rs 1,000 crore to set up this refinery. The refinery will process Lithium ore to produce battery-grade material. Lithium is a rare element and is usually not found in India.
- Last year, Manikaran Power had collaborated with Australian firm Neometals to tap the Mount Marion Lithium mine in Western Australia. The proposed project is expected to help Gujarat secure the raw material supply for domestic manufacturing of Lithium batteries as it looks to promote electric vehicles.

Niti Aayog launches Cloud Storage Service 'DigiBoxx'

- NITI Aayog has launched indigenously developed India's first Digital Asset Management and Storage platform, called 'DigiBoxx'. The initiative will give a boost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', as India now has its own cloud storage platform.
- This cloud storage and file sharing service will be available for desktop, iOS, and Android users, including both regular users as well as businesses. Digiboxx offers free 20GB cloud storage space, and 100GB space per month at just Rs 30.

Karnataka unveils “FRUITS” portal for farmers

- Karnataka government has unveiled the Farmer Registration and Unified beneficiary Information System (FRUITS), an e-governance portal, to create a repository of farmland information and farm loan details on a single platform. All farmers will be registered and given an identification number on the portal.
- The FRUITS Portal is integrated into the BHoomi Package of the Karnataka State for fetching and validating the land details. One other important facility of this Portal is online creation of charge by which visit of farmers to Sub-Registrar Office is avoided.

Canara Bank has agreed to run FRUITS on a pilot basis.

- Canara Bank observed that Karnataka State Government has always been in the forefront of technology initiatives to improve the ease of Banking as can be seen from the various initiatives like BHoomi Package, Debt Waiver Portal and currently, the FRUITS Portal.
- Using this number, banks and other lending institutions can access the land details of farmers as well as details of their existing borrowings and take a quick decision on lending.

Cabinet approves 100% FDI in DTH services

- The Union Cabinet approved revised guidelines for Direct-to-Home (DTH) broadcasting services, allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) as well as increasing the licence period to 20 years. Due to our I&B guidelines, this field was not getting the benefit of 100 per cent FDI. After changing the guidelines, the guidelines will have the same guidelines as the Commerce Ministry and will come under 100 per cent FDI.
- Under the revised guidelines the licenses will be issued for a period of 20 years, compared to 10 years at the moment, and will be renewed for a 10-year period. The license fee has been revised from 10 per cent of gross revenue (GR) to 8 per cent of adjusted gross revenue (AGR), which will be calculated by deduction of GST from GR.

Karnataka unveils “FRUITS” portal for farmers

- Karnataka government has unveiled the Farmer Registration and Unified beneficiary Information System (FRUITS), an e-governance portal, to create a repository of farmland information and farm loan details on a single platform. All farmers will be registered and given an identification number on the portal.
- The FRUITS Portal is integrated into the BHoomi Package of the Karnataka State for fetching and validating the land details. One other important facility of this Portal is online creation of charge by which visit of farmers to Sub-Registrar Office is avoided.

Canara Bank has agreed to run FRUITS on a pilot basis.

- Canara Bank observed that Karnataka State Government has always been in the forefront of technology initiatives to improve the ease of Banking as can be seen from the various initiatives like BHoomi Package, Debt Waiver Portal and currently, the FRUITS Portal.
- Using this number, banks and other lending institutions can access the land details of farmers as well as details of their existing borrowings and take a quick decision on lending.

Cabinet approves 100% FDI in DTH services

- The Union Cabinet approved revised guidelines for Direct-to-Home (DTH) broadcasting services, allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) as well as increasing the licence period to 20 years. Due to our I&B guidelines, this field was not getting the benefit of 100 per cent FDI. After changing the guidelines, the guidelines will have the same guidelines as the Commerce Ministry and will come under 100 per cent FDI.
- Under the revised guidelines the licenses will be issued for a period of 20 years, compared to 10 years at the moment, and will be renewed for a 10-year period. The license fee has been revised from 10 per cent of gross revenue (GR) to 8 per cent of adjusted gross revenue (AGR), which will be calculated by deduction of GST from GR.

World Bank signs \$500mn project to develop highways in India

- The Government of India and the World Bank signed a \$500 million project to build safe and green national highway corridors in the states of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. The project will also enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) in mainstreaming safety and green technologies. The \$500 million loans from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development a lending arm of World Bank Group, has a maturity of 18.5 years including a grace period of five years.
- The Green National Highways Corridors Project will support MoRTH construct 783 km of highways in various geographies by integrating safe and green technology designs such as local and marginal materials, industrial byproducts, and other bioengineering solutions.
- The project will help reduce GHG emissions in the construction and maintenance of highways.
- The ultimate objective of transport infrastructure is to provide seamless connectivity and reduce logistics costs.
- The Government of India has launched many investment programs in road sector infrastructure to strengthen and improve logistics performance.
- This project will also support analytics to map the freight volume and movement pattern on the National Highway network, identify constraints, and provide innovative logistics solutions.

Dharmendra Pradhan dedicates Bengal's 1st oil and gas reserve 'Bengal Basin'

- Union Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan has dedicated West Bengal's first oil and gas reserve, 'Bengal Basin', to the nation. The Bengal Basin is explored and owned by Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC). It is the eight producing basins of India by ONGC.
- The others are Krishna-Godavari (KG), Mumbai Offshore, Assam Shelf, Rajasthan, Cauvery, Assam-Arakan Fold Belt and Cambay. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Limited commenced the production of crude oil from the Asokenagar-1 well, Bengal Basin in 24 Paragana district of the state on 20 December 2020.

PM Modi to launch 'SEHAT', Health Insurance Scheme for J&K

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch 'SEHAT' – Health Insurance Scheme for the entire Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on 26th December. This scheme will cover the remaining One crore population which was not covered under Ayushman Bharat Scheme. Under Ayushman Bharat PM Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), eligible beneficiaries were covered under Health Cover of Rs 5 Lakh.
- Under PMJAY scheme, 30 lakh people are being covered in J&K. With the launch of 'SEHAT' Scheme by the Prime Minister on December 26, J&K will be among the first in the country to achieve Universal Health Coverage. Programmes will be organized across the UT and the distribution of Golden cards will be started on the same day. Around 16 Lakh registrations have been done as on date and the registrations for the rest of the beneficiaries is underway.

Gol notifies new "Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020"

- The Union Power Ministry, R. K. Singh has framed the new 'Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020. These rules shall empower the consumers of electricity and added that these Rules emanate from the conviction that the power systems exist to serve the consumers and the consumers have rights to get the reliable services and quality electricity.

(Rights of Consumers) Rules 2020:

- These rules provide for Rights of consumers and Obligations of Distribution licensees.
- The distribution licensee shall supply 24x7 power to all consumers.
- However, the commission may specify lower hours of supply for some categories of consumers like agriculture.

Prakash Javadekar releases 'Status of Leopards in India 2018' report

- The Union environment minister, Prakash Javadekar has released a report titled the 'Status of Leopard in India 2018'. As per the report, the population of leopard in India has increased by 60 per cent in four years since 2014.
- India now has 12,852 leopards as per 2018 estimate, compared to the previous estimate of 7910 conducted in 2014. The States of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra recorded the highest leopard estimates at 3,421, 1,783, and 1,690 respectively.

Rajnath Singh inaugurates advanced "HWT" test facility in Hyderabad

- Union Minister of Defence, Rajnath Singh has inaugurated the advanced Hypersonic Wind Tunnel (HWT) test facility of the DRDO in Hyderabad, Telangana. The state-of-the-art HWT Test facility has made India as the only third country in the world, after the US and Russia, to have such a huge facility in size and capability.
- The indigenously developed HWT Test facility is a pressure vacuum-driven enclosed free jet facility having a nozzle exit diameter of 1 metre. This will simulate Mach No 5 to 12 (Mach represents the multiplication factor to the speed of sound)".
- The facility has the capability to simulate hypersonic flow over a wide spectrum and will play a major role in the realization of highly complex futuristic aerospace and defence

systems.

Rajnath Singh hands over high-tech systems to chiefs of 3 armed forces

- The Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh recently handed over three indigenously developed high technology systems to chiefs of the three armed forces: the Indian Army, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force. The three systems namely, Border Surveillance System (BOSS), Indian Maritime Situational Awareness System (IMSAS) and ASTRA Mk-I Missile, have been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
1. Border Surveillance System (BOSS)
 - BOSS is an all-weather electronic surveillance system. It was handed over to Army Chief General M M Naravane.
 - BOSS has already been deployed in Ladakh against the Chinese troops for day and night surveillance.
 - It has been designed and developed by Instruments Research & Development Establishment (IRDE), Dehradun and is being produced by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Machlipatnam.
 - The system facilitates monitoring and surveillance by automatically detecting the intrusions in harsh high-altitude sub-zero temperature areas with remote operation capability.
 2. Indian maritime situational awareness system (IMSAS)
 - It was handed to Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh.
 - The IMSAS is a state-of-the-art high-performance intelligent software system that provides Global Maritime Situational Picture, Marine planning tools and Analytical capabilities to Indian Navy.
 - The product is jointly conceptualised and developed by Centre for Artificial Intelligence & Robotics (CAIR), Bengaluru and Indian Navy, while it is being produced by BEL, Bengaluru.
 3. Astra Mk-1 missile system
 - It was handed over to Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhadauria.
 - This missile is the first indigenously developed beyond visual range (BVR) missile that can be launched from Sukhoi-30, Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), Mig-29 and Mig-29K.
 - ASTRA weapon system has been developed by Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL) and production by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) Hyderabad.

Jaishankar addresses 5th Annual Global Technology Summit

- The 5th edition of the annual Global Technology Summit (GTS) was organised virtually by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India in collaboration with Carnegie India (CI). GTS is one of the four flagship annual conferences organised by MEA. The other three conferences are the Raisina Dialogue, the Geo-economic dialogue, and the Indian Ocean Conference.
- The theme of the 2020 GTS was “The Geopolitics of Technology”. The speakers from included the External Affairs Minister, Dr S. Jaishankar, and Dr K. VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.

"Varasat" campaign launched in Uttar Pradesh

- The Uttar Pradesh government has launched a special campaign 'Varasat' (natural succession) to curb property & land-related disputes in rural areas. This is a first of its kind campaign in the state which aims to put an end to the land-related issues in the rural areas and eradicate the exploitation of the villagers over succession rights by land mafias, who generally target disputed properties. The two-month-long special drive will continue till 15th February 2020.
- Under the arrangements, the villagers will get both online and offline facilities for registering their 'Varasat'.
- For the people who have landed in the village but they are living at some other place, a special counter will be opened at the Tehsil-level where they can apply for the same.

India's 1st CoE for Skill Development in Power Sector inaugurated in Gurugram

- The Minister of State for Skill Development, Raj Kumar Singh has inaugurated the first Centre of Excellence (CoE) for 'skill development in the power sector' in Gurugram. The CoE has been established in the campus of National Institute of Solar Energy, Gurugram, Haryana.
- This new centre has been set up by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education and Youth, Government of France and Schneider Electric.
- It has high-end modern labs designed keeping in mind the future technology, which will further strengthen India and France's relationship in the energy sector.
- The centre will design and deliver Training for Trainers, Instructors, Training of Assessors and other high-end programmes in the power and solar sector.

India International Science Festival begins from 22 December

- Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences in association with Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA) are organizing the India International Science Festival (IISF) from 22 December. This year this festival will be through virtual mode.
- The central theme of this year's festival is "Science for Self-reliant India and Global Welfare".
- India International Science Festival (IISF) launched in 2015 is a celebration to promote Science and Technology.

Indian Railways initiates National Rail Plan in the country

- Indian Railways has launched National Rail Plan with an aim to increase modal share of the Railways.
- This plan is being circulated among various Ministries for their views now. Railways aim to finalize the final plan by January 2021.
- As part of a national commitment to reduce Carbon emission, The railways will also increase the modal share of Railways from 27 per cent currently to 45 per cent in freight by 2030.

Mega leather park with Rs 5,850 cr investment to come up in Kanpur

- Mega leather park to come up in Ramaipur village of Kanpur with an investment of Rs 5,850 crores. The park, part of the mega leather cluster project will create 50,000 direct jobs & indirect employment for 1.5 lakh people. Recently, the project has received approval from the Union Commerce Ministry. The mega leather cluster project will attract an investment of about Rs 13,000 crores.
- With the mega leather cluster at Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh will become the first state in the country to establish a leather park. The leather park will be equipped with an effluent treatment plant to keep a check on pollution. For setting up units in the park, industrial plots ranging from 4,000 square metres to 10,000 square metres will be provided to the investors.

Nehru Zoological Park Hyderabad gets ISO certifications

- Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad, with its standard working procedures, has acquired ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Standards Certification from ASCB, UK. The Hyderabad Zoo has become the first zoo in the country to receive ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Standards Certificate. This was presented to Telangana Forests Minister A. Indra Karan Reddy.
- HYM International Certifications, Accredited by ASCB(UK) recently conducted an assessment of the Zoo for ISO 9001:2015 Certifications and expressed satisfaction and happiness in the standards being followed in Nehru Zoological Park in the area of sanitation, food processing, animal breeding, Zoo Hospital, animal care, hygiene maintenance and establishment.

Uttar Pradesh govt to launch 'Kisan Kalyan Mission'

- Uttar Pradesh government will launch a special program to double the income of farmers. The program named as "Kisan Kalyan Mission" will cover all assembly constituencies of the state. Under the Kisan Kalyan mission, various programs will be organised across the state.
- Exhibitions of agriculture and Associate sectors will be organised which will include the products of MSME sector units and livelihood missions.
- Farmer meetings will also be organised in which progressive farmers, scientist and workers associated with Agriculture Department will explain the scientific farming and provide information about the schemes of the government.
- Farmers will be given benefit under the various schemes of the agriculture department during these events.
- Under the Kisan Kalyan mission, many departments of state government like agriculture marketing Mandi Parishad, Horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, sugarcane food and supply and Panchayati Raj will work together.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik launched 'Pareshram' Portal

- Chief Minister of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik through a video conference, launched 'Pareshram' Portal along with 22 online services of Labour and Employees State Insurance Department.

The Portal and the Online Services shall be helpful in “Ease of Doing Business” and contribute significantly to the industrial development of the State.

- The Portal will provide 52 types of services in the coming days. This technology is the foundation of 5-T initiative and this will help in transformation, hoped that information regarding different Labour Laws will be available and industries, commercial organisations, small entrepreneurs and public will be benefited through this Portal.

PM Modi inaugurates world's largest renewable energy park in Gujarat

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the 30,000 megawatt (MW) capacity hybrid renewable energy park in Kutch district of Gujarat. It will be the largest renewable energy park of its kind in the world. It is expected to play a major role in fulfilling India's vision of generating 450 GW (4,50,000 mw) of power by 2030.
- The park is being constructed between Khawda and Vighakhhot villages near India-Pakistan border.
- The renewable park will have two dedicated zones, one each for the wind energy and solar energy.
- It will be spread over 72,600 hectares of waste land, including 49,600 hectares for solar project and 23,000 hectares of land for wind power.

Indian Coast Guard's OPV 'Sujeet' commissioned in Goa

- Indian Coast Guard's (ICG) Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) 'Sujeet', which is second in the series of 5 OPVs was commissioned at the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) in Vasco Town, Goa by Raj Kumar, Secretary (Defence Production).
- The vessel has been designed and built indigenously by GSL. The 1st ship in series – ICGS (ICG Ship) Sachet was commissioned by Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in May 2020. The ship was commissioned in the presence of K Natarajan, Director General of Indian Coast Guard and others.
- Sujet has been equipped with features like Integrated Bridge System, Integrated platform management system, power management system and high power external fire-fighting.
- It is capable of carrying 1 twin-engine helicopter, 4 high-speed boats, 2 inflatable boats for boarding operations, search and rescue, law enforcement and maritime patrol.
- The ship will be based at Goa and will be deployed extensively for EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) surveillance and other duties.
- The ship will be 105 metres long and weigh 2400 tonnes.
- At present, ICG has stated that it has 155 ships and 62 Aircraft at its disposal with 35 more ships in various stages of construction at shipyards across India.

Maharashtra Government introduces Unified Development Control Rules for Real Estate

- The Government of Maharashtra has approved the Unified Development Control and Promotion Regulations, (UDCPR), to strengthen and bring uniformity in the real estate construction laws of the state. This uniform set of regulations will specify everything from the height of buildings to the width of roads and the size of amenity spaces.

- The new set of rules will apply on all municipal corporations, councils and Nagar panchayats in the entire state except Mumbai and some neighbouring areas like hill stations, eco-sensitive zones and specified corporation areas.
- It will help to increase the stock of affordable housing projects and improve ease of doing business as well as help the developers to improve their resource management.

GRSE Kolkata launches 'Himgiri', its 1st Ship of Project 17A

- Himgiri, which is the first of the three Project 17A ships being built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata was launched. The launch of 'Himgiri' has showcased GRSE's commitment towards the building of three state-of-the-art warships of P17A for Indian Navy.
- Under the Project 17A program, a total of seven ships, four at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three ships at GRSE are being built with enhanced stealth features, advanced indigenous weapon and sensor fit along with several other improvements. P17A ships are the first gas turbine propulsion and largest combat platforms ever built at GRSE. Since its inception, Project 17A has upheld India's vision for Atmanirbhar Bharat.

NITI Aayog releases 'Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India'

- NITI Aayog has released a white paper titled 'Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India' on 14 December 2020. The 'Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India' is a continuation of the work on Health Systems Strengthening. The building blocks for this vision are an interdependent federated system of governance between the Centre and states.
- The vision of this white paper is to make India's public health surveillance system more responsive and predictive to enhance preparedness for action at all levels.
- The citizen-friendly public health surveillance system will ensure individual privacy and confidentiality, enabled with a client feedback mechanism.
- India aims to provide regional and global leadership in managing events that constitute a public health emergency of international concern.
- Public health surveillance (PHS) is an important function, requiring primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of care.
- The white paper lays out India's vision of 2035 for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system into Ayushman Bharat.

9th Sustainable Mountain Development Summit held in Dehradun

- The 9th edition of Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS) held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand. The four-day-long summit was organised by Indian Mountain Initiative (IMI) and hosted by Sustainable Development Forum Uttaranchal (SDFU), Dehradun.
- The theme for 2020 SMDS was 'Emerging Pathways for Building a Resilient Post COVID-19 Mountain Economy, Adaptation, Innovation and Acceleration'.
- The Summit deliberated on issues such as migration, water security, climate resilience and innovative solutions for the farm sector, and disaster risk reduction in the Indian Himalayas.

- The focus of the summit was on building pathways toward a resilient and sustainable mountain economy in the context of a post-C-19 scenario and Climate Change.

Ola to set up world's largest scooter factory in Tamil Nadu

- The SoftBank-backed mobility platform, Ola has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Tamil Nadu government, to set up its first factory in the state, at an investment of Rs 2,400 crore. Upon completion, the Ola factory in Tamil Nadu will be the largest scooter manufacturing facility in the world. Initially, the factory will have an annual manufacturing capacity of 2 million units.
- The factory is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of an AtmaNirbhar Bharat and will make India a manufacturing hub for two-wheeled electric vehicles. The new factory will also reduce the dependence of India on import of electric vehicles, boost local manufacturing, create jobs and also improve the technical expertise in the country.

PM Narendra Modi addresses International Bharathi Festival 2020 virtually

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed the International Bharathi Festival 2020 through video conferencing. The festival was organised by Vanavil Cultural Centre in Chennai to celebrate the 138th birth anniversary of Mahakavi Subramanya Bharathi, an eminent writer, poet and journalist from Tamil Nadu.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi also conferred the 2020 Bharathi Award to the noted writer Seeni Viswanathan, who is credited with compiling the voluminous works of Bharathi in chronological order.
- The Bharathi Award is conferred every year since 1994, to eminent persons who have done laudable service in any field of social relevance.

PM Modi to address FICCI's 93rd AGM, Annual Convention

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered the inaugural address at FICCI's 93rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Annual Convention on December 12, 2020 via video conferencing.
- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has organised the convention from December 11 to 14, 2020.
- The theme for the FICCI 93rd AGM is 'Inspired India'.
- FICCI AGM is the annual high-powered flagship event where Cabinet Ministers, Secretaries to Govt of India, Global Industry Captains, Diplomats, Political party leaders, and other thought leaders participate.
- More than 10000 delegates are virtually participating in this mega event from across the globe.
- The Prime Minister also inaugurated the virtual FICCI Annual Expo 2020. It will start from 11 December

2020 and will continue for a period of a whole year.

- Finance Ministry notifies updated viability gap funding scheme

- The Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme was notified by the Ministry of Finance under which various infrastructure projects will be selected for financial support to provide a boost to the sector. According to the VGF scheme, the Empowered Committee (EC) chaired by the economic affairs secretary will sanction a funding amount of up to Rs 200 crore, while projects requiring more than Rs 200 crore would be approved by the Empowered Committee, after the approval from the Minister of Finance.
- The VGF scheme will be known as the 'Scheme for Financial Support to PPPs' (Public-Private Partnerships) in the infrastructure sector. This will be a central sector scheme and administered by the Finance Ministry.

BSNL launches World's 1st Satellite-based Narrowband-IoT Network

- Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has partnered with Skylotech India (Skylo), a global machine connectivity solutions company, to launch satellite-based narrow band-Internet of things (NB-IoT). This initiative is the world's first satellite-based NB-IoT network.
- The new indigenous IoT solution has been developed by Skylo and will connect with BSNL's satellite-ground infrastructure to provide PAN-India coverage, including Indian seas. To begin with, the solution will be extended to fishermen, farmers, construction, mining and logistics enterprises. The solution is in line with BSNL's vision to leverage technology to provide affordable and innovative telecom services and products across India's core sectors.

Union Cabinet approves historic PM-WANI Scheme

- The Union Cabinet has approved a scheme called the Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Initiative (PM-WANI), to improve wireless connectivity and pave the way for free wireless internet in public spaces across the country. The scheme will allow anyone, from an individual in a residential area to a Kirana shop owner to a tea shop vendor, to set up public Wi-Fi hotspot and deliver wifi services. It aims to promote the growth of public wi-fi networks in the country.
- Public Data Office (PDO): It will establish, maintain, and operate only WANI compliant Wi-Fi Access Points and deliver broadband services to subscribers. (tea shop, or Kirana shop, individual or any organisation.)
- Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA): It will look after functions relating to Authorization and Accounting of PDOs.
- App Provider: It will develop an App to register users and discover WANI compliant Wi-Fi hotspots in the nearby area and display the same within the App for accessing the internet service.
- Central Registry: It will maintain the details of App Providers, PDOAs, and PDOs. To begin with, the Central Registry will be maintained by C-DoT.

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurates Koilwar bridge in Bihar

- The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari has inaugurated the 1.5 km long Koilwar bridge over Sone river in Bihar through Video Conferencing. This newly inaugurated bridge is a part of the six-lane bridge being made in place of the existing two-

lane bridge, for both rail and road traffic, which is 138 years old.

- The total cost of setting up this three-lane bridge is estimated at Rs 266 crore. The bridge is a major road for transport between Bihar and UP. Once this six-lane bridge is fully operational, the traffic on NH-922 and NH-30 will ease substantially.

National Centre for Divyang Empowerment inaugurated in Telangana

- The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, G Kishan Reddy has inaugurated the National Centre for Divyang Empowerment (NCDE) at the CRPF Group Centre in Hakimpet near Hyderabad, Telangana.
- The NCDE is first of its kind establishment to re-skill and rehabilitates the Divyang Warriors of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) who suffered life-threatening injuries in the line of duty.
- Several market-driven expertise like computer skills and various sports skills will be imparted on the Divyang Warriors to empower them and enable them to serve the force and the country.
- All possible assistance and cooperation will be extended for the welfare of the Divyang Warriors.

Cabinet approves Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) to boost employment in the formal sector by encouraging the businesses to do fresh hiring amid the pandemic. ABRY will also incentivize the creation of new employment opportunities under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0.

About the Yojana:

- The Cabinet has approved an expenditure of ₹ 1,584 crores for the current financial year and ₹ 22,810 crores for the entire scheme period from 2020 to 2023.
- The scheme will provide subsidy for two years in respect of new employees engaged on or after October 1, 2020, and up to June 30, 2021.
- The government will pay both 12 per cent employees' contribution and 12 per cent employers' contribution i.e. 24 per cent of wages towards EPF in respect of new employees in establishments employing up to 1,000 employees for two years.
- It will pay only employees' share of EPF contribution i.e. 12 per cent of wages in respect of new employees in establishments employing more than 1,000 employees for two years.

Eligibility

- An employee drawing monthly wage of less than ₹ 15,000 who was not working in any establishment registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) before October 1, 2020, and did not have a Universal Account Number (UAN) or EPF Member account number prior to October 1, 2020, will be eligible for the benefit.
- Any EPF member possessing Universal Account Number (UAN) drawing monthly wage of less than ₹ 15,000 who made exit from employment during COVID pandemic from March 1, 2020, to September 30, 2020, and did not join employment in any EPF covered establishment up to September 30, 2020 will also be eligible to avail benefit.

PM Modi Inaugurates virtual India Mobile Congress 2020

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated and addressed the virtual edition of the India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2020 on 8th December 2020 through video conference. The objective of IMC 2020 is to align with the Prime Minister's vision to promote 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', 'Digital Inclusivity', and 'Sustainable development, entrepreneurship & innovation' and drive foreign and local investments, encourage R&D in the telecom and emerging technology sectors.
- The theme for IMC 2020 is "Inclusive Innovation – Smart, Secure, Sustainable". The three-day event will be held from 8th to 10th December 2020. IMC 2020 has been organised by the Department of Telecommunications, Government of India, and the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).

Gwalior, Orchha in UNESCO world heritage cities list

- The historical fort cities of Gwalior and Orchha in Madhya Pradesh have been included in the list of UNESCO's world heritage cities under its The World Heritage Cities Programme. Under the plan, UNESCO will suggest best measures and resources for the development and beautification of these places as per the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape recommendations. With this Inclusion, the total number of UNESCO World Heritage Cities of India will increase to 40.
- The inclusion will lead to the beautification of both cities by the MP Tourism Department in collaboration with UNESCO.
- In this regard, UNESCO team will visit the state in 2021 and will prepare a master plan for their development and conservation under the Historic Urban Landscape recommendation.
- Chemical treatment of historic spots like Mansingh Palace, Gujri Mahal and Sahastrabahu Temple will also be done so that art inscribed on them will become more visible.
- Guards will also be deployed at both places to welcome tourists as per the Indian traditions

About Gwalior:

- Gwalior was established in the 9th century and ruled by Gurjar Pratihara Rajvansh, Tomar, Baghel Kachvaha and Scindias. It occupies a sandstone plateau and consists of memorials, forts and palaces.
- The famous spots include Sun Temple, Jal Vilas Palace, Memorial of Tansen, Tigra Dam, 15th-century Gujari Mahal Palace among others.

About Orchha:

- Orchha means 'hidden palace', as its name suggests it is popular for its temples and palaces and was the capital of the Bundela kingdom in the 16th century.
- The famous spots in the town are Raj Mahal, Jehangir Mahal, Ram Raja Temple, Rai Praveen Mahal, and Laxminarayan Mandir.

Kiren Rijiju launches 2nd edition of Fit India Cyclothon

- Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has launched the second edition of Fit India Cyclothon through a virtual platform. The mega cycling event will run for 25 days, beginning from 7th December

till 31st December 2020. The event has been organised across the country in each district. The citizens can participate by registering on Fit India website.

- The participants can cycle daily for a distance of their choice, and share their images and videos on social media. They may also tag @FitIndiaOff and use the hashtag – FitIndiaCyclothon and #NewIndiaFitIndia.

PM Modi virtually inaugurates Construction work of Agra Metro project

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the construction work of the Agra Metro project in Agra, Uttar Pradesh. The Agra Metro project comprises 2 corridors with a total length of 29.4 km. It would connect major tourist attractions like Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Sikandra with railway stations and bus stands.
- The estimated cost of the project will be around Rs 8,379.62 crore. It will be completed in 5 years.
- The Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation (UPMRC) has set the target to complete the first phase of the Agra Metro Rail Project by December 2022.
- Once operational, the project will boost 'Ease of Living' of the 26 lakh population of the city and also cater to more than 60 lakh tourists who visit Agra every year.
- It will also provide an environment-friendly Mass Rapid Transit System to the city.

Centre Launches QRMP scheme for GST payers

- The Central Government has launched 'Quarterly Return filing & Monthly Payment of Taxes (QRMP)' scheme for small taxpayers under the GST system. Taxpayers with an aggregate annual turnover of up to Rs 5 crore in the preceding financial year and have filed their October GSTR-3B (sales) return by November 30, 2020, are eligible for this scheme. The notifications for the same were issued by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).
- Persons with aggregate turnover up to Rs 5 crore would be allowed to furnish their GSTR-1 and GSTR-3B returns on a quarterly basis, beginning January-March quarter of 2020-21.

Quarterly GSTR-1 and GSTR-3B can also be filed through an SMS.

- Taxpayers can also make GST payments every month, through challan, with effect from January 1, 2021.
- This can be done either by self-assessment of monthly liability or 35% of net cash liability of previous filed GSTR-3B of the quarter.
- Under this, the registered person or a taxpayer will furnish a return for every quarter, under sub-rule (1) of rule 61A of the Central Goods and Services Tax Rules, 2017 and pay the monthly tax under sub-section (7) of section 39 of the same Act.
- After the above changes, the act is named as the Central Goods and Services Tax (Thirteenth Amendment) Rules, 2020.

Pixxel to launch remote-sensing satellite on ISRO rocket

- The Bengaluru-based space-technology start-up "Pixxel", has signed a pact with the Indian

Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to launch its first remote-sensing satellite on Isro's workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket in early 2021. Earlier, the startup had planned to launch this satellite towards the end of 2020 and on a Russian Soyuz rocket.

- Pixxel aims to put a constellation of 30 earth observation micro-satellites into a sun-synchronous orbit by mid-2023. The data through these satellites will help in various sectors, ranging from agriculture to urban monitoring, such as track on air and water pollution levels, forest biodiversity and health, coastal and marine health, and changes in the urban landscape.
- The agreement was signed between Pixxel with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), a Government of India company under the Department of Space.
- This agreement with NSIL is the first-of-a-kind private earth-observation mission and one of the first since the setting up of IN-SPACe, the authorisation and regulatory body under the Department of Space (DoS) to enable private players undertaking space activities in India.

Naidu virtually releases postage stamp in former PM I K Gujral's honour

- Vice President Venkaiah Naidu has virtually released a commemorative Postage Stamp in honour of the late Prime Minister of India & Freedom Fighter, I K Gujral (Inder Kumar Gujral).
- I K Gujral was the 12th Prime Minister of India, he served as the Prime Minister from April 1997-March 1998. He was born in Jhelum (now in Pakistan) in 1919. During his tenure as India's External Affairs Minister, I K Gujral laid a set of five principles – 'Gujral Doctrine' to guide the conduct of foreign relations with India's immediate neighbours. He passed away in 2012 due to a lung infection.

PASSEX conducted by Indian Navy and Russian Navy

- The Indian Navy (IN) and the Russian Federation Navy (RuFN) are undertaking Passage Exercise (PASSEX) in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The exercise will help in enhancing interoperability, improving understanding and imbibing best practices between both the friendly navies. It involves advanced surface and anti-submarine warfare exercises, weapon firings, seamanship exercises and helicopter operations.
- Indian Navy is being represented by indigenously constructed guided-missile frigate Shivalik and anti-submarine corvette Kadmat along with integral helicopters. Russian Federation Navy includes guided-missile cruiser Varyag, the large anti-submarine ship Admiral Panteleyev and medium ocean tanker Pechenga. The PASSEX's are conducted regularly by Indian Navy with units of friendly foreign navies.

Majerhat Bridge named "Jai Hind" to Mark Netaji's 125th Birth Anniversary

- West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee named the newly built "Majerhat bridge" in Kolkata as 'Jai Hind' bridge to commemorate the 125th Birth Anniversary of Subash Chandra Bose.
- The new bridge has been built in the place of an old one which collapsed in September 2018. It is 650-metres long and connects the Central part of Kolkata to the Southwestern

suburbs of Behala and others.

International Sand Art Festival & Konark Festival 2020 begins

- The 9th edition of the International Sand Art Festival and the 31st edition of the Konark Festival has kicked-off in Odisha. International Sand Art Festival is being held at the Chandrabhaga Beach of Konark in Puri district of Odisha. About 70 artists from across the country are taking part in the festival. The world-renowned sand artist and Padmashree Awardee, Sudarsan Pattnaik, has been appointed as Chief Curator of the festival.
- The festival is organised every year as part of the Konark Dance Festival, to provide a platform for both national and international sand artists to showcase their talent. However, in 2020 international artists are not participating due to the ongoing global C-19 pandemic.
- Meanwhile, the Konark Festival is organised by Odisha Tourism to showcase the best of India's traditional and classical dance forms, and offer interesting insights into the rich cultural heritage of the country.
- Leading exponents and dance enthusiasts of almost all classical dance forms of India, including Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri, Kuchipudi and Kathak, are participating in the five-day classical dance carnival.

Karnataka's 1st 11.5 megawatt power plant being set up at Bidadi

- In Karnataka, Chief Minister, BS Yediyurappa laid the foundation stone for a 11.5 megawatt power plant based on municipal waste in Bidadi, Bengaluru. It is first of its kind power plant in the state being set up by the Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) and will help in converting 600 tonnes of municipal waste into 11.5-megawatt energy.
- This power plant will add 80.59 million units of power to the existing power grid. The power plant project is being constructed at a cost of Rs. 260 crore and is likely to be operational by 2022.

IOCL launches India's first 100 Octane Premium Petrol

- Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel, Dharmendra Pradhan launched India's first indigenously developed '100 Octane premium petrol' through video conferencing. Octane ratings are measures of fuel stability that increases engine efficiency. The high octane premium grade petrol will be marketed under the brand 'XP-100'. It has been developed by Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) at its Mathura refinery in Uttar Pradesh.
- XP-100 will be made available in a phased manner across the country and in the first phase, it will be made available in 10 cities. The cities are Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, Agra, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad.
- With this launch, India has joined a select league of nations globally that have such superior quality fuel. Till date, such quality of fuel is available only in six countries including USA, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Malaysia and Israel.

West Bengal launches massive 'Duare Sarkar' outreach campaign

- West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee has launched a massive campaign titled 'Duare Sarkar' (government at doorsteps) to aware people about the 11 state-run welfare schemes and help them avail its benefits. The two-month-long outreach programme has been launched keeping in view the 2021 state assembly elections which are due in April-May.
- The campaign will continue from December 1, 2020, to January 30, 2021, in four phases, with slogan 'jar jekhane darkar, asche apnar duare sarkar' (government will be at your doorsteps whenever you need it). The 11 schemes will be made available to the beneficiaries through camps set up for the purpose.

Arjun Munda e-launches "Virtual Aadi Mahotsav-Madhya Pradesh"

- The Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Arjun Munda has launched the first-ever virtual edition of Aadi Mahotsav – Madhya Pradesh. The event will showcase the tribal traditions of the various tribal communities by having their crafts and natural products on display. Videos showcasing different aspects of their culture – music, dance etc, will also be shared. In essence, it will still be a celebration of the tribes and their diverse, varied lifestyle but on a different platform.
- The 10-day long festival will begin from December 1, 2020. It is being hosted on the Tribes India website – www.tribesindia.com. The highlights of the virtual launch included a virtual tour of the artisans' workplace and glimpses of the tribal dance and music from Madhya Pradesh. The main focus of the first virtual Aadi Mahotsav is on the tribal craft and culture of Madhya Pradesh. The next focus state of the programme would be Gujarat (from 11th December 2020), followed by West Bengal from the 21st December 2020.

Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat inaugurates Suryadhar Lake

- Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat has inaugurated the Suryadhar lake at Doiwala, Dehradun. The Suryadhar lake is 550 meters long, 28 meters wide and 10 meters deep with a capacity of 77,000 cubic meters.
- Besides fulfilling the drinking water and irrigational needs of 18-20 villages, the lake will recharge the water resources in the area and help build a healthy eco-system that will attract migratory birds. The state government's plans to organize a water sports festival at the lake either by Makar Sankranti or Basant Panchami next year to showcase the beauty of its surrounding environs.

Piyush Goyal inaugurates Dhigawara-Bandikui section of NWR

- The Union Minister of Railways, Piyush Goyal has inaugurated newly electrified Dhigawara-Bandikui section of North Western Railway (NWR) in the state of Rajasthan. The Minister also flagged off the first train on this newly electrified route. The Dhigawara-Bandikui section is on Delhi-Ajmer route via Jaipur.
- The Railways has set the target to electrify the entire percentage of railway lines across the country in a phased manner. Once these electrified trains start running, the trains that run

on diesel will be stopped.

Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar launches “Sahakar Pragya” initiative

- The Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar recently unveiled a new initiative called Sahakar Pragya. Sahakar Pragya is an initiative of National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), to help in capacity development of the cooperative sector in India, through the training programme.
- Under this initiative, 45 new training modules have been developed for the farmers and would be imparted to primary cooperative societies in rural areas of the country by NCDC.
- The training modules aim to impart knowledge and organisational skills and attempt to prepare the primary cooperative societies across the country to be able to play a big role in the government’s AtmaNirbhar Bharat initiative.

Narendra Singh Tomar launches Honey FPO Programme in 5 states

- The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar virtually inaugurated Honey Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) Programme in five states, for producing honey. The Honey FPO Programme aims to address the issues faced by the beekeeping industry and also promote honey production in the country. This will also help in achieving the goal of increasing farmer’s income.
- These 5 FPOs will be set up by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED). They will be set up at
 - East Champaran (Bihar)
 - Morena (Madhya Pradesh)
 - Bharatpur (Rajasthan)
 - Mathura (Uttar Pradesh)
 - Sunderbans (West Bengal)
- The Honey FPO Programme has been launched under the Central Sector Scheme for Formation & Promotion of new 10,000 FPOs.
- The Government has approved 2,200 FPOs for the current financial year 2020-21.
- The task of creating these FPOs has been given to Nabard (600 FPOs), Small Farmers’ Agribusiness Consortium (500), National Cooperative Development Corporation (500) and NAFED which will support 50 commodity-specific FPOs and some State-level organisations.

SPORTS

BWF bans Russian badminton player Nikita Khakimov for 5 years

- The Badminton World Federation (BWF) has imposed a 5-year ban on Russian shuttler Nikita Khakimov for charges of “betting, wagering and irregular match results. Khakimov was part of the Russian men’s team that won the bronze medal at the 2020 European Team Championships.
- The 32-year-old Khakimov was found to breach BWF’s integrity regulations, including approaching a player and offering money to manipulate a match, betting on badminton games and deliberately destroying evidence of a corruption offence to conceal from the

BWF.

Anshu Malik wins silver at Individual Wrestling World Cup in Serbia

- Indian wrestler, Anshu Malik has become the first wrestler of the country to finish on the podium position at the Individual Wrestling World Cup in Belgrade, Serbia.
- The 19-year-old won a silver medal in the women's 57kg category to claim first international medal of the tournament for the country. She lost to Moldova's Anastasia Nichita 5-1 in the final.

ICC Awards of the Decade 2020 announced

- The winners of the prestigious ICC Awards of the Decade were announced on 28th December 2020. The ICC Awards of The Decade recognise the best players across Cricket over the past 10 years.

List of Winners

- ICC Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade: MS Dhoni (India)

ICC Men's Awards

- Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade: Virat Kohli (India)
- ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Decade: Virat Kohli (India)
- ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Decade: Rashid Khan (Afghanistan)
- ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Decade: Steve Smith (Australia)
- ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Decade: Kyle Coetzer (Scotland)

ICC Women's Award

- Rachael Heyhoe Flint Award for ICC Female Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry (Australia)
- ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry (Australia)
- ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry (Australia)
- ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Decade: Kathryn Bryce (Scotland)

International Cricket Council (ICC) announced its Test, ODI and T20I teams of the decade

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced its Test, ODI and T20I teams of the decade on Sunday and cricket fans in India were thrilled. Legendary MS Dhoni, who retired on August 15, has been named as the captain of ODI and T20I teams. whereas Virat Kohli has been declared the captain of the Test team which includes the likes of former stalwart skippers Kumar Sangakkara and Alastair Cook.
- For India, off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has been named in the Test XI of the decade, men's ODI team of the decade included Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli apart from the side's captain Dhoni. Men's T20I team of the decade has four Indians - Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, MS Dhoni and Jasprit Bumrah.
- However, on the flip side no cricketer from Pakistan got a place in any of the XI's. There were representations from Australia, New Zealand, England, South Africa, West Indies, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and even Afghanistan in at least one of the three teams.

FIFA cancels next year's U-20, U-17 World Cups

- FIFA has cancelled men's U-20 and U-17 World Cup tournaments in 2021 for the novel coronavirus. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau of the FIFA Council has decided to cancel the 2021 editions of the men's FIFA U-20 World Cup and FIFA U-17 World Cup, and to appoint Indonesia and Peru respectively, who were due to host the tournaments in 2021, as the hosts of the 2023 editions.
- So Peru will host the FIFA U-17 World Cup in 2023. In the same year, the FIFA U-20 World Cup will be held by Indonesia.

India's largest hockey stadium to be set up in Odisha

- Odisha Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik has announced that India's biggest hockey stadium is being set up in Rourkela city of Odisha. The stadium will be constructed in the Biju Patnaik University of Technology campus, Rourkela.
- It will have a sitting capacity of 20,000 people, spread over 15 acres of land.
- The stadium will be developed as a benchmark for other hockey stadiums around the world.
- It must be noted that Odisha will be hosting FIH Men's Hockey World Cup for a second consecutive time, in 2034, at two venues, Bhubaneswar and Rourkela.

Lewis Hamilton wins BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2020

- Formula 1 world champion, Lewis Hamilton has won the BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2020. This is the second time that the 35-year-old Hamilton has been crowned Sports Personality of the Year. Prior to this, he won the award in 2014.
- Helen Rollason Award: Captain Sir Tom Moore
- Expert Special Panel Award: Marcus Rashford
- Coach of the Year: Jurgen Klopp (Football)
- Team of the Year: Liverpool FC
- Unsung Hero: Sgt Matt Ratana
- Captain Tom Young Unsung Hero: Tobias Weller
- Young Sports Personality of the Year: Andrea Spendolini-Sirieix (British diver)

Sports Ministry permits 4 indigenous sports in Khelo India Youth Games 2021

- The Sports Ministry has approved the inclusion of four indigenous Games to be a part of Khelo India Youth Games 2021, which is scheduled to be held in Haryana.
- The four new games are, Gatka, Kalaripayattu, Thang-Ta and Mallakhamba. The four selected games represent different parts of the country and will get national recognition with the help of the Khelo India Youth Games 2021.

Indian Boxers bag 3 Gold at Cologne Boxing World Cup

- Indian boxers have bagged 9 medals including three gold, two silver and four bronze at the Cologne Boxing World Cup 2020, held in Cologne, Germany. India finished 2nd in the overall Medals List, Germany topped the list with 16 medals. The Cologne Boxing World 2020 was hosted by the European Boxing Confederation (EUBC).

- Gold: The three gold medals for India were bagged by Amit Panghal (52kg), Manisha Moun (57kg) and Simranjit Kaur (60kg) in their respective categories.
- Silver: Silver medals were claimed by Sakshi Choudhary (57kg) and Satish Kumar (91kg).
- Bronze: Sonia Lather (57kg), Pooja Rani (75kg) Gaurav Solanki (57kg) and Mohamed Hussamudin (57kg) claimed the bronze medal in their respective categories.

Yogasana recognized as a competitive Sport in India by Sports Ministry

- Union Sports Minsitry has approved Yogasana as a competitive Sport in India. The Objective for this recognition is to spread awareness about Yoga and its advantages to people.
- Yogasana will be introduced as a sport discipline in Khelo India, National Games and International Sports Events.
- After this approval now Yogasana becomes eligible to enter several sports event.

Mohammad Amir announced his retirement from international cricket

- Pakistan's star pacer, Mohammad Amir has announced his retirement from international cricket citing 'mental torture' by the management as the reason behind his decision. Left-arm fast bowler Amir made his international debut in July 2009.
- In his ODI debut, in the same month, Amir bagged 3 wickets for 45 runs in his 10 overs, announcing the start of a star career. However, his potentially big career was hindered by his infamous match-fixing involvement with Salman Butt and Mohammad Asif.

Mauritian badminton player Foo Kune banned for two years by CAS

- The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has banned Mauritian badminton player Kate Jessica Foo Kune for two years for an anti-doping violation. Foo Kune tested positive for a banned steroid during the 2019 African Badminton World Championships in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, but a Badminton World Federation (BWF) panel ruled she bore no fault or negligence.
- The 27-year-old escaped sanction after contending that her positive test was the result of sabotage and that her water had been spiked by an "ill-intentioned individual".

Robert Lewandowski and Lucy Bronze win best of 2020 FIFA awards

- The Bayern Munich striker, Robert Lewandowski has been named The Best FIFA Men's Player 2020, beating off competition from last year's winner Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. The 32-year-old Lewandowski, top scorer in Europe and winner of the Champions League with Bayern.
- Manchester City full-back, Lucy Bronze won the women's best player award, becoming the first female English player to take the prize. It is the first occasion for both Lewandowski and Bronze to win the award, with the Pole only the second player after Luka Modric in 2018 to break a 13-year Messi-Ronaldo hegemony.

Qatar to host 2030 Asian Games, 2034 edition in Saudi Arabia

- The 2030 Asian Games were awarded to Doha, Qatar and the 2034 event went to Riyadh,

Saudi Arabia after a deal was struck between the rival nations. Doha beat Riyadh for the 2030 Games in the vote at the Olympic Council of Asia's (OCA) general assembly.

- The vote took place amid a bitter and long-running political dispute between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Saudi Arabia is one of four countries which has imposed a trade and travel boycott on Qatar since 2017. The OCA reached a deal to vote on the 2030 host but to give the other candidate the 2034 event.

Odisha to host 2023 FIH Men's Hockey World Cup

- The International Hockey Federation (FIH) had announced that the 2023 FIH Men's Hockey World Cup will be hosted in Odisha, for a second consecutive time. The tournament will be held at two venues, Bhubaneswar and Rourkela. The Men's Hockey World Cup 2018 was also hosted by Odisha.
- The 2023 tournament will be 15th edition of the Men's FIH Hockey World Cup. It will be held at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar and at the Biju Patnaik Hockey Stadium in Rourkela. FIH Hockey World Cup is held after every four years.

Max Verstappen wins 2020 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix

- Max Verstappen (Red Bull – Netherlands) won the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix 2020, held on 13 December 2020 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- This was his second victory of the season and 10th victory of his career.
- The race was the 17th and final round of the 2020 Formula One World Championship.
- Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes-Finland) stood second, followed by world champion Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes-Great Britain) at third place.

IOC gives Olympic status to Breakdancing

- The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has registered 'Breakdancing' as the newest entry into Olympics and an official Olympic sport, with the aim to attract a new and younger audience. Breakdancing will be known as 'Breaking' in Olympics event.
- Breaking will make its Olympic Games debut at the 2024 Paris Games (2024 Summer Olympics). It must be remembered that three new sports, skateboarding, sport climbing, and surfing, will make their Olympic debuts at the Tokyo Games 2021 (earlier 2020 Summer Olympics).

Madagascar replaces Maldives as host of 2023 Indian Ocean Island Games

- Madagascar has replaced the Maldives as the host of the 2023 Indian Ocean Island Games due to concerns over the C-19 pandemic. The event had been awarded to the Maldives last year, but members of the Indian Ocean Island Games Federation voted to move the Games to Madagascar.
- The decision came as a result of the challenges the Maldives is facing in organising the event during the coronavirus crisis. The Maldives had requested pushing back the 2023 Games to 2025 but the IOIGF was keen to avoid a six-year void between editions of the multi-sport event.

Parthiv Patel announces retirement from all forms of cricket

- India's wicketkeeper-batsman Parthiv Patel has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. The 35-year-old left-hander, who made his international debut in 2002, played 25 Tests, 38 ODIs and two T20Is for India. He last wore Indian jersey in 2018 during a Test match against South Africa in Johannesburg.
- While the Gujarat cricketer represented his state in 194 first-class matches. He played 204 T20 matches for his state and various IPL franchises and scored 4,300 runs at a strike rate of 123.84, with the help of 23 half-centuries.

Yulimar Rojas and Mondo Duplantis crowned 2020 World Athletes of the Year

- Swedish pole vaulter Mondo Duplantis and Venezuelan triple jumper Yulimar Rojas are the 2020 Male and Female World Athletes of the Year. They are their countries' first recipients of the prestigious athletics award announced during the virtual awards.
- At the age of 20, Duplantis is the youngest ever winner of the Male Athlete of the Year Award after twice breaking the absolute world record (6.17m and 6.18m) in February before producing the highest outdoor vault in history (6.15m) in September.

Rojas who broke the world indoor triple jump record with a leap of 15.43m, finished the Sergio Perez wins Sakhir Grand Prix 2020

- Sergio Perez (Mexico-Racing Point-BWT Mercedes), won the 2020 Sakhir Grand Prix at the Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir, Bahrain. Esteban Ocon (Renault-France) secured the second position, followed by and Lance Stroll (Racing Point-BWT Mercedes-Canada) at third place.
- The race was the maiden edition of the Sakhir Grand Prix and sixteenth race of the 2020 Formula One World Championship. This is the first Formula One win for Perez. He is also the first Mexican Formula One driver to win a race since Pedro Rodríguez won the 1970 Belgian Grand Prix.

Sri Lanka to host Asia Cup in 2021

- Sri Lanka will host the Asia Cup in June 2021 while Pakistan has earned the rights to host the tournament in 2022. As per the original schedule, the tournament was supposed to be hosted by Pakistan in 2020, however, it got postponed due to the C-19 pandemic.
- Now the event has been moved forward to June 2021, with Sri Lanka Cricket taking the hosting rights from PCB. As compensation, PCB has got the hosting rights for the 2022 edition.

Jehan Daruvala becomes first Indian to win F2 race

- Jehan Daruvala created history, as he became the first Indian to win a Formula 2 race at the 2020 Sakhir Grand Prix, Bahrain. This was the final race of the F2 season. The Formula 2 Championship is a second-tier single-seater racing championship.
- The 22-year-old Jehan Daruvala is currently a member of the Red Bull Junior Team and

competes for Carlin Motorsport. His Japanese teammate, Yuki Tsunoda came second while Britain's Daniel Ticktum was in a third spot. Racing legend Michael Schumacher's son Mick Schumacher was crowned as the overall F2 champion of the season.

- shortened 2020 season undefeated in four triple jump competitions indoors and outdoors.

New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson retires from all forms of Cricket

- New Zealand all-rounder, Corey Anderson has announced his retirement from international cricket. Anderson has played 13 Tests, 49 ODIs and 31 T20Is for New Zealand, scoring 2277 runs with two hundred and 10 half-centuries and 90 wickets.
- Anderson has signed a 3-year contract with Major League Cricket (MLC) in the USA, where he will serve in the Major and Minor League Cricket and coaching ventures at the cricket academies that come under the MLC.
- Anderson rose to fame after scoring fastest 100 in the history of One Day International cricket (ODI), in 36-ball against West Indies in January 2014. However, this record was broken by AB de Villiers, in January 2015 who scored the fastest ODI century against the West Indies in Johannesburg in 31 balls.

Ranjitsinh Disale becomes 1st Indian to win 2020 Global Teacher Prize

- Ranjitsinh Disale, a government teacher from Zilla Parishad Primary School, in Paritewadi village, Solapur district of Maharashtra, has won the 2020 Global Teacher Prize. He is the first Indian to win this award, which carries prize money of \$1 million (Rs 7.4 crore).
- The 32-year-old has won the annual Global Teacher Prize 2020 in recognition of his efforts to promote girls' education in his village and trigger a quick-response (QR) coded textbook revolution in India. He made efforts and added QR codes to textbooks of primary classes to provide links to audio poems, video lectures, stories and assignments. He also worked towards education for girls and teaching people about the ill-effects of teenage marriage and even helped to achieve 100% attendance of girls.
- Ranjitsinh has also created history by announcing to share half the prize money with the nine finalists from across the world for the award, where each one will receive about \$55,000 each. He also becomes the first winner to share the prize money with the finalists.
- The Global Teacher Prize is an annual prize founded by the Varkey Foundation in 2014 to recognise an exceptional teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession. The award is given in partnership with UNESCO.

England's Dawid Malan achieves highest-ever rating points in T20

- Dawid Malan of England has attained the highest-ever rating points for batsmen in the MRF Tyres ICC Men's T20I Player Rankings. The 33-year-old Malan has reached 915 points, and thus became the first player to cross the 900-point mark in the format.
- Before him, Australia's Aaron Finch reached exactly 900 points in July 2018. Babar Azam (871) of Pakistan and Aaron Finch (835) of Australia is second and third in the list. India's KL Rahul is at fourth position, while Virat Kohli's rank has dropped to 9th in the list.

Virat Kohli fastest to 12000 runs in ODI cricket

- Virat Kohli became the fastest to reach 12,000 runs in One-day International cricket. Kohli breached the mark in the third ODI against Australia in Canberra. He got to the milestone in his 242nd inning thus bettering the previous record set by Sachin Tendulkar, who got his 12000th run in his 300th inning.
- Kohli is the second-highest scorer for India in ODIs behind Tendulkar's 18,426 from 463 ODIs. The India captain also holds the record for the fastest batsman (in terms of innings) to 10,000 and 11,000 runs in ODIs. Kohli reached 11,000 runs in 222 innings and became the fastest to breach the 10000-run mark by doing so in his 205th inning.

Lewis Hamilton wins Bahrain Grand Prix 2020

- Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes-Great Britain) has won the 2020 Bahrain Grand Prix at Bahrain International Circuit, Bahrain. The race was the fifteenth round of the 2020 Formula One World Championship. This is the 11th victory for Hamilton of the season, and 95th F1 win of his career.
- Also, Hamilton now holds the records for the most wins (95), in Formula One history. Red Bull Racing teammates Max Verstappen (Netherlands) and Alexander Albon (Thailand) were second and third respectively.

Virat Kohli becomes fastest to reach 22,000 international runs

- Indian cricket team skipper Virat Kohli scripted another record in the game. He broke Sachin Tendulkar's record and became the quickest batsman to complete 22,000 runs. He reached the milestone in his 462nd innings. Tendulkar batted 493 times to reach that mark. They are followed by Brian Lara (511 innings) and Ricky Ponting (514 innings) on the list. The only batsman with an average of over 50 across all formats, Kohli has 7240 runs in Tests, 12834 runs in ODIs and 2794 runs in T20Is.
- Kohli achieved this feat during the second ODI between Australia and India at the SCG. Notably, Kohli has become the eighth batsman overall and the third Indian to surpass 22,000 international runs. Rahul Dravid, who scored 24208 runs, is another Indian on the list.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Cabinet approves export of indigenously-developed Akash Missile System

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the proposal to export indigenously-developed Akash Missile System. The Cabinet has also approved to set up of a committee for faster approvals of exports. The export version of Akash will be different from System currently deployed with Indian Armed Forces.
- Akash is a short-range Surface to Air Missile with a range of 25 Kms to protect vulnerable areas and vulnerable points from air attacks. It was inducted in IAF in 2014 and in the Indian Army in 2015.

ISRO sets up dedicated control centre 'NETRA' for SSA

- The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has set up a dedicated Space Situational Awareness (SSA) Control Centre named "NETRA", at its ISTRAC campus at Peenya, Bengaluru. The ISRO SSA Control Centre 'NETRA' was formally inaugurated by ISRO Chairman K Sivan.
- The "NEtwork for space object TRacking and Analysis (NETRA)" will monitor, track and protect India's space assets. It will function as a hub of all SSA activities within India.
- It has been set up as a 'Directorate of Space Situational Awareness and Management (DSSAM)' aiming to protect high valued space assets from space debris close approaches and collisions.
- The state-of-the-art facility, dedicated to SSA activities, will also help to coordinate between Indian agencies, their foreign counterparts and international bodies.
- The main elements of NETRA would be a radar, an optical telescope facility, and a control centre.

ISRO to launch communication satellite CMS-01

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch a communication satellite CMS-01, formerly named GSAT-12R, on December 17, using its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket's XL variant numbered as PSLV-C50. The CMS-01 will be a replacement for GSAT-12 that weighed 1,410 kg and was launched on July 11, 2011, with a mission life of eight years.
- CMS-01 is a communication satellite envisaged for providing services in Extended-C Band of the frequency spectrum, which will include the Indian mainland, Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands. The 42nd communication satellite of India, it will have a mission life of seven years.
- The 44-metre-high four staged/engine PSLV-C50 is the 22nd flight of PSLV in 'XL' configuration (with six strap-on motors hugging the first stage).
- The PSLV in the normal configuration is a four-stage/engine expendable rocket powered by solid and liquid fuels alternatively with six booster motors strapped on to the first stage to give higher thrust during the initial flight moments.
- The Indian space agency has PSLV variants with two and four strap-on motors, larger PSLV-XL and the Core Alone variant without any strap-on motors. The choice of the rocket to be used for a mission depends on the weight of the satellite and the orbit where the satellite has to be orbited.

Indian Army successfully testfires Anti-Ship version of BrahMos missile

- India successfully test-fired the anti-ship version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory. The test was conducted as part of the ongoing trials being conducted by the Indian Navy. The DRDO-developed BrahMos supersonic cruise missile with a strike range of 300 Km was launched from Indian Navy's INS Ranvijay and it successfully hit its target ship near the Car Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal.
- Recently the land-attack version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was also

successfully test-fired from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory. The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile is the world's fastest operational system in its class.

OBITUARY

French fashion designer Pierre Cardin passes away

- French fashion designer Pierre Cardin, hailed for his visionary creations but also for bringing stylish clothes to the masses, died Tuesday aged 98.
- Cardin, who was born to a low-income family in northern Italy but became a France-based fashion superstar, died in a hospital in Neuilly in the west of Paris.
- Born into poverty in 1922 near Venice in northern Italy, his family emigrated to France when he was a small child.

Veteran Dance Historian Sunil Kothari passes away

- Padma Shri awardee dance historian and critic, Sunil Kothari has passed away. He was qualified as a Chartered Accountant, before turning to the study of Indian dance forms. He authored more than 20 books on the subject of Indian dance forms.
- The noted dance scholar Kothari received numerous titles and awards for his contribution to Indian dance forms. Some of them include the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1995); the Padma Shri bestowed by the Government of India (2001); and the Life Time Achievement Award of the Dance Critics Association, New York, USA (2011).

Cinematographer Ishwar Bidri passes away

- Veteran cinematographer Ishwar Bidri, best known for his work in popular 1990s films like Andaz Apna Apna and Border, died on Sunday due to multiple health issues. He was 87.
- The noted director of photography breathed his last at a hospital in Karnataka, his son Sanjeev Bidri said.

Former WWE Wrestler Luke Harper Passes Away

- Professional Wrestler Jon Huber, popularly known as Luke Harper in the WWE, and Brodie Lee in the AEW has died aged 41 of non-C-19 related lung issue, an AEW official statement on social media said on Sunday.
- The professional wrestler from Rochester, New York started his career back in 2003, made his name in the independent wrestling scene, wrestling for promotions like Dragon Gate and Combat Zone Wrestling. In 2012 he won his first WWE contract, where he made a big splash in NXT and then in the WWE main roster as Luke Harper part of the ultra-popular Wyatt Family.

Legendary Urdu poet Shamsur Rahman Faruqi passes away

- Legendary Urdu poet and critic, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi has passed away, a month after recovering from C-19.
- He received Saraswati Samman in 1996 for his work 'She'r-e Shor-Angez', a four-volume study of the eighteenth-century poet Mir Taqi Mir. The Government of India awarded him

the civilian honour of Padma Shri in 2009.

Former England batsman John Edrich passes away

- Former English first-class batsman John Edrich has passed away. He was amongst the best players of his generation, during a career that ran from 1956 to 1978. He played 77 test matches for England, and scored more than 5,000 runs, spanning 13 years between 1963 and 1976.
- He scored a triple-century during a test match in 1965 that is the fifth-highest Test score for England.

Renowned Malayalam poet Sugathakumari passes away

- Renowned poet and activist, Sugathakumari passed away, after testing positive for the coronavirus. She was one of the most active campaigners of the Save Silent Valley Movement when it took shape in the 1970s. She wrote a poem Marathinu Sthuti (Hymn to a Tree), which was recited at every other protest to save the Silent Valley.
- Sugathakumari was awarded India's fourth-highest civilian award, Padma Shri, in 2006.

Senior-most Congress veteran Motilal Vora passes away

- Veteran Congress leader, Motilal Vora has passed away following post-C-19 complications. He was born at Jodhpur in Rajasthan and began his career as a journalist. The late Congress leader served as the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh twice, once from 1985 to 1988 and then again in 1989 for 11 months.
- He also held the office of Governor of Uttar Pradesh between 1993 and 1996. He had served as a Rajya Sabha member four times and as a Lok Sabha member once from Chhattisgarh.

Veteran Journalist and first official RSS Spokesperson MG Vaidya passes away

- Senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue, MG Vaidya has passed away. He was a veteran journalist, a Sanskrit scholar and the first official spokesperson of the RSS. He became a member of the RSS in 1943.

Former Australian Test cricketer all-rounder Eric Freeman passes away

- Former Australia Test all-rounder, Eric Freeman has passed away. He made his Test debut against India at the Gabba (Brisbane Cricket Ground) in 1968 during which his opening scoring shot was a six, and he became the first player to achieve the feat.
- Freeman received the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2002 for his services to sport. After retiring from cricket in the 1973-74 season he took up the career as administrator, coach and broadcaster. Freeman was also an elite football player, representing Port Adelaide and he topped the club's goalkicking list in all five of his complete seasons.

Aerospace Scientist Shri Roddam Narasimha passes away

- Eminent aerospace scientist and Padma Vibhushan awardee, Roddam Narasimha has

passed away. He had served at the prestigious Indian Institute of Science (IISc), where he taught Aerospace Engineering from 1962 to 1999. He also served as the director of the National Aerospace Laboratories from 1984 to 1993.

- The central government bestowed the second-highest civilian award of India, Padma Vibhushan on him in 2013 for his contribution in the field of aerospace engineering. Together with the Missile Man of India and former president Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, Prof Narasimha had authored a book –“Developments In Fluid Mechanics and Space Technology”.

‘Hind Kesari’-winning wrestler Sripati Khanchanale passes away

- Noted Indian wrestler, Sripati Khanchanale, who had won the prestigious ‘Hind Kesari’ title in 1959, passed away. In 1959, Khanchanale won the ‘Hind Kesari’ title by defeating wrestler Rustam-e-Punjab Battasingh at the New Railway Stadium in Delhi.
- The prestigious ‘Hind Kesari’ title commands the highest respect in the Indian wrestling world. He was also a recipient of the Shiv Chhatrapati award, which is given by the Maharashtra government.

Eswatini’s Prime Minister, Ambrose Dlamini passes away

- Ambrose Dlamini, the Prime Minister of Eswatini, a country in Southern Africa, has passed away after contracting coronavirus.
- He was appointed as the tenth prime minister of the country in October 2018.

US Pilot Chuck Yeager, first man to fly faster than speed of sound, passes away

- US Air Force officer and test pilot Chuck Yeager, who in 1947 became the first pilot in history to have exceeded the speed of sound in level flight, has passed away. He was 97.(Level flight means flying at a constant altitude, not going up and down.)
- As a test pilot, on October 14, 1947, Yeager became the first human to officially break the sound barrier, when he flew the experimental Bell X-1 aircraft at Mach 1 (speed of sound) at an altitude of 45,000 ft (13,700 m).
- Yeager had been associated with World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War and his three-war active-duty flying career spanned more than 30 years.

Renowned Sanskrit Scholar VidyavachaspatiGovindacharya passes away

- Renowned Sanskrit scholar VidyavachaspatiBannanjeGovindacharya has passed away due to age-related illness. He was 85.
- Govindacharya was conferred the Padma Shri in 2009.
- He was well versed in Veda Bhashya, Upanishad Bhashya, Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas and had written commentaries on Veda Suktas, Upanishads, ShataRudriya, Brahma Sutra Bhashya, and Gita Bhashya.
- He had authored around 150 books and translated several texts from Sanskrit to Kannada.

Italy's 1982 Football World Cup Legend Paolo Rossi passes away

- Italy's legendary footballer, Paolo Rossi, who led the country to victory in the 1982 World Cup, has passed away. He was 64.
- Rossi scored 6 goals to help Italy to win the 1982 FIFA World Cup title against Brazil. This was the third World Cup title for Italy and their first since 1938./
- He was awarded the Golden Boot as top goalscorer, and the Golden Ball for the player of the tournament, 1982 Ballon d'Or as the European Footballer of the Year and World Player of the Year in 1982, for his performances.

All India Radio writer Madhukar Gangadhar passes away

- Eminent Hindi writer, Madhukar Gangadhar passed away. He was the lead storyteller of the new story movement. He was an associate of Renuji in Patna Akashvani, director of All India Radio in Allahabad & Deputy Director General at Delhi AIR.
- After serving for 39 years in All India Radio (AIR) he became an independent writer based in Delhi. 'Motiyo Wale Hath', 'Hirna Ki Aankhen' are some of his most well-known works.

Father of Fibre Optics Narinder Singh Kapany passes away

- Narinder Singh Kapany, also known as the father of fibre optics, passed away. The India-born American physicist was named as one of the seven "Unsung Heroes" by Fortune in their 'Businessmen of the Century' issue of November 1999.
- Kapany was the first to transmit images through fibre optics back in 1954 and laid the foundation for high-speed internet technology. He not only founded fibre optics but also used his own invention for the business. He founded the Optics Technology Incorporation and Kaptron Incorporation in 1960 and 1973 respectively. He studied at Agra University and then moved to Imperial College in London. He received his PhD from the University of London in 1955.
- He received 'The Excellence 2000 Award' from the USA Pan-Asian American Chamber of Commerce in 1998, a fellow of numerous scientific societies including the British Royal Academy of Engineering, the Optical Society of America, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Veteran Marathi actor Ravi Patwardhan passes away

- Ravi Patwardhan, a popular face in Marathi entertainment industry, has passed away. The veteran actor became a household name for his role in Marathi TV series Agabai Sasubai.
- Apart from this, Patwardhan has also starred in a few Hindi movies namely Tezab, Jhanjaar, Bond and Yeshwant.

Veteran Bengali actor Manu Mukherjee passes away

- Veteran Bengali actor Manu Mukherjee passed away. He started his film career with Mrinal Sen's Nil Akasher Niche (1958).
- The actor is best remembered for his roles in Satyajit Ray's Joy Baba Felunath and Ganashatru. He had also been part of children's fantasy film Patalghar'.

Lakshadweep Administrator Dineshwar Sharma passes away

- Lakshadweep Administrator, Dineshwar Sharma passed away. He was earlier headed the Intelligence Bureau and was also the Interlocutor for Jammu and Kashmir.
- The 66-year-old retired IPS officer of the Kerala cadre had been appointed administrator of the Lakshadweep Union Territory in October 2019. He was assistant director in the IB in Kashmir between 1994 and 1996 and then went on to serve on the Kashmir desk of the bureau in the national capital.

Former PM of Pakistan Zafarullah Jamali passes away

- The 15th Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zafarullah Khan Jamali passed away. He served as PM from November 2002 to June 2004 for a duration of 1 Year, 7 Months and 3 days. He is the first politician from Balochistan to become Prime Minister.
- Jamali served the country when former military dictator Pervez Musharraf was the President of the country. As PM, Jamali vowed to sign a peace agreement and cease-fire in the disputed Kashmir region. In 2004, Jamali made the first high-level visit from Pakistan to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban government in 2001.

Former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing passes away

- The former President of France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing has passed away at the age of 94, from the complications of coronavirus. He had served as the third president of the Republic of France from 1974 to 1981. He was born on 2nd February 1926 in Koblenz, French-occupied Germany (now Germany).
- Giscard founded the Union for French Democracy, a centre-right political party in 1978 to counter the Gaullist preponderance over the political right in France. He lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 and he also liberalised the laws on divorce, abortion and contraception during his tenure as the President.

World's greatest athlete-turned actor Rafer Johnson passes away

- American decathlete and film actor, Rafer Johnson, who was 1960 Olympic gold medalist in the decathlon, has passed away.
- After he retired from athletics, Johnson turned to act and appeared in a number of films, including the James Bond film Licence to Kill in 1989.

MDH owner 'Mahashay' Dharampal Gulati passes away

- The owner of MDH Masala, Dharampal Gulati passed away. He was born in 1923 in Sialkot, Pakistan. He was fondly called 'dalaji' and 'Mahashayji'. A school dropout, Dharampal Gulati joined his father's spice business in the early days. Back in 2019, the government honoured him with Padma Bhushan, the third-highest civilian award in the country.
- After partition in 1947, Dharampal Gulati moved to India and stayed at a refugee camp in Amritsar. He then moved to Delhi and opened a store in Delhi's Karol Bagh. Gulati officially established the company in 1959. The business did not just flourish in India only but Gulati

became a distributor and exporter as well. His company exports Indian spices to various parts of the world including the UK, Europe, UAE, Canada, etc.

Senegal World Cup footballer Papa Bouba Diop passes away

- Senegal's professional footballer, Papa Bouba Diop, who helped the country win the FIFA World Cup match in 2002, has passed away. He was of the age of 42. His goal helped Senegal secure historic 1–0 win over the then-world champions France in the opening match of the 2002 FIFA World Cup, and Senegal's first-ever match at the FIFA World Cup. Diop has won 63 caps for Senegal.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

Kerala's Arya Rajendran becomes India's youngest mayor from Thiruvananthapuram

- The 21-year-old college student, Arya Rajendran has been elected the new mayor of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, of Kerala. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader, Arya is the youngest person in India to occupy the post of mayor anywhere in the country.
- Arya won 54 votes out of 99 votes cast in the civic body polls in Kerala. She is also the state president of Balasangam, the children's wing of the CPI(M). Arya is a second-year student of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) in Mathematics at the All Saints College.

Vineet Agarwal takes over as new Assocham President

- Managing Director of logistics major Transport Corporation of India Limited, Vineet Agarwal has taken over as the new President of The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham).
- He replaces Niranjana Hiranandani, Co-Founder and MD, Hiranandani Group of Companies. Sumant Sinha, Chairman and Managing Director of ReNew Power, is the new Senior Vice-President of Assocham.

Satyendra Garg assumes Andaman and Nicobar DGP charge

- Senior IPS officer, Satyendra Garg has assumed Andaman and Nicobar DGP charge. Garg, a 1987-batch IPS officer was posted as joint secretary in the Union home ministry. He was heading the North East division in the home ministry as a joint secretary before being repatriated to his cadre.
- Among other top-level reshuffle IPS officer, Ranvir Singh Krishna is named the police chief of Puducherry. He will replace 1988-batch IPS officer Balaji Srivastava who will assume charge in Delhi. Srivastava has been transferred to the Delhi Police.

NHAI chairman Sukhbir Singh Sandhu gets six months extension

- Sukhbir Singh Sandhu has been given six months extension as the chairman of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the extension in central deputation tenure of Sandhu, chairman, NHAI, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, for

a period of six months beyond January 21, 2021, i.e. up to July 21, 2021. Sandhu is a 1988-batch IAS officer of Uttarakhand cadre.

Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati elected as Vice President of ABU

- The CEO of Prasar Bharati, Shashi Shekhar Vempati has been elected as the Vice President of Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) for a period of three years. Prasar Bharati is India's largest public broadcasting agency.
- The Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia-based Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), is one of the largest broadcasting associations in the world.

RBI re-appoints Uday Kotak as MD of Kotak Mahindra Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the re-appointment of Uday Kotak as Managing Director of Kotak Mahindra Bank for a further period of three years, with effect from January 1, 2021. Kotak is founder managing director and promoter of the bank.
- RBI has also approved the appointment of part-time chairman Prakash Apte and Dipak Gupta as Joint MD of the bank for a period of three years.

Sabrina Filzmoser and Flavio Canto appointed IJF Climate Ambassadors

- Austria's Sabrina Filzmoser and Brazil's Flavio Canto have been appointed as International Judo Federation (IJF) climate ambassadors by IJF President Marius Vizer, in a bid to spread the message of environmentalism.
- The pair are now expected to talk about global warming and use judo as a positive influence in delivering this message.

Romanian PM Ludovic Orban resigns

- The Prime Minister of Romania, Ludovic Orban has stepped down from his post after his ruling National Liberal Party (PNL) lost in 2020 parliamentary election. Following this, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis appointed the Minister of National Defense, Nicolae-Ionel Ciuca as the interim prime minister of the country.

Zena Wooldridge Elected As World Squash Federation President

- Zena Wooldridge from England has been elected as the World Squash Federation President. She will become the 10th WSF President to serve since the Federation's inception in 1967.
- She is the second female President after New Zealand's Susie Simcock. She replaces outgoing President Jacques Fontaine, from France. She previously served six years as President of the European Squash Federation between 2013-2019.

Annika Sorenstam elected president of International Golf Federation

- The International Golf Federation (IGF) elected Annika Sorenstam as its new president effective January 1, 2021.
- IGF President, Peter Dawson, is stepping down after 10 years of leadership and service. Sorenstam, a 72-time winner on the LPGA Tour and former No. 1 from Sweden.

Kuwait emir reappoints Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid as prime minister

- Kuwait Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has re-appointed Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah as prime minister. The move comes two days after Sheikh Sabah submitted his government's resignation in a procedural step following parliamentary polls.
- The country's ruler accepted the premier's resignation before reassigning him to form the upcoming government. Sheikh Nawaf who took over the leadership of the Gulf state in September after the death of his brother also asked Sheikh Sabah to nominate members of a new cabinet. The new cabinet would have to be approved by the Emir.

Anil Soni appointed first CEO of The WHO Foundation

- US-based Indian-origin health expert, Anil Soni has been appointed as the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the newly-created "The World Health Organization (WHO) Foundation". Before this, he was working with Viatrix, a global healthcare company in the US, where he served as Head of Global Infectious Diseases. He will assume his role as CEO with effect from 1st January 2021.
- The WHO Foundation was launched in May 2020 as an independent grant-making agency, based in Geneva, Switzerland, to work alongside the WHO and the global health community to address the most pressing global health challenges.

Kuldeep Handoo appointed as "Fit India" movement ambassador

- Srinagar born Wushu coach and the first Dronacharya Awardee from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Kuldeep Handoo is appointed as the Ambassador of Fit India movement. He won 11 gold medals in National and 6 in International stage, is the Wushu coach of Team India. Under his guidance Athletes have won two gold medals at the world championship and one at the World Cup. He also serves as Inspector of police in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Jammu and Kashmir Police medal award, for meritorious service
- The Parshuram Award, an honour of sports in the state of Himachal Pradesh
- Fit India movement was launched in August 2019, to encourage Indians to include fitness activities and sports in their daily lives to pave the way for a healthy and fit lifestyle.

Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhary becomes new Director General of BRO

- Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhary has been appointed as the 27th Director General of Border Roads Organisation (BRO). His appointment is effective from 1st December 2020.
- Lt Gen Chaudhary succeeds Lt Gen Harpal Singh who has been appointed as the new Engineer-in-Chief of the Indian Army. The BRO is responsible for construction and maintenance of all border roads including those along the frontiers with China and Pakistan.

AR Rahman roped in as 'BAFTA Breakthrough' India ambassador

- Oscar and Grammy-winning Indian composer, AR Rahman has been roped in as ambassador

of the BAFTA Breakthrough initiative in India. In 2020, BAFTA will identify and support up to five exceptional talents working in film, games or television in India.

- The BAFTA Breakthrough initiative, is part of the Academy's year-long programme to support new talent, coming up in the film, games and television industries in the UK, China, India and the US and gives them access to unique career development and mentoring opportunities. It is a unique opportunity for promising artists to be supported by a world-renowned organisation, including connections with other talented creatives across the world and being mentored by BAFTA-winners and nominees.

Bata names Sandeep Kataria as global CEO

- Footwear major Bata Shoe Organization has appointed Sandeep Kataria as the new global Chief Executive Officer (CEO). He is the first Indian to be appointed to the global role of Bata (Headquarter-Lausanne, Switzerland). He takes over from Alexis Nasard, who has stepped down after almost five years in the role.
- Before this, Kataria was the CEO of Bata India since 2017. Under Kataria, Bata India managed to transform into the largest footwear retailer in India within a relatively short span.

IAS officer Varsha Joshi named Chairperson of NDDB

- The Government of India has appointed IAS officer Varsha Joshi as the new Chairperson of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). She is presently served as Joint Secretary (CDD), Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Government of India.
- With incumbent Dilip Rath's tenure as Chairman of NDDB ends on November 30, 2020, Joshi's appointment is made effective from December 1, 2020, until further orders.

Utpal Kumar Singh Appointed as Secretary-General of Lok Sabha

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has appointed senior IAS officer Utpal Kumar Singh as Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha and Lok Sabha Secretariat. His appointment will come into effect from December 1, 2020. He will succeed incumbent Snehlata Shrivastava.
- Mr Singh is a 1986 batch IAS officer of Uttarakhand Cadre and has been appointed as Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha in the rank and status of Cabinet Secretary.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Good Governance Day: 25 December

- In India, Good Governance Day (Sushasan Divas) is observed annually on 25th December. In this day nation celebrates the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna and former-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Good Governance Day was established in 2014 to honour Prime Minister Vajpayee by fostering awareness among the Indian people of accountability in government. In keeping with this principle, the Good Governance Day has been declared to be a working day for the government.
- Atal Bihari Vajpayee served as the Prime Minister of India for three times. His first term was

for only 13 days in 1996. He served his second term for a period of thirteen months from March 1998 to April 1999 and then a full term from 1999 to 2004. His first entry into parliament was in 1962 through the Rajya Sabha. He was elected to the Lok Sabha seven times. In 2015, Mr Vajpayee was conferred the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award.

National Consumer Rights Day 2020

- National Consumer Rights Day is observed every year on December 24. On this day in 1986, the Consumer Protection Act 1986 received the Presidential assent and thus came into force. The Act aims to provide consumers with effective safeguards against different types of exploitation, such as defective goods, deficiency in services and unfair trade practices.
- This day provides an opportunity for people to highlight the importance of the consumer rights movement and the need to make every consumer more aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- 'Jago Grahak Jago', which means 'Be aware consumer', is a consumer awareness program launched by the Department of Consumer Affairs.
- As part of this initiative, the government has used channels to create consumer awareness through print, media advertisements, audio campaigns and video campaigns for consumer information and education.

Amit Shah to lead panel on Netaji's 125th birth anniversary event

- The Union Government has decided to constitute a High-Level Committee (HLC) to commemorate the 125th Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The High-Level Committee will be headed by the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah.
- This HLC will decide on the activities for a one-year-long commemoration beginning 23 January 2021, as a tribute and mark of gratitude to the contribution made by Netaji in India's freedom struggle. The other members of the High-Level Commemoration Committee will include experts, historians, authors, family members of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, as well as eminent persons associated with Azad Hind Fauj/INA.

India Observes National Farmer's Day on December 23

- National Farmer's Day (Kisan Diwas) is observed every year on 23 December in India to remember the role of Indian farmers in the economy. The day is observed to mark the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh. He brought farmer-friendly policies and worked towards the welfare of the farmers.
- He was the fifth Prime Minister of India and served the country as Prime Minister from 28 July 1979 to 14 January 1980.

National Mathematics Day observed on 22 December

- India observes the National Mathematics Day every year on 22 December since 2012. The day is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of Mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan. This year nation celebrates his 133rd birth anniversary of Ramanujan.
- Ramanujan had a wealth of ideas that have transformed and reshaped 20th-century

mathematics. These ideas continue to shape mathematics of the 21st century. The main objective behind the celebration of National Mathematics Day is to make people aware of the development of mathematics and its importance in the growth of humanity.

- The day was announced on 26 February 2012 by the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to mark the 125th anniversary of the birth of the Indian mathematical genius Srinivasa Ramanujan (22 Dec 1887- 26 Apr 1920). 2012 was also observed as National Mathematics Year.

International Human Solidarity Day: 20 December

- International Human Solidarity Day is observed globally on 20 December every year to celebrate unity in diversity and raise awareness about the importance of solidarity. According to the United Nations Millennium Declaration, solidarity is among the fundamental values that are essential to international relations.
- Solidarity is defined as an awareness of shared interests and objectives that create a psychological sense of unity and ties in a society that bind people together as one.
- The General Assembly, on 22 December 2005, by resolution 60/209 identified solidarity as one of the fundamental and universal values that should underlie relations between peoples in the twenty-first century, and in that regard decided to proclaim 20 December of each year International Human Solidarity Day.

Goa Liberation Day: 19 December

- Goa Liberation Day is observed on 19 December every year in India and it marks the day Indian armed forces freed Goa in 1961 following 450 years of Portuguese rule. Goa Liberation Day is marked by an abundance of events and festivities in Goa though this time because of the pandemic the celebrations are expected to be muted. A torchlight procession is ignited from three different locations in the state, eventually all meeting at the Azad Maidan.
- The Portuguese colonised several parts of India in 1510 but by the end of the 19th-century Portuguese colonies in India were limited to Goa, Daman, Diu, Dadra, Nagar Haveli and Anjediva Island.
- The Goa liberation movement, which sought to end Portuguese colonial rule in Goa, started off with small scale revolts.
- On August 15, 1947, when India gained its Independence, Goa was still under the Portuguese rule.
- The Portuguese refused to give up their hold over Goa and other Indian territories. Following a myriad of unsuccessful negotiations and diplomatic efforts with the Portuguese, the former prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, decided that military intervention was the only option.
- The 36-hour military operation, conducted from December 18, 1961, was code-named 'Operation Vijay' meaning 'Operation Victory,' and involved attacks by the Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and Indian Army.

Arabic Language Day observed globally on 18 December

- UN Arabic Language Day is observed annually on December 18 every year. The day was established by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2010 to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as well as to promote equal use of all six of its official languages throughout the Organization.
- December 18 was chosen as the date for the Arabic language as it is “the day in 1973 when the General Assembly approved Arabic as an official UN language”.

International Migrants Day is celebrated on 18 December

- The International Migrants Day is observed globally on 18 December every year. In December 2000, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 18 December as International Migrants Day after considering the large and increasing number of migrants in the world.
- The theme of International Migrants Day 2020 is ‘Reimagining Human Mobility’.
- The day marks the anniversary of the adoption of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which was adopted by the United Nations (UN) on 18 December 1990.

Nation Observes 49th Vijay Diwas on 16 December 2020

- In India, Vijay Diwas (also called Victory Day) is celebrated every year on December 16. The country is celebrating the 49th Vijay Diwas in 2020. Vijay Diwas is observed to commemorate the service, valour, and sacrifices of the gallant men of the Indian Armed Forces’ victory over Pakistan in 1971 war.
- The Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 which began on December 3 lasted for 13 days and officially ended on December 16, after which Pakistan surrendered to India. It was on this day in 1971, the chief of the Pakistani forces, General AA Khan Niazi, along with 93 thousand troops, had surrendered unconditionally to the allied forces consisting of Indian Army and Mukti Bahini. The end of the war also resulted in subsequent secession of East Pakistan into Bangladesh.

National Energy Conservation Day

- The National Energy Conservation Day is celebrated every year on 14 December by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under Ministry of Power.
- The day is celebrated to raise awareness among the general public about the importance of energy conservation and energy efficiency, as well as holistic development for overall effort towards climate change mitigation
- The Energy Conservation Act in India was executed by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in the year 2001.
- BEE is a constitutional body that comes under Government of India and helps in the development of policies and strategies in order to reduce the energy use.

International Universal Health Coverage Day: 12 December

- International Universal Health Coverage Day is a United Nations’ recognized international

day celebrated every year on December 12. The Day aims to raise awareness of the need for strong and resilient health systems and universal health coverage with multi-stakeholder partners.

- This year theme of International Universal Health Coverage Day is 'Health For All: PROTECT EVERYONE'. The theme reflects that to end this crisis (C-19) and build a safer and healthier future, we must invest in health systems that protect us all—now.
- On 12 December 2012, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed a resolution urging countries to accelerate progress toward universal health coverage (UHC) – the idea that everyone, everywhere should have access to quality, affordable health care – as an essential priority for international development. On 12 December 2017, the United Nations proclaimed 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day).

International Day of Neutrality: 12 December

- International Day of Neutrality is a United Nations recognized day held on December 12 each year to raise public awareness of the value of neutrality in international relations. It was officially declared by a UN General Assembly resolution adopted in February 2017 and first observed on December 12, 2017.
- Neutrality is defined as the legal status arising from the abstention of a state from all participation in a war between other states, the maintenance of an attitude of impartiality toward the belligerents, and the recognition by the belligerents of this abstention and impartiality — is critically important for the United Nations to gain and maintain the confidence and cooperation of all in order to operate independently and effectively, especially in situations that are politically charged.

UNICEF Day: 11 December

- Every year the UNICEF Day is observed on December 11. The United Nations General Assembly created UNICEF on December 11, 1946, as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund to improve the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children devastated due to World War II.
- UNICEF's name was subsequently changed from United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund to United Nations Children's Fund though, it continued to be known by the popular acronym based on the previous title.

International Mountain Day: 11 December

- The International Mountain Day is observed globally on December 11 every year. The day is celebrated to create awareness about the importance of mountains to life, to highlight the opportunities and constraints in mountain development and to build alliances that will bring positive change to mountain peoples and environments around the world.
- "Mountain biodiversity" is the theme of this year's International Mountain Day, so let's celebrate their rich biodiversity, as well as address the threats they face.
- The day was established by the UN General Assembly in 2003 to encourage sustainable development of mountains. United Nations had declared 2002 as the UN International Year

- of Mountains.
- Neutrality.

World Human Rights Day: 10 December

- Human Rights Day is celebrated on 10 December annually across the world. This Day came into existence on December 10, 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations. This day is observed every year across the world, as it empowers us all. The day also acknowledges the advocates and defenders of human rights around the world.
- This year theme of Human Rights Day: Recover Better – Stand Up for Human Rights. This year theme relates to the COVID-19 pandemic and focuses on the need to build back better by ensuring Human Rights are central to recovery efforts.
- The UDHR is a milestone document that proclaims the inalienable rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being – regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or another status. Available in more than 500 languages, it is the most translated document in the world.

International Anti-Corruption Day: 09 December

- International Anti-Corruption Day is observed annually on 9 December to raise public awareness for anti-corruption. The day is observed since the passage of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption on 31 October 2003.
- The theme of International Anti-Corruption Day 2020: 'RECOVER with INTEGRITY.' The theme focuses on recovery through corruption mitigation and emphasizes that inclusive C-19 recovery can only be achieved with integrity.

Armed Forces Flag Day: 7 December

- In India, the Armed Forces Flag Day (also known as the Flag Day of India) is observed annually on December 7 since 1949 as an honour to the soldiers, sailors and airmen of India who fought on the borders to keep the country safe.
- The three branches of the Armed Forces of India, namely, the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy are remembered on this day. The 'Armed forces Flag Day Fund' (AFFDF) has been constituted by the Government of India for the welfare and rehabilitation of the Ex-Servicemen (ESM) community.

International Civil Aviation Day: 07 December

- The International Civil Aviation Day is celebrated every year on December 7 to recognize the importance of aviation to the social and economic development of the world. The purpose of International Civil Aviation Day is to help generate and reinforce worldwide awareness of the importance of international civil aviation to the social and economic development of States, and of the unique role of ICAO in helping States to cooperate and realize a truly global rapid transit network at the service of all mankind.
- The Council has decided that from now until 2023, the theme will be: "Advancing

Innovation for Global Aviation Development”.

- The Day was established in 1994 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the day in 1996.

World Soil Day: 05 December

- The World Soil Day is celebrated every year on December 5 to raise awareness of the importance of soil quality for human well-being, food security and ecosystems. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) campaign “Keep soil alive, protect soil biodiversity” aims to raise awareness of the importance of sustaining healthy ecosystems and human well-being.
- The date of 5 December was chosen because it corresponds with the official birthday of the late H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand, who was one of the main proponents of this initiative.
- An international day to celebrate Soil was recommended by the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) in 2002. Under the leadership of the Kingdom of Thailand and within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership, FAO has supported the formal establishment of WSD as a global awareness-raising platform. The FAO Conference unanimously endorsed World Soil Day in June 2013 and requested its official adoption at the 68th UN General Assembly. In December 2013, the UN General Assembly responded by designating 5 December 2014 as the first official World Soil Day.

International Volunteer Day: 05 December

- The International Volunteer Day (IVD), also called International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development is observed on 5 December every year. IVD 2020 Theme: “Together We Can Through Volunteering”. The IVD international observance was mandated by the UN General Assembly in 1985.
- The purpose of the day to celebrate the efforts of volunteers and organizations and offer the opportunity to promote volunteerism, encourage governments to support volunteer efforts and recognize volunteer contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local, national and international levels.

Indian Navy Day: 04 December

- In India, December 4 is observed as the National Navy Day every year, to celebrate the achievements and role of the naval force to the country. The theme of Navy Day 2020 is “Indian Navy Combat Ready, Credible & Cohesive”.
- The day is marked in recognition of the launch of Operation Trident during the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971. During Operation Trident, on December 4 in 1971, the Indian Navy sank four Pakistani vessels and also killed over 500 Pakistani Navy personnel, meanwhile, the Indian side suffered no losses.
- The Indian Navy is the marine branch of the Indian Armed Forces and is led by the President of India as Commander-in-Chief. The Maratha Emperor, Chhatrapati Shivaji Bhosle of the

17th century is considered as “Father of the Indian Navy”.

International Day of Banks: 4 December

- International Day of Banks is observed globally on the 4th of December. On 19 December 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 74/245, which designated 4 December as the International Day of Banks.
- The day is celebrated to the recognition of the significant potential of multilateral development banks and other international development banks in financing sustainable development and providing know-how, and also in recognition of the vital role of the banking systems in the Member States in contributing to the improvement of the standard of living.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities: 03 December

- The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed annually on December 3. The IDPWD day was proclaimed in 1992 by the United Nations General Assembly. The 2020 theme: ‘Not all Disabilities are Visible’.
- The day is celebrated to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development, and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

World Computer Literacy Day: 02 December

- The World Computer Literacy Day is observed annually on 2nd December to create awareness and drive digital literacy in underserved communities worldwide. The day promotes technological skills, especially in children and women. The World Computer Literacy Day controls the advanced gap that exists in the world today.
- The day was originally founded by the Indian computer company NIIT to mark its 20th anniversary in 2001. World Computer Literacy Day was first observed and held in the year 2001 on 2nd Dec.

National Pollution Control Day: 02 December

- In India, the National Pollution Control Day is observed every year on December 2 to commemorate the life of people lost in the unfortunate incident of Bhopal Gas Tragedy that occurred in the year 1984 on the night of 2–3 December.
- The year 2020 marks the 36th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. Through this day, awareness is created about the rising pollution of air, water, and soil, as well as shifts the attention of people with regards to the pollution control acts.

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

- International Day for the Abolition of Slavery is observed annually on 2nd December since 1986 by the United Nations General Assembly. The focus of this day is on eradicating contemporary forms of slavery, such as trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, the worst forms of child labour, forced marriage, and the forced recruitment of children for use in

armed conflict.

- The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December, marks the date of the adoption, by the General Assembly, of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (resolution 317(IV) of 2 December 1949).

World AIDS Day: 01 December

- Every year, on 1 December, the world commemorates World AIDS Day. The day provides an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, to show support for people living with HIV and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. This year the theme of World AIDS Day is "Global solidarity, shared responsibility".
- In 2020, the world's attention has been focused by the C-19 pandemic on health and how pandemics affect lives and livelihoods. C-19 is showing once again how health is interlinked with other critical issues, such as reducing inequality, human rights, gender equality, social protection and economic growth.

BSF Celebrates its 56th Raising Day on December 1, 2020

- The Border Security Force (BSF), is observing its 56th Raising Day on 01 December 2020. BSF was formed on December 1, 1965, as a unified central agency, after the Indo-Pak and India-China wars, for ensuring the security of the borders of India and for matters connected therewith. It is one of the five Central Armed Police Forces of the Union of India and stands as the world's largest border guarding force. BSF has been termed as the First Line of Defence of Indian Territories.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

- The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an UN-organized day held every year on November 29. It is observed to mark the anniversary of resolution 181, wherein the Assembly adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine on November 29, 1947.
- In 1977, the General Assembly called for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On that day, in 1947, the Assembly adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine. This date, which was chosen because of its meaning and significance to the Palestinian people, is based on the call by the United Nations General Assembly for an annual observance of the resolution on the partition of Palestine.

SUMMITS AND MOU'S

Tata Sons to buy 32.67% stake in AirAsia India for \$37.66 million

- In a move that is being pegged as the first step in consolidation of Tata Group's aviation portfolio, Tata Sons will purchase 32.67 per cent stake in AirAsia India from Malaysian AirAsia Group Bhd, taking its holding in the joint-venture airline up to 83.67 per cent. In a filing to the Malaysian stock exchanges, the AirAsia Group said that the deal, which is worth

\$37.66 million, will see its share in the Indian budget airline go down to 16.33 per cent.

- As of date, AirAsia held a 49 per cent stake in AirAsia India, while Tata Sons held 51 per cent. In addition to this, Tata Sons also owns 51 per cent stake in full-service airline Vistara, the rest of which it is owned by Singapore Airlines.

Cabinet approves the merger of four Govt film media units

- The Cabinet approved the merger of four government-run film and media units — the Films Division, the Directorate of Film Festivals, the National Film Archives of India and the autonomous body Children's Film Society, with the National Film Development Corporation.
- The merger of Film Media Units under one corporation will lead to convergence of activities and resources and better coordination, thereby ensuring synergy and efficiency in achieving the mandate of each media unit. This will lead to a reduction in duplication of activities and direct savings to the exchequer.
- The Films Division, which was established in 1948 and is the oldest of the four units, was created primarily to produce documentaries and news magazines as publicity for government programmes and to keep a cinematic record of Indian history.
- The National Film Archives of India was established in 1964 with the primary objective of acquiring and preserving Indian cinematic heritage.
- The Directorate of Film Festivals was set up in 1973 to promote Indian films and cultural exchange.
- The Children's Film Society, which was founded in 1955 with the specific objective of providing children and young people value-based entertainment through the medium of films.

UN Women and Kerala govt tie-up for India's 1st Gender Data Hub

- The UN Women and Kerala government have collaborated to establish India's first Gender Data Hub. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in this regard in the presence of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Three key areas of co-operation, as specified in the MoU, will be setting up the Gender Data Centre at The Gender Park, launching the second edition of the International Conference on Gender Equality, and increasing engagement on the global normative frameworks on gender equality and empowerment of women.
- The Gender Hub builds on the goals established through the International Conference on Gender Equality held in November 2015, to collect, analyse and use more nuanced data and inform policy formulation in a manner that centre-stage women's rights. This collaboration will broaden and deepen various pioneering initiatives for gender equality and women empowerment launched by the Social Justice Department of Kerala through The Gender Park.

12th GRIHA Summit of TERI Concludes

- The 12th GRIHA (Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment) Summit was held virtually. It was inaugurated by Vice President of India Venkaiah Naidu virtually. The

Summit provides a platform to deliberate on innovative technologies and solutions to help in creating robust mechanisms for developing sustainable and resilient solutions for the benefit of the entire community.

- The theme of the Summit was “Rejuvenating Resilient Habitats”. It is the annual flagship event organized by GRIHA Council in association with ‘key stakeholders in the construction industry’ to discuss and deliberate on the furtherance of Sustainable Habitat Development in India.
- It is an independent, not-for-profit society jointly setup by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India to promote and administer green buildings in India.
- Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) is the national rating system of India for any completed building construction.
- It has been being recognised as India’s own green building rating system in India’s Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

India-Vietnam Leaders’ Virtual Summit 2020

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Nguyen Xuan Phuc, jointly addressed the India-Vietnam Virtual Summit, via video conferencing. During the Summit, a ‘Joint Vision for Peace, Prosperity and People’ document was adopted to guide the future development of the India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- Both leaders agreed to support each other’s national development priorities and work together towards the shared objective of a peaceful, stable, secure, free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.
- India and Vietnam signed seven agreements during the virtual summit in areas such as defence, scientific research, renewable energy, nuclear energy, petro-chemicals, and cancer treatment.

ADB and India sign \$300 million loan to upgrade power projects in UP

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has signed \$300 million loan agreement with the Government of India to upgrade rural power distribution networks in Uttar Pradesh. This upgradation helps to provide reliable electricity supply to consumers in the state. This is the first tranche of the loan for the Uttar Pradesh Power Distribution Network Rehabilitation Project.
- Overall, the \$430 million multi-tranche financing facility (MFF) has been approved for the project constituting two tranches.
- The project envisages conversion of 65,000 kilometres (km) of rural low-voltage distribution lines from bare conductors to aerial bundled conductors (ABC) to create a robust distribution network that will benefit an estimated 70 million people in 46,000 villages.

Gol and ADB sign 4.21 million dollar PRF facility for Tripura

- The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a US \$4.21 million project readiness financing (PRF) facility for the preparation of infrastructure development projects to improve urban amenities and develop tourism infrastructure in Tripura. This is ADB's first PRF facility for a state in the northeastern region of India.
- The facility will support the Tripura Government's priorities of improving urban services and tourism infrastructure that will help boost economic development.
- The facility aims to ensure high readiness of ensuing infrastructure projects through feasibility studies, preparing detailed engineering designs, and capacity building of state-level agencies while ensuring climate and disaster resilience and sustainability of sub-projects.

PM Modi holds virtual summit with Sheikh Hasina

- The Government of India and Bangladesh held a virtual summit to hold comprehensive discussions on the entire spectrum of the bilateral relationship, including further strengthening cooperation in the post-C-19 era. The meeting was led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina.
- The two leaders jointly inaugurated the Chilahati-Haldibari rail link, which would connect the borders of the two neighbouring countries. The rail route lies between Haldibari in West Bengal and Chilahati in Bangladesh. It is re-opened after a gap of 55 years. The railway line has been defunct after rail links between India and then East Pakistan snapped in 1965.
- Both the leaders also digitally inaugurated the digital exhibition in the honour of Mahatma Gandhi and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.
- The Indian side also released a postal stamp to commemorate Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- Apart from this, the two sides signed 7 MoUs and agreements in various fields.

Gol inks \$1-bn loan pact with NDB to support Indian Economy

- The Government of India and the New Development Bank (NDB) have signed a loan agreement worth \$1,000 million for 'supporting India's economic recovery from C-19'. The loan has a tenor of 30 years, including a 5-year grace period. The programme will support Indian Government in mitigating the adverse economic impact of C-19 pandemic and enable economic recovery in the rural areas.
- The loan will support expenditures on rural infrastructure related to natural resource management (NRM) and rural employment generation under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
- The programme will support the government in mitigating the adverse economic impact of C-19 pandemic and enable economic recovery in the rural areas through natural resource management works which will facilitate economic activity and employment generation to stimulate rural demand.
- The programme will improve the livelihood of rural poor along with providing income

opportunities to migrant workers who returned home due to job loss caused by C-19 pandemic.

Norway signs MoU with Clean Ganga Mission in India

- The Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO) has signed an MoU with cGanga, a think-tank of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) for development of sludge management framework in India. Through this initiative, Norway intends to deepen the relationship with India especially in the prevention of climate change and conservation of the environment.
- The MoU was signed during the 5th edition of the India Water Impact 2020, held from 10-15 December 2020. The event is co-organised by National Mission for Clean Ganga and Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies.

India and World Bank sign \$400 million project to protect India's poor

- The Government of India and the World Bank have signed a \$400 million project to protect vulnerable groups in urban and peri-urban areas across the country impacted by C-19. This is the second such assistance in the series of two 'Accelerating India's C-19 Social Protection Response Programme'. Under the first operation, \$750 million was approved by World Bank in May 2020.
- World Bank will support India in its efforts at providing social assistance to the poor and vulnerable households, severely impacted by the C-19 pandemic.
- The programme will strengthen the capability of state and central governments in India to provide coordinated and adequate social protection to the poor and vulnerable from the shocks triggered by the C-19 pandemic.

India and Austria inks MoU on Technology Cooperation

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of Austria on Technology Cooperation in the Road Infrastructure Sector. The MoU will further strengthen ties, promote long-standing bilateral relations and enhance trade and regional integration between the two countries.
- The MoU aims to create an effective framework for bilateral cooperation in the field of road transportation, road/highways infrastructure development, management and administration, road safety and intelligent transport systems between both countries.
- The Indo-Austria bilateral cooperation in the road transport sector would be beneficial both from the perspective of enhanced road safety as well as attractive financing possibilities for the sector, thus fostering and intensifying the already good relations between the two countries, through this MoU in the transport sector.

India and Uzbekistan inks 9 Agreements to strengthen strategic partnership

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev co-

chaired the virtual Summit held between the two countries, to strengthen strategic partnership among them. The Government of India also approved a US \$448 million Line of Credit for four developmental projects in Uzbekistan in the fields of road construction, sewerage treatment and information technology.

- India and Uzbekistan signed nine Agreements and Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) in various areas including in the field of:
 1. Solar Energy
 2. Digital Technologies
 3. High Impact Community Development Projects
 4. Trade, Economic and Investment Cooperation
 5. Defence and Security
 6. Civil Nuclear Energy
 7. Connectivity
 8. Culture, Education and People-to-People Contacts
 9. Terrorism

World Economic Forum 2021 to be held in Singapore

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) has decided to host its 2021 annual meeting in Singapore, which earlier was scheduled to take place in Lucerne-Burgenstock, Switzerland from 13-16 May 2021. The decision to shift the annual forum from Switzerland has been taken in view of the C-19 situation in Europe.
- This would be the second time since its inception in 1971 that the forum will be held outside Switzerland. In 2002, the forum was held in New York to show solidarity with the American people in the aftermath of 9/11. The meeting is generally held in Davos, Switzerland, but amid covid, the meeting was first shifted to Lucerne-Burgenstock, Switzerland in October 2020. Now again the venue has been shifted to Singapore. It would return to Davos, Switzerland, in 2022.

PwC, UNICEF and YuWaah partner to redefine education

- Consulting firm PwC India has collaborated with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and YuWaah (Generation Unlimited in India) to upskill 300 million young Indians over the next 10 years. This collaboration is part of PwC's global multi-sector partnership with UNICEF and Generation Unlimited to upskill and provide about 1.8 billion youngsters with socio-economic opportunities from school to work by 2030.
- This partnership will focus on three facets to India's digital empowerment for youngsters, which are education, skilling and entrepreneurship. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), India is staring at a 29 million skill deficit by 2030.

NTPC inks MoU with IIFM-Bhopal for Narmada Landscape Restoration Project

- National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC), a PSU under Ministry of Power, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal, for the implementation of Narmada Landscape Restoration Project (NLRP).

IIFM Bhopal is an Autonomous Institute under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).

- The NLRP Project involves a grant in aid from NTPC Ltd and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in equal proportions.
- IIFM-Bhopal will be jointly implementing this project with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) [Headquarter-Seoul, South Korea], an intergovernmental organization that promotes sustainable and inclusive economic growth in emerging economies.
- IIFM Bhopal will participate in the project with the grant-in-aid from NTPC, Ltd and GGGI will participate with funding support from USAID.

Bangladesh signs maiden Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)

- Bangladesh has signed its first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Bhutan, which will allow duty-free access to a range of goods between the two countries and hence boost bilateral trade between them. Under the PTA, 100 Bangladeshi products will get duty free access to Bhutan, while 34 items from Bhutan will get duty free access into Bangladesh. Further items can be added in the list later on the basis of discussion between the two countries.
- This is the first PTA signed by Bangladesh with any country in the world since its independence in 1971. The PTA was signed on 6th December 2020, to mark 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Bhutan. In 1971, Bhutan was the first country in the world to recognise Bangladesh as an independent country.

India & USA signs MoU on Intellectual Property Cooperation

- The Government of India and the United States of America (USA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of Intellectual Property Cooperation. As a part of this MoU, the two sides will develop Biennial Work Plan to implement the MoU which will include the detailed planning for carrying out of the co-operation activities including the scope of action. The Union Cabinet had approved the signing the MoU for the same on 19 February 2020.
- The MoU was signed between Dr Guruprasad Mohapatra, Secretary, DPIIT and Mr Andrei Iancu, who represented the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Department of Commerce of the United States of America respectively.

India and Finland sign MOU on environmental protection

- India and Finland signed an MoU for developing cooperation in the field of Environment protection and biodiversity conservation. The MoU was signed by Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar from the Indian side and his Finnish counterpart Krista Mikkonen through video-mode.
- Further, advance Indian and Finnish partnership and strengthen technological, scientific and management capabilities and develop bilateral cooperation in the field of environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

- Support, exchange best practices in areas like prevention of air and water pollution, waste management, and promotion of circular economy.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

V.K. Yadav chairman of railway board conferred with Eminent Engineer Award

- The chairman & CEO of Railway Board, Vinod Kumar Yadav has been conferred with the prestigious “Eminent Engineer Award for the Year 2020”. This award is given by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) for his outstanding contribution towards modernization and reforms over Indian Railways.
- Every year Institution of Engineering and Technology, Delhi Local Network celebrates Engineers’ Day on the 15th of September to commemorate the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Sir M Visvesvaraya. On this occasion, besides technical activities, the Institution also presents the Eminent Engineer’s Award to distinguished Engineering personalities for their outstanding services in the field of Engineering and technology.
- The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) is a multidisciplinary professional engineering institution formally known as The Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE), established in 1871.
- It is one of the world’s largest engineering institutions with over 168,000 members in 150 countries. The Institution is celebrating glorious 150 years of existence.
- IET is registered as a Charity in England and Wales and Scotland. IET Delhi Local Network is one of nine such networks in South Asia, which constitutes the Indian arm of the IET.

Hemant Kumar Pandey gets DRDO’s “Scientist of the Year” award

- Senior scientist Hemant Kumar Pandey has been honoured with DRDO’s “Scientist of the Year Award” for his contribution in developing several herbal medicines, including the popular drug Lukoskin meant for the treatment of leucoderma. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had recently facilitated the scientist at an event here with the prestigious award that comprises a certificate and cash prize of Rs 2 lakh.
- The scientist has developed six herbal drugs so far, Lukoskin used for treating leucoderma or Vitiligo, a condition in which white patches get developed on the skin, has been most widely appreciated and found huge acceptance in the market.
- A recipient of several prestigious awards for his contribution in the field of herbal medicine, Pandey has been undertaking research at the Defence Research and Development Organisation’s (DRDO) lab Defence Institute of Bio-Energy Research (DIBER) at Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand for the past 25 years.
- Apart from Lukoskin, Pandey has developed drugs for the treatment of eczema and toothache as well as an anti-radiation cream, most of which are already being sold in the market following the transfer of technology (ToT).

Bihar wins Digital India award for transferring money in C-19 time

- The Chief Minister Secretariat of Bihar, the Disaster Management Department besides the

National Informatics Centre (NIC) of the state have jointly been chosen as winners in the “pandemic category” Digital India Awards 2020. Bihar government’s initiative to transfer financial assistance directly to the accounts of beneficiaries during the C-19 pandemic has made its departments winners of the Digital India Awards, instituted by the central government, this year for innovative steps in e-governance.

- More than 21 lakh stranded workers outside Bihar were provided financial assistance through the “Bihar Sahayata Mobile App”. The Digital India Awards, instituted under the aegis of the National Portal of India, serve the purpose of bringing to the fore innovative digital solutions and thereby inspiring emulation by all government entities.

K. Veeramani honoured with Dr. Narendra Dabholkar Memorial Award

- The Dr Narendra Dabholkar Memorial Award for this year has been conferred upon Dravidar Kazhagam president K. Veeramani. The award was instituted in the memory of the Maharashtra-based rationalist Dabholkar.
- The U.S.-based Maharashtra Foundation had instituted the award in his memory, a release issued by the Dravidar Kazhagam. The award includes ₹1 lakh and a citation. Mr Veeramani has dedicated his whole life to propagate rationalism and served for the cause of social justice in society.

NTPC wins the prestigious CII-ITC Sustainability Awards 2020

- Country’s largest power producer, National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) has been conferred “Excellence” in the prestigious CII-ITC Sustainability Awards 2020 in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Domain. NTPC has been honoured in the Corporate Excellence Category, Commendation for Significant Achievement.
- This is the highest award conferred by CII-ITC in CSR domain. NTPC is the only PSU to receive the award in the Corporate Excellence category. NTPC wins the prestigious CII-ITC Sustainability Awards in Corporate Excellence category second time in a row i.e. in the year 2019 and 2020.

Srinagar’s Amar Singh College recognised with UNESCO Award

- Srinagar based Amar Singh College has been recognized with the ‘Award of Merit’ in the 2020 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The restoration of the Amar Singh College brought back one of the most prominent institutional buildings in Kashmir to its former glory.
- The college building is 80 years old and INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) chapter in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir had carried out the conservation work at the Amar Singh College.

Ratan Tata honoured with “ASSOCHAM Enterprise of the Century Award”

- Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed the ‘ASSOCHAM Foundation Week 2020’ via video conferencing. The week-long Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM) Foundation Week was organised from 15 to 19 December 2020. The theme of

the programme was 'India's resilience: Atmanirbhar roadmap towards \$5 trillion economies.'

- As a part of the celebration, PM Modi also presented the 'ASSOCHAM Enterprise of the Century Award' to Shri Ratan Tata, on behalf of the TATA Group, for his distinguished contributions to the country. In the last 100 years, ASSOCHAM and the entire Tata group has worked very hard to strengthen India's economy and help the common Indian.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Telecom Skill Excellence Awards announced

- Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has presented the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Telecom Skill Excellence Awards, including a cash award of Rs 50,000 and Rs 30,000 respectively, to both awardees. The nominations were called for the first time for the year 2018.

First Prize:

- Sreenivas Karanam, Bengaluru was selected for the FIRST prize for his contribution in developing a cost-effective customized technical solution under the brand 'C mobile', for deep-sea communication, operating along the Kerala coast, facilitating communication among fishermen and issue of weather alerts etc.
- The service enables the fishermen to have one-one voice calls, group calls, SMS, Location services and Emergency services while they are out of GSM coverage area. The service is available from Thiruvananthapuram to Calicut, almost 500km along Kerala coast, with devices installed in nearly 900 motorboats.

Second Prize:

- Subrat Kar, New Delhi was selected for the SECOND prize for his innovative solution on development & deployment of a large scale sensor network and devices to avoid a train-animal collision, which works without interfering with natural movements/behaviour of animals, thereby helping in wildlife conservation.
- The system under the pilot phase is installed in Rajaji National Park in Uttarakhand, to prevent elephant deaths by train-elephant collision.

Ratan Tata to be honoured with 'Global Visionary of Sustainable Business and Peace' award Veteran industrialist,

- Ratan Tata will be honoured by the Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce for promoting innovation that supports sustainability and peace in the region, including with the Palestinians. The chairman emeritus of the Tata group will be honoured with 'Global Visionary of Sustainable Business and Peace' award during the launch of the Federation of Indo-Israel Chamber of Commerce's international chapter in Dubai on December 21.
- The opening of the Federation of Indo-Israel Chamber of Commerce's international chapter in Dubai is the first such initiative aiming at tapping business opportunities together in other countries and developing trilateral collaborations.

India's Vidyut Mohan named among 'Young Champions of the Earth' by UNEP

- Vidyut Mohan was one of the "Young Champions of the Earth" winners by United Nations

Environment Programme. A 29-year-old Indian entrepreneur is among the seven winners of the prestigious “Young Champions of the Earth” 2020 prize given by the UN environment agency to global change-makers using innovative ideas and ambitious action to help solve some of the world’s most pressing environmental challenges. The prize is annually awarded to 7 entrepreneurs under age 30.

- Vidyut Mohan, an engineer, is the co-founder of “Takachar”, a social enterprise enabling farmers to prevent open burning of their waste farm residues and earn extra income by converting them into value-added chemicals like activated carbon on-site.

Kylie Jenner tops Forbes’ list of highest-paid celebrities of 2020

- American media personality and reality TV star, Kylie Jenner has been crowned the highest-paid celebrity of 2020 by Forbes. The top-earning stars in the world earned a combined of \$6.1 billion in 2020 with Kylie Jenner. Setting aside Kylie’s history with Forbes, the financial experts there calculated her earning this year to be at \$590 million after she sold a majority of her beauty brand’s stake to Coty Inc.
- Ranked at number 2 on the list by making \$170 million was American rapper and record producer Kanye West, who is also coincidentally Kylie’s brother-in-law. In addition to Tyler Perry, Howard Stern, and Dwayne Johnson, A-listers athletes like Roger Federer, Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Neymar and LeBron James helped round out the top 10. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the entertainment industry, this year’s combined total of USD 6.1 billion was USD 200 million lesser than that of 2019.

SAIL gets Golden Peacock Environment Management Award 2020

- Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has been awarded with the prestigious Golden Peacock Environment Management Award for the year 2020 in the Steel Sector by the Institute of Directors. The company has been the winner of this award for successive two years and this bears testimony to the efforts made by it for sustainable and environmentally responsible steel making. This award is one of the most coveted awards in the category.
- SAIL, as its Corporate Responsibility for Environment Protection continuously focuses on adopting various environmental measures including, upgrading of pollution control facilities, treatment & recirculation of wastewater from individual units & outfalls, enhancement in the green cover in & around Plants & Units, efficient handling of different solid wastes (viz. process waste, hazardous waste, canteen/township waste), carbon sequestration through afforestation, eco-restoration of mined out area, among others.
- Also, the impact of SAIL’s initiatives and best practices on improving cleaner environment, reducing emissions & discharges, mitigating impacts of climate change and helping the Company to conduct its operations in environmentally benign manner has been recognized.

UNEP announces 2020 Champions of the Earth Award

- The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has announced six laureates of the 2020

Champions of the Earth award, the UN's highest environmental honour. The Champions were chosen for their transformative impact on the environment and their leadership in urging bold and decisive action on behalf of the planet and its inhabitants.

The Champions of the Earth Award is presented in 5 categories:

1. Lifetime Achievement,
 2. Inspiration and Action,
 3. Policy Leadership,
 4. Entrepreneur Vision,
 5. Science and Innovation.
- The 2020 Champions of the Earth Award has been bestowed upon 6 individuals. The list of winners is given below.
Policy Leadership:
 - Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama of Fiji, honoured in the Policy Leadership category for his global climate action work and his commitment to climate-responsive national development**Inspiration and Action:**
 - Yacouba Sawadogo (Burkina Faso), also honoured in the Inspiration and Action category for teaching farmers his traditional nature-based solution to regenerate their soil and turn barren land into arable land and forest across Africa**Inspiration and Action:**
 - Nemonte Nenquimo (Ecuador), awarded in the Inspiration and Action category for her leadership and unifying work with indigenous communities that halted drilling in Ecuador's Amazon rainforest**Science and Innovation:**
 - Dr Fabian Leendertz (Germany), honoured in the Science and Innovation category for his discoveries in zoonotic and his work in One Health**Entrepreneur Vision:**
 - Mindy Lubber (USA), recognized in the Entrepreneurial Vision category for her commitment to turning capital markets green by mobilizing top investors and companies and making the business case for climate action and sustainability**Lifetime Achievement Award:**
 - Professor Robert D. Bullard (USA) who was awarded the Champion of the Earth Lifetime Achievement award for his commitment and service to environmental justice.
 - The UN Environment Program (UNEP) is presenting the Champions of the Earth Award since 2005, to inspire and motivate more people to act for nature. The award recognizes outstanding environmental leaders from the public and private sectors, and from civil society for their pioneering initiatives aimed at healing the planet amid natural and man-made threats and whose activities have had a positive impact on the environment.

Myanmar's Paul Sein Twa receives Goldman Environmental Prize 2020

- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Asia Regional Office awarded Paul Sein Twa, for Goldman Environmental Prize 2020 for Asia. This award is given to him for his

efforts in promoting the self-determination of the Karen people in managing their natural resources.

- Paul is the co-founder of the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN), established in 2001.
- Paul and his team at KESAN supported Karen indigenous communities in establishing the Salween Peace Park in Myanmar and on the border of Thailand.
- The Peace Park represents a unique community-based approach to conservation in one of Asia's biodiversity hotspots.
- The Salween Basin is home to vast stretches of teak forests, teeming with tigers, sun bears, and clouded leopards.
- The Goldman Environmental Prize is one of the most prestigious environmental prizes awarded annually to grassroots environmental activists, one from each of the world's six geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Islands and Island Nations, North America, and South and Central America.

UNESCO launches Bangabandhu award on creative economy

- UNESCO has launched an international award named after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman following Bangladesh's proposal. The UN agency's executive board unanimously adopted the proposal on UNESCO-Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman International Prize for the "Creative Economy" in its 210th session. This is the first time a UN agency launched an award named after Bangabandhu.
- The award will create the opportunity to spread Bangabandhu's ideals across the world and inspire the global cultural activists to contribute to the field of the creative economy.
- It will also play a "special" role in branding and image-building of Bangladesh.
- The award will be given every two years with \$50,000 prize money – three times in six years. The renewal of the award will be discussed later.
- The first UNESCO-Bangabandhu award is set to be given in the 41st session of the UNESCO's general conference in November 2021. Bangladesh proposed the award in August 2019.
- The UNESCO launches awards in recognition of the contribution of leaders in several fields, such as education, culture, science and technology, with the financial help of the member states. It had launched 22 awards named after noted individuals or organisations.

Ashraf Patel wins Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award – India 2020

- Ashraf Patel, the founder member and Board member of Pravah and ComMutiny – The Youth Collective (CYC) has been declared as the winner of the Social Entrepreneur of the Year (SEOY) Award – India 2020. The award was presented by the Union Minister of Women & Child Development & Textiles, Smriti Zubin Irani.
- The SEOY award "recognizes entrepreneurs who implement innovative, sustainable and scalable solutions to solve India's social problems. It is the 11th edition of the annual award, instituted by the Schwab Foundation and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation in 2010.

Bajrang Punia, Elavenil Valarivan bag Sportsperson of the Year awards

- Indian athletes, Bajrang Punia (Freestyle-Wrestling) and Elavenil Valarivan (Shooting), bagged the top honours at the virtually held FICCI India Sports Awards 2020 on the back of the 10th Global Sports Summit. The two athletes, who have had an impressive 2019-20 season, won the Sportsperson of the Year awards in their respective categories.
- | Award | Personality |
|--|--------------------|
| Sportsperson of the Year (Female) | Elavenil Valarivan |
| Sportsperson of the Year (Male) | Bajrang Punia |
| Best State Promoting Sports Award | Madhya Pradesh |
| Best Company Promoting Sports (Private Sector) | Anil Kumble |
- The sports awards are an attempt by industry body, Federation of Indian Commerce and Industry (FICCI) to acknowledge and recognise the contribution of sportspersons and various stakeholders who deliver excellent results throughout the year.

Carolina Araujo awarded 2020 Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians

- The year 2020 Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians was awarded to Dr Carolina Araujo, Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Her work area focuses on birational geometry, which aims to classify and describe the structure of algebraic varieties.
- The prize is awarded annually to a researcher from a developing country funded by the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India in association with ICTP (International Centre for Theoretical Physics), and the International Mathematical Union (IMU) was given for her outstanding work in algebraic geometry.
- Dr. Araujo, who is Vice President of the Committee for Women in Mathematics at the International Mathematical Union, is the first non-Indian women mathematician to receive this prize and will be a role model for all women around the world.

Invest India wins United Nations Investment Promotion Award 2020

- The Geneva-based United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has awarded the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award to Invest India, the National Investment Promotion Agency of India. The Invest India was declared the winner from among the 180 global Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs).
- The response of IPAs to the C-19 pandemic was the basis for the evaluation of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award. The annual award recognizes and celebrates the outstanding achievements and best practices of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) across the globe.

Raj Kamal Jha wins Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize

- Journalist-author, Raj Kamal Jha has won the 3rd Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for his novel, "The City and The Sea". Due to the C-19 pandemic, the winner of the \$5,000 prize was announced online in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Jha's book, which is based on the December 2012 Nirbhaya rape and murder case, was

chosen from ten shortlisted books including Amitav Ghosh's Gun Island, Nirmala Govindarajan's Taboo and Ranjit Hoskote's Jonahwhale.

- The Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for Social Achievement 2020 was conferred to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, the late Sultan of Oman and The People of Oman,
- Renowned Indian choreographer Sandip Soparrkar for his contribution to the betterment of society through his initiative Dance for a Cause.

ICAR wins 2020 King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), has won the prestigious International King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award for 2020. The award was presented annually by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The award was conferred to the ICAR on the occasion of World Soil Day, on December 5. ICAR India will officially receive the award by Her Royal Highness, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand, during an event in Bangkok in January 2021.
- ICAR has been conferred the award for its commitment to raising awareness of the importance of healthy soils at the World Soil Day celebration in 2019, which addressed soil erosion under the motto "Stop soil erosion, save our future".
- The programme was organised by Bhopal-based Indian Institute of Soil Science, an autonomous institute for higher learning, established under the umbrella of Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

Serum Institute's Adar Poonawalla named as 1 of 6 "Asians Of The Year"

- Adar Poonawalla, the Chief Executive of the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), has been named among six "The Straits Times Asians of the Year" for 2020, by Singapore's leading daily, The Straits Times, for their work in fighting the C-19 pandemic.
- SII has collaborated with the University of Oxford and the British-Swedish pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca to develop C-19 vaccine, 'C-19 shield', and is conducting trials in India.

The other five Asians of the Year includes:

- Chinese researcher Zhang Yongzhen
- China's Major-General Chen Wei,
- Japan's Dr Ryuichi Morishita
- Singapore's Professor Ooi Eng Eong
- South Korean businessman Seo Jung-jin
- The Straits Times has collectively referred these 6 winners as "the virus busters", because they are heroes of a kind, having devoted themselves to the pressing cause of resolving the C-19 pandemic, each in their own capacity.

RANKING

India ranks 111 in Human Freedom Index 2020

- A worldwide ranking of civil, economic and personal freedom, the Human Freedom Index 2020 was released. India was placed at the 111th spot out of 162 countries. In 2019, India

ranked 94 on the index.

- The first three spots have been bagged by New Zealand, Switzerland and Hong Kong. The United States and the United Kingdom are tied at the 17th spot on the index. War-torn Syria ranked the last on the list.
- India's scored 6.30 out of 10 in personal freedom and 6.56 in economic freedom. The country's overall human freedom score was 6.43.
- However, India has been ranked ahead of China and Bangladesh, which ranked 129 and 139 on the 2020 index respectively.
- Human Freedom Index was published by American think tank Cato Institute and Fraser Institute in Canada. The index takes into account 76 indicators of personal, civil, and economic freedoms to rank 162 countries from 2008 to 2018. The institutes noted that the world has seen a notable decline in personal freedom since 2008.

India ranks 131 in Human Development Index 2020

- According to the report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), India has been dropped two spots to 131 among 189 countries in the 2020 Human Development Index.
- Norway topped the index, followed by Ireland, Switzerland, Hong Kong and Iceland, the report showed.
- Niger is the lowest ranked country at 189, placed among Low human development category, with a score of 0.394.
- India(131), Bhutan (129), Bangladesh (133), Nepal (142), and Pakistan (154) were ranked among countries with medium human development.
- In the BRICS grouping, Russia was 52 in the human development index, Brazil 84, and China 85.
- Between 1990 and 2019, India's life expectancy at birth increased by 11.8 years, mean years of schooling increased by 3.5 years, and expected years of schooling increased by 4.5 years.
- India's GNI per capita increased by about 273.9% between 1990 and 2019. Life expectancy for Indian's at birth was 69.7 years in 2019, slightly lower than the south Asian average of 69.9 years, but slightly higher than the average of medium human development index groupings in the world at 69.3 years.
- The Human Development Index measures average achievement of the countries in 3 basic dimensions of human development i.e. life expectancy, education and per capita income.

Lakshadweep declared first UT to become 100% organic

- The Ministry of Agriculture has declared Lakshadweep as India's first Union Territory to become 100 per cent organic.
- All farming activity in the UT is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, which provides access to safer food choices and making agriculture a more environment-friendly activity.
- Lakshadweep is second only to Sikkim, which was India's first state to be declared

completely organic. This comes after the UT received proper certifications and declarations under the Centre's ParamparagatKrishiVikasYojana.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at 41 on Forbes 2020 list

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has grabbed the 41st spot in the 2020 list of Forbes 100 most powerful women in the world. This is the second time she features in the list, in 2019 ranked at 34 and ranked 41st in 2020.
- India's leading Businesswomen, Kiran Mazumdar-shaw, Chairman of Biocon Limited also featured in the list at 68th position. The list also saw the biggest jump in ranking to 3rd position by Kamala Harris, Vice President-Elect of USA, and Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina Wajed is ranked at 39.

Rank	Personality	Profession
1	Angela Merkel	Chancellor, Germany
2	Christine Lagarde	President, European Central Bank
3	Kamala Harris	Vice President-elect, United States
4	Ursula von der Leyen	President, European Commission, European Union
5	Melinda Gates	Co-Chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
41	Nirmala Sitharaman	Finance Minister of India
68	Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw	Founder, Chair and Managing Director, Biocon Ltd.

India Ranks 10th in the Climate Change Performance Index 2021

- India is ranked at 10th place in the 'Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2021', released on 7th December 2020. The overall score of India is 63.98. It is for the second time in a row that India emerged among the top 10 countries with higher climate performance from among 58 economies. India was at 9th spot last year in the index.
- Like CCPI 2020, the first three places in 2021 ranking also remains unoccupied, since none of the countries is on the path compatible with the Paris climate targets, to implement strategies to limit global warming below 2 or even 1.5°C. Sweden (4th) United Kingdom (5th), Denmark (6th), Morocco (7th), Norway (8th), Chile (9th) were among the top 10 rankers in the index. It was also noted that, from the G20 countries, only the EU as a whole, along with the UK and India, ranked among high performers.

India Ranks 10th in the Climate Change Performance Index 2021

- India is ranked at 10th place in the 'Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2021', released on 7th December 2020. The overall score of India is 63.98. It is for the second time in a row that India emerged among the top 10 countries with higher climate performance from among 58 economies. India was at 9th spot last year in the index.
- Like CCPI 2020, the first three places in 2021 ranking also remains unoccupied, since none of the countries is on the path compatible with the Paris climate targets, to implement

strategies to limit global warming below 2 or even 1.5°C. Sweden (4th) United Kingdom (5th), Denmark (6th), Morocco (7th), Norway (8th), Chile (9th) were among the top 10 rankers in the index. It was also noted that, from the G20 countries, only the EU as a whole, along with the UK and India, ranked among high performers.

Manipur's Nongpok Sekmai Police Station best in India

- The Nongpok Sekmai Police Station in Manipur topped the list of best police stations in India, while Sooramangalam All Women Police Station at Salem, Tamil Nadu was adjudged the second best police station in the country. The Kharsang PS, Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district was adjudged the country's third-best police station.

Here is the list of Top 5 Police Stations for 2020:

State	District	Police Station
Manipur	Thoubal	Nongpok Sekmai
Tamil Nadu	Salem City	AWPS-Suramangalam
Arunachal Pradesh	Changlang	Kharsang
Chhattisgarh	Surajpur	Jhilmili (Bhaiya Thana)
Goa	South Goa	Sanguem

- The top 10 Police Stations were selected from among the 16,671 Police Stations in the country through data analysis, direct observation and public feedback.

HCL's Roshni Nadar tops Kotak Wealth-Hurun wealthy women list 2020

- Chairperson of HCL Technologies, Roshni Nadar Malhotra has topped the list of wealthiest women in India, according to the second edition of 'Kotak Wealth Hurun-Leading Wealthy Women' report. The report is compiled by Kotak Wealth Management, a division of Kotak Mahindra Bank, and Hurun India.
- Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw of Biocon and Leena Gandhi Tewari of USV are at the second and third rank respectively in the Kotak Wealth Hurun wealthy women list 2020. Shaw is also the wealthiest self-made woman on the list. 19 women from this list also feature in the Hurun India Rich List 2020, and 6 women have made it to the Hurun Global Rich List 2020.
- The ranking is based on the net worth of women as on September 30, 2020, and focuses exclusively on women who play an active role in their family business, entrepreneurs and professionals.

Reliance Industries tops Fortune India 500 Ranking 2020

- Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has topped the 2020 Fortune 500 list of Indian companies, released. The revenue of RIL clocked Rs 615,854.00, accounting for 7% of cumulative revenues and 11 per cent profit of the companies. The country's biggest oil firm, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), bagged the second spot, followed by Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) at the third position. The list was published by Fortune India, which is part of the Kolkata-based RP Sanjiv Goenka Group.

Top 10 companies on the 2020 Fortune India-500 list:

1. Reliance Industries
2. Indian Oil Corporation
3. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation
4. State Bank of India
5. Bharat Petroleum Corporation
6. Tata Motors
7. Rajesh Exports
8. Tata Consultancy Services
9. ICICI Bank
10. Larsen & Toubro

India ranked 8th in Global Terrorism Index 2020

- In the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2020, India has been ranked at 8th spot globally in the list of countries most affected by terrorism in 2019. The GTI score of India is 7.353 out of 10. India recorded 277 Deaths, 439 Injuries & 558 Incidents due to Terrorism in 2019. Regionally, South Asia was the most impacted region by terrorism in 2019, recording more deaths than any other region. Also, globally the deaths caused due to terrorism fell by 15 per cent to 13,286 in 2019 over 2018.

India:

- Jammu and Kashmir was the most affected Region due to terrorism, it reported 165 attacks and 103 deaths. The three most active groups in Kashmir was Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Hizbul Mujahideen & Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).
- Chhattisgarh was the second most affected region in India with 85 attacks and 53 deaths all from Maoist Extremists.

Countries Most Affected by Terrorism:

- With a score of 9.592, Afghanistan has topped the index as the worst terror impacted nation among the 163 countries.
- It is followed by Iraq (8.682) and Nigeria (8.314) at second and third place respectively.

Countries Least Affected by Terrorism:

- Qatar (0.014) took the 133rd Rank followed by Uzbekistan (0.010) in the 134th Rank and around 29 Countries (score of 0.000) took the 135th Rank which means they are Least Affected Countries or Face No Impact due to Terrorism.

US Air Quality Index: Lahore is world's most polluted city

- Lahore, the cultural capital Pakistan, has been ranked as the world's most polluted city, according to air pollution data released by the US Air Quality Index (AQI). Lahore reported a particulate matter (PM) rating of 423. New Delhi stood second with a PM of 229, while Nepal's capital Kathmandu ranked the third with a PM of 178.
- The Air Quality Index (AQI) is released by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to give people an idea of whether it's safe to breathe the air.
- AQI is based on the levels of five major pollutants regulated by the EPA: ground-level

- ozone, particulate matter (PM2.5), carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide.
- AQI measures air quality by placing it on a scale of 0-500, where air quality is regarded as satisfactory if the AQI is under 50.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Late Justice Rajindar Sachar's Autobiography: 'In Pursuit of Justice'

- The family of Late Justice Rajindar Sachar in association with The Indian Society of International Law and The Indian Law Institute is organizing the book launch "In Pursuit Of Justice: An Autobiography" written by Late Justice Rajindar Sachar. The book has been posthumously published.
- Justice Rajindar Sachar was a socialist, an egalitarian, a defender of civil liberties, a deeply engaged citizen of India, and, above all, a humanist.
- A man who believed in standing for the last man in the line, he was 'armed' with a moral compass that never wavered.
- He joined the Delhi High Court in 1970 but was transferred out of Delhi for voicing his opposition to the Emergency.
- During those dark days, he shared a close bond with justice H.R. Khanna, the lone voice of dissent in a Supreme Court that chose to side with Indira Gandhi.
- Brought back to Delhi after the Emergency, he rose to become the Chief Justice of the Delhi High

Union Minister Shripad Naik Releases book "Sutranivednachi sutra- ek anbv"

- Union Minister of State (I/C) for AYUSH and Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik released a Konkani book "Sutranivednachi sutra- ek anbv", by Dr Roopa Chari on 26 December, 2020. It is published by Sanjana Publications .
- Dr. Roopa Chari is a well-known personality in the field of Compering in Goa.
- This book will help aspiring youngsters, who wish to make a career in this field. This is the spontaneous art; you don't nurture it by having any classes. With proper study, you always have to be vigilant, as compere is the link between the audience and the speaker.

A new book titled 'Covid-19: Sabhyata ka Sankat aur Samadhan' released

- Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi's new book titled 'Covid-19: Sabhyata ka Sankat Aur Samadhan' (Covid-19: Crisis of Civilisation and Solutions) was launched by former Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra and Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh. The Hindi book, published by Prabhat Prakashan.
- The new book discusses how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the common way of life while suggesting solutions to the ongoing crisis triggered by the disease. The book discusses how the pandemic has influenced the education system, business, politics, public safety, foreign policy, law, medicine, economy and development of countries.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay-NIF book prize announced

- The winners of the Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay New India Foundation Book Prize 2020 for the best non-fiction book on contemporary/ modern India were announced. The Prize was given jointly to Amit Ahuja for his Mobilizing the Marginalized: Ethnic Parties without Ethnic Movements (Oxford University Press) and to former Union minister Jairam Ramesh for his A Chequered Brilliance: The Many Lives of VK Krishna Menon (Penguin Random House), a biography of politician and diplomat VK Krishna Menon.
- The award carries a citation and a cash prize of Rs 15 lakh, that will be shared by the two authors.

VP Venkaiah Naidu virtually released the book 'Oh Mizoram'

- VP Venkaiah Naidu virtually released the book 'Oh Mizoram', written by Governor of Mizoram, Shri P S Sreedharan Pillai. Pillai is a lawyer, an orator, a prolific writer, a philanthropist, and a thinker.
- He has written 125 books in Malayalam & English. Oh, Mizoram is his first poetry collection in English.

Devendra Fadnavis releases book 'Ayodhya' written by Madhav Bhandari

- Maharashtra former Chief Minister and present leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, Devendra Fadnavis has released the book 'Ayodhya' written by Madhav Bhandari. The book will serve as a key reference document summarising the protests held for the cause of a Ram temple in Ayodhya.
- The book brings together various references that are related to Ayodhya town in Uttar Pradesh. The invaders had destroyed the Ram temple there and a defeatist mentality was thrust upon Hindus for years to come. The (temple) campaign was undertaken to counter this mentality and awaken the community.

Om Birla releases book on 19th anniversary of Parliament attack

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has released a book on the occasion of the 19th anniversary of the Parliament attack on 13 December.
- He released the book 'The Shaurya Unbound' (English Version) and 'Samundar Samawe Boond Mein' (Hindi Version) was released on the 2001 incident. As many as 14 people including the five terrorists died during the incident.

Vice President releases a book on Former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam

- The Vice President of India, M Venkaiah Naidu has released the book titled "40 Years with Abdul Kalam- Untold Stories", a book on the life of the former President of India Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. The book was authored by Dr A.Sivathanu Pillai. The book is published by Pentagon Press LLP and the foreword was written by Pranab Mukherjee, former president of India.
- The book provided a first-hand account of the life of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, who was described as the epitome of simplicity, honesty and wisdom.

- Dr. Kalam strengthened the Defence sector of India and contributed to the development of India's space capabilities.
- The book discusses his life events including the events at ISRO, DRDO and BrahMos and his interaction with the power corridors
- Dr A. Sivathanu Pillai has assisted Dr Vikram Sarabhai during the evolution of the ten-year space profiles and worked with Dr APJ Abdul Kalam in Satellite Launch Vehicle-3 (SLV3) and Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) configuration design and with Prof. Satish Dhawan in the study of future ISRO launch vehicles and missions.

Ministry of I&B release booklet on birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji

- A booklet titled 'PM Modi and his Government's special relationship with Sikhs' was released, on the occasion of birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It has been produced by Bureau of Outreach Communication under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and is released in three languages Hindi, Punjabi and English.
- The booklet was jointly inaugurated by the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Shri Prakash Javadekar and Union Minister for Civil Aviation and Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri. The Minister credited the Prime Minister for personally supervising the smallest of arrangements and personally seeing off the first Jattha for Kartarpur Corridor.
- Mentioning other important decisions, the Minister highlighted the decision on no taxation on Langars, FCRA Registration to Sri Harmandir Sahib, allowing global Sangat participation, revision of 'Blacklist' as per the demand of Sikh community et al.

A book titled 'Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific' by ADB

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has released a new book titled 'Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific'.
- The book provides insight on how stronger regional cooperation strategies, including in health, trade, finance, and disaster risk, can help governments in Asia and the Pacific accelerate economic growth and robust recovery from the C-19 pandemic. It also explores opportunities for economies in the region to work together to recover and rebuild from the C-19 pandemic.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

ICICI Bank and Google Pay collaborate to bring digital registration of FASTag

- ICICI Bank has announced that it is collaborating with Google to issue FASTag. It has become the first bank to join hands with Google Pay for the issuance of FASTag. Customers will now be able to order, track and recharge ICICI Bank FASTag via the Google Pay app. Currently, Google Pay users could recharge their FASTag on the app, but purchasing one directly from the Google app was not possible.
- The new partnership will now allow users to conveniently order, track, and recharge ICICI Bank FASTags from the app itself. The government has made January 1, 2021, as the new date for mandatorily adding FASTags to vehicles.

- The announcement makes ICICI Bank the first bank to join hands with Google Pay for the issuance of FASTag. This will also add competition for Paytm, which currently issues FASTags from the app as well and is quite a popular choice for many customers.
- The association gains prominence during the widespread pandemic as this allows any Google Pay user to order and receive FASTag in a seamless and contact-less manner.

AU Small Finance, ICICI Pru Life tie up to offer life insurance solutions

- AU Small Finance Bank has announced a strategic partnership with ICICI Prudential Life Insurance to offer life insurance solutions. The tie-up aims to deliver “paperless, secure, and hassle-free life insurance”.
- Through the corporate agency arrangement, over 18 lakh customers of AU Bank across over 700 banking touchpoints in 13 states and 2 Union territories, will have easy access to the entire suite of customer-centric protection and long-term savings products of ICICI Prudential Life. AU Bank even claimed that these products will enable customers to provide financial security to themselves and their families and help them achieve their financial goals.

TCS crosses ₹11 trln in market capitalisation

- Tata Consultancy Services Ltd's market capitalisation surged past ₹11 trillion on Monday, making it the second Indian firm after Reliance Industries Ltd to achieve this milestone.
- Shares of TCS jumped nearly 1.2% intraday to hit an all-time high of ₹2942 a piece on the BSE with a market capitalisation of ₹11.03 trillion. So far, this year, the scrip has surged 36%.
- Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd remains India's most valued company with an mcap of ₹12.75 trillion.
- Of the 47 brokerages tracking TCS, 26 have recommend buy, 14 have maintained sell, while 7 have put hold rating on the stock, according to Bloomberg.

Tesla to start selling cars in India in early 2021

- Billionaire Elon Musk's clean energy and electric vehicle company Tesla will start operations in India early next year, confirmed Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari.
- Tesla is initially expected to sell its vehicles in India, and it would also look at setting up a manufacturing facility at a later stage depending on demand.
- Gadkari has already held a few rounds of talks with top Tesla executives. Some states have also held meetings with the electric car company for sales of its vehicles in India.

Dixon Technologies' subsidiary to make smartphones for Motorola

- Dixon Technologies said its wholly-owned subsidiary Padget Electronics will begin making smartphones for Motorola.
- Padget Electronics has inked an agreement with Motorola Mobility LLC for manufacturing smartphones, the statement added.

- The products will be manufactured at Padget's manufacturing facility located at Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

RBI cancels the Licence of the Subhadra Local Area Bank, Maharashtra

- The Reserve Bank of India has cancelled the banking licence issued to Subhadra Local Area Bank Ltd., Kolhapur, Maharashtra to carry on banking business in India. The Reserve Bank cancelled the licence of the Subhadra Local Area Bank Ltd as it had breached the minimum net worth requirement for two quarters in the financial year 2019-20.
- The affairs of the Subhadra Local Area Bank Ltd. were conducted in a manner detrimental to the interests of its present and future depositors. After this, there are only two Local Area Banks operational in India, i.e. – Coastal Local Area Bank Ltd and Krishna Bhima Samruddhi LAB Ltd.

HDFC Bank ranks top among 100 BFSI Firms in India

- HDFC Bank is the top-ranked company among the 100 Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) companies in the country, as per the BFSI Movers and Shakers 2020 report by Wizikey. HDFC Bank has topped because of its customer service, monetary management, and innovative offerings amid the coronavirus pandemic.
- ICICI Bank and State Bank of India (SBI) are ranked second and third, respectively. Other top 10 banks in 2020 Wizikey's BFSI Movers and Shakers report are Yes Bank, PNB, HSBC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bank of Baroda, Deutsche Bank, and IDBI.
- Wallet and UPI segment: Google Pay.
- Neo Banks segment: YONO.
- Payments bank category: Airtel Payments Bank.

Ind-Ra revises India's GDP contraction to 7.8% for FY21

- India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has revised India's GDP estimate for the current financial year 2020-21 (FY21) to -7.8 per cent from -11.8 per cent estimated earlier.
- This lower contraction rate is mainly due to the easing of C-19 curbs and better-than-expected recovery in the second quarter. Ind-Ra has also estimated the GDP to grow by 9.6% in 2021-22 (FY22).

PayU ties up with Google Pay to introduce tokenised payments

- PayU with Google Pay has introduced tokenised payments flow for Indian merchants. With the digital token linked to the phone and card information tokenised, Google Pay users can make repeat payments seamlessly and securely. Through the option of one-click payment, one doesn't need to re-enter the payment data, as the OTP is read automatically and the payment is processed instantaneously.
- Tokenised payments offer a highly convenient, safe, and friction-free payment experience, and we are excited to partner with Google Pay to make this available for our merchants. It will help them build lasting trust and loyalty with customers, reduce risks of cart abandonment and payment failures, and scale up their businesses.

BoB signs MoU with defence forces named "Baroda Military Salary package"

- Bank of Baroda (BoB) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard under which the bank would offer customised services along with a host of facilities to account holders. The bank has also renewed its existing MoU with the Indian Army to offer specially customised banking services through "Baroda Military Salary Package".
- Services under "Baroda Military Salary Package" will be offered to serving and retired personnel of Indian Armed Forces through the Bank's network of over 8,200 domestic branches and around 20,000 business correspondent touchpoints.
- The package offers very attractive benefits including free Personal Accidental Insurance cover, Permanent Total Disability cover, Partial disability Cover and Air Accident Insurance Cover of sizable amounts, as well as Higher Education Cover and Girl Child Marriage Cover on death in case of serving personnel.
- Other offerings under the package include unlimited free ATM transactions at all bank ATMs, waivers or concessions on various service charges in retail loans, free remittance facility through RTGS/NEFT, free Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque, substantial discount in locker rentals, and various additional benefits in the usage of Cards.

ICICI Bank launches online portal 'Infinite India'

- ICICI Bank has launched an online platform 'Infinite India' to support foreign companies to establish or expand business in India. The one-stop portal will offer banking solutions as well as value-added services such as the incorporation of a business entity, corporate filings, licences and registrations, HR services, compliances and taxation among others.
- Through this initiative, ICICI bank aims to strengthen its position in the multinational corporations (MNC) segment. The initiative is part of our strategy to further strengthen our technology-enabled offerings aimed to partner with foreign companies coming to India.

ADB announces Rs 2100 crore loan to Tripura

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has announced to provide Rs 2,100 crore loan to the Tripura government for the development of urban areas and tourism in the northeastern state. From the total fund of Rs 2,100 crore, Rs 1600 crore will be for urban development and Rs 500 crore for the tourism sector.
- Under this, all 20 urban local bodies in Tripura would be covered and in the tourism sector, all tourism destinations, roads leading to them and tourist facilities would be covered.
- Under the loan arrangement, initially ADB would provide Rs 40 crore for engagement of project design and management consultants for urban and tourism sectors.
- Once the projects are prepared, ADB would provide Rs 1,600 crore for development works in urban areas and Rs 500 crore in the tourism sector over the next three years.

Central Bank of India ties up with NPCI to launch 'RuPay Select'

- The Central Bank of India has launched a unique variant of a contactless debit card under

the name 'RuPay Select', in association with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). Central Bank RuPay Select Debit cardholders will be able to avail complimentary membership and concessional access to golf courses, gyms, spas and restaurants.

- This RuPay Debit Select Card will focus on customers' lifestyle, fitness, rejuvenation, nutrition and personal care.
- The card comes with features such as airport lounge access to over 20 domestic and more than 500 international lounges.
- The card will also facilitate offline transactions in both transits as well as retail purchases.
- Apart from this, the cardholders would also be entitled to discounted health check-ups with this National Common Mobility Debit Card (NCMC).
- Additionally, it comes up with an accidental and permanent disability insurance cover up to 10 lakh at no extra cost to customers.

RBI extends restrictions on PMC Bank for 3 months

- Reserve Bank of India has further extended the restrictions on crisis-ridden Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank by three months till 31 March 2021. The bank has also received four Expression of Interest (EoI) for its revival. To examine them, the bank would need some more time. These proposals will be examined by the bank with regard to their viability and feasibility taking into account the best interest of the depositors.
- As per the Expression of Interest, the bank wants to identify a suitable equity investor/group of investors willing to take over management control so as to revive the bank and commence regular day-to-day operations.
- The PMC bank was placed under Directions by RBI with effect from the close of its business on September 23, 2019, and superseded the bank's board due to a huge fraud perpetrated by the promoter of a real estate group and some bank officials.
- The Directions for PMC Bank were last extended for a further period of six months from June 23, 2020, to December 22, 2020.

World Bank approves several projects to support development in India

- The World Bank has approved 4 India projects worth over \$800 million. The projects will support a range of development initiatives that supports the efforts of India to rebuild itself by creating a sustainable and resilient economy.

The projects that have been approved are:

1. \$400 million Second Accelerating India's C-19 Social Protection Response Program.
2. \$100 million Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural and Accelerated Agriculture Growth Project (CHIRAG).
3. \$68 million Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project.
4. \$250 million Second Dam Improvement and Rehabilitation Project (DRIP-2).

\$400 Million Second Accelerating India's C-19 Social Protection Response Program:

- The Government of India and the World Bank signed a \$400 million Second Accelerating India's C-19 Social Protection Response Program.

- The project supports and protects India's efforts to provide social assistance to poor and vulnerable households, severely affected by the C-19 pandemic.
 - It is the 2nd operation in a programmatic series of 2. The 1st operation of \$750 million was approved in May 2020. The Program builds on the outcomes achieved by the 1st operation.
- CHIRAAG project:**
- Amount sanctioned: USD 100 million
 - CHIRAAG aims at promoting nutrition-supportive agriculture for tribal households in Chhattisgarh
 - It will develop sustainable production systems that allow tribal households in remote areas of Chhattisgarh to practice round-the-year production of diversified and nutritious food.
 - It will be implemented in the southern tribal-majority region of the state where a large population is undernourished and poor.
 - The project will benefit over 180,000 households from about 1,000 villages in eight districts of Chhattisgarh.

Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project

- Amount approved: USD 68 million
- It will improve classroom instruction; create opportunities for the professional development of teachers, and build technology systems to provide students and teachers with more access to blended and online learning as well as allow better monitoring of policies and programs.
- It will enhance overall quality education in the state

Dam Improvement and Rehabilitation Project (DRIP-2):

- Financial aid approved: USD 250 million.
- DRIP-2 will improve the safety and performance of existing dams across various states of India, and strengthen dam safety by building dam safety guidelines; bring in global experience; and introduce newer technologies.

Paytm launches 24x7 RTGS money transfer for merchants

- Digital financial services platform Paytm has launched a 24x7 RTGS facility to support the companies that make high-value transactions. It also enables businesses to make bulk and instant money transfers to their employees, vendors & partners. Customers can instantly make bulk payments to Bank Accounts, UPI addresses, and Paytm Wallets through Paytm Payouts' APIs and Paytm for Business Dashboard.
- Paytm Payout is the only service provider that offers seamless round the clock money transfers through Wallet, UPI, IMPS, NEFT & RTGS. The company has made this announcement after Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decision to make RTGS facility 24x7. This service saves time and resources and it is beneficial for SME & large enterprises who use it to adopt an automated payment mechanism.

SBI General Insurance, IntrCity RailYatri partner to offer ₹5L travel cover

- SBI General Insurance partnered with IntrCity RailYatri, to provide travel insurance of ₹5 lakh on tickets for bus commuters opting to travel through IntrCity RailYatri.
- The travel cover is offered on buying the ticket. Under this partnership, SBI General insurance will provide a wide variety of coverage including accidental death, permanent total disability, and medical evacuation.

RBI imposes Rs 50 lakh fine on Urban Co-operative Bank in Kerala

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 50.00 lakh on The Urban Co-operative Bank Ltd in Kerala. This fine is imposed for non-compliance with directions issued on Income Recognition and Asset Classification (IRAC) norms and on Management of Advances-UCBs.
- Statutory inspection of the bank with reference to its financial position as on March 31, 2019, conducted by RBI, revealed that the bank had not complied with the directions, the central bank said in a statement. A notice was issued to the bank asking why penalty should not be imposed for non-compliance with the directions issued by RBI.

India pledges USD 1 million to WADA to support Clean Sport

- India has pledged a sum of USD 1 million to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), towards its scientific research budget, to ensure an atmosphere of Clean Sport globally. The contribution made by India is the highest among contributions made by other world governments, including China, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This contribution is over and above the annual contribution made to WADA's core budget by India.
- The sum will be used by WADA to develop innovative anti-doping testing and detection methods, and further strengthen WADA's independent Investigations and Intelligence Department. The total contribution of all member nations will be matched by an equal sum by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to create a corpus of USD 10 million.

Canara Bank unveils "FX 4 U" for forex remittance via Internet Banking

- Canara Bank has launched FX 4 U that enables its entire internet banking users to handle forex transactions hasslefree. FX 4 U is used for forex remittance through internet banking. With this development, eligible customers will be able to undertake remittance facility in adherence to the FEMA regulations 1999.
- Once the letter of credit (LC) module is activated, the corporate customers can make and submit LC applications with documents through internet banking.
- Corporate customers can make and submit the LC applications along with documents through internet banking once the LC module is activated.
- The transactions that are submitted through internet banking will flow seamlessly to the Centralized Process Centre – Forex Transactions(CPCFT), where the Compliance and accounting will be done and transmitted through The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT).

India Post Payments Bank unveils new digital payment app 'DakPay'

- The India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) along with Department of Posts (DoP) launched a digital payment application called 'DakPay' on 15 December 2020, in an effort to provide Digital Financial inclusion at the last mile across India. The app was launched by Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology and Law & Justice, Ravi Shankar Prasad.
- The app 'DakPay' will facilitate the customers of the DoP and IPPB in easy digital transactions and other banking and postal services.
- This innovative App will help people transfer and receive money with ease and those who do not have smartphones can also do money transaction on this App with the assistance of postmen.
- DakPay is not just a digital payment app but a suite of digital financial and assisted banking services provided by India Post and IPPB through the trusted Postal network across the nation to cater to the financial needs of various sections of the society.

CRISIL slows contraction rate for India at -7.7% in FY21

- Rating agency CRISIL has lowered the contraction rate of India's GDP and now expects the growth rate of the Indian economy to contract 7.7% in the ongoing fiscal 2020-21, compared to the 9% forecast in September 2020, due to "faster-than-expected" recovery in the second quarter. For the fiscal 2021-22 (FY22), CRISIL expects the growth to bounce back to 10%.

RBI to set up Automated Banknote Processing Centre in Jaipur

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to set up an Automated Banknote Processing Centre (ABPC) in Jaipur for the receipt, storage and dispatch of currency notes. The functions of the ABPC will also include processing of banknotes received from currency chests (CCs) and bank branches and destruction of soiled banknotes in an automated manner. The volume of banknotes in circulation has increased three-fold from March 2001 to March 2019 and is expected to rise further in the years to come.
- RBI is the sole issuer of banknotes of the country and responsible for the management of currency and all its aspects.
- RBI is supplied with banknotes from four printing presses and coins from four mints.
- The new banknotes and coins are received at 19 issue offices of the bank located across the country from where these are further distributed to about 3,300 CCs operated by scheduled banks under an agency agreement with the RBI.
- The CCs act as storehouses and the currency stored there is distributed to various bank branches/ATM network for distribution to the public.
- The unfit notes withdrawn from circulation are verified through a Currency Verification and Processing System (CVPS) and destroyed by shredding.

RBL Bank, ICICI Prudential join hands for Bancassurance partnership

- RBL Bank and ICICI Prudential have joined hands under a bancassurance partnership. 398

RBL Bank branches across 28 states will distribute ICICI Prudential Life's protection and savings products.

- The protection products of ICICI Prudential Life will help the bank's customers to develop a strong financial plan and its long-term savings products will help the customers of the bank to achieve their financial goals.

BSE launches e-agricultural spot market platform 'BEAM'

- BSE Ltd. has launched an electronic spot platform, BSE E-Agricultural Markets Ltd (BEAM) , for agricultural commodities through its subsidiary BSE Investments Ltd.
- BEAM will function as a national level, institutionalised, electronic, transparent commodity spot trading platform in line with the Prime Minister's vision to create a single market.
- With the help of BEAM, farmers in one state will be able to reach out to markets in other states and auction their produce.
- The farmers will be able to discover best prices for their produce based on the quality, as well as build capacity to help intermediaries, processors and exporters procure from states.
- Equitas Small Finance Bank launches 3-in-1 account for saving, trading & demat
- Equitas Small Finance Bank Ltd, (SFB) has launched a 3-in-1 account, which allows its customers to invest in wide variety of financial product using a single platform.
- A 3-in1 account (savings +trading+ demat) will help the customers to keep all their banking and financial investments under one umbrella entity. The bank will provide stock broking and demat services through referral arrangement with brokerage firms for trading and depository services.
- The financial products offered through the 3-in-1 account includes direct equity and F&O trading, MF investment across all AMCs, ETFs, corporate FDs, corporate bonds, government bonds, insurance products, National Pension Scheme (NPS) and initial public offerings.

ADB launches \$9 bn "APVAX" for Developing Countries

- The Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) has launched an initiative called, the Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX), for its developing member countries. The bank has allocated USD 9 billion for APVAX.
- APVAX will play a critical role in helping our developing members meet these challenges, overcome the pandemic, and focus on economic recovery.
- Through APVAX, the ADB will offer rapid and equitable support to its developing members, who need financing to procure vaccines as well as offer appropriate plans and knowledge to be able to safely, equitably and efficiently manage and deliver the C-19 vaccine.

BoB launches Atmanirbhar Women Gold Scheme

- Bank of Baroda (BoB) has recently launched the Atmanirbhar Women Scheme as part of its Baroda Gold Loan. This scheme aims to target the self-reliant woman in India. Under the scheme, the bank is offering loans at 0.50 per cent concession for women. The bank under the gold loan scheme is offering agri-gold loan at 0.25 per cent concession and for a retail loan at 0.50 per cent concession.

- This Atmanirbhar scheme is exclusively meant for helping women to be self-reliant. The scheme was launched at BOB's Ramamurthy Nagar branch in Bengaluru and simultaneously in 18 branches coming under 18 zones in the country.

Fitch Ratings lowers India's GDP contraction at 9.4% for FY21

- Fitch Ratings has revised the GDP growth rate for India in its Global Economic Outlook, and now expects the economy to contract 9.4 per cent in the current financial year 2020-21, as compared to (-)10.5 per cent forecast earlier. Fitch has also projected the FY22 GDP growth at 11 per cent and 6.3 per cent growth in FY23.

Nomura Expects India to be fastest growing Asian economy in FY21

- The Japanese research and brokerage house Nomura has projected India to be the fastest-growing Asian economy in 2021. Nomura has estimated the gross domestic product (GDP) growth of India for the calendar year 2021 (CY21) at 9.9%. For the calendar year 2020 (CY20), Nomura expects GDP growth at -7.1 per cent.

ICICI Bank Launches iMobile Pay to offer Payments

- The private lender ICICI Bank has launched a new version of its mobile payment app called iMobile Pay, to offer payment and banking services to customers of any bank. The latest version of the app is interoperable and will now allow payments and other banking services to even those customers who do not hold an ICICI Bank account.
- Using the app, the customers of other banks can link their bank account, generate a UPI ID and start paying, shopping, transfer funds to any bank account or to any other payment apps or digital wallets; or bill payments and online recharges, among others.
- It also offers instant banking services such as savings account, investments, loans, credit cards, gift cards, and travel cards, among others.

Kotak AMC launches REIT Funds of Funds scheme

- Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company (Kotak Mutual Fund), has launched Kotak International REIT Fund of Funds, India's first diversified REIT Mutual Fund. REIT stands for Real Estate Investment Trust.
- Kotak International REIT Fund of Funds is an open-ended mutual fund scheme that will invest in units of SMAM Asia REIT Sub Trust Fund.
- This mutual fund scheme will have a diversified investment portfolio comprising of listed REITs which will invest in real estate projects like residential, office, data centres, warehousing, retail and hospitality.
- The Kotak International REIT Fund of Funds will invest in units of Japan-based SMAM Asia REIT Sub Trust Fund.
- The SMAM Asia REIT Sub Trust Fund is one of the largest Asia Pacific (Ex Japan) REIT funds investing in listed REITs in the Asia Pacific region.
- It is managed by Sumitomo Mitsui DS Asset Management Company, which has a significant portfolio of listed Real Estate Investment Trusts in Singapore, Australia and Hong Kong.

PNB launches loan management solution 'LenS-The Lending Solution'

- Punjab National Bank (PNB) has launched a tech-based loan management solution 'LenS-The Lending Solution', to speed up and maintain accuracy in online loan processing and sanctioning of credit proposals. It is envisaged to be implemented in a phased manner for all kinds of loans. Under the Mudra scheme, the processing and sanction of credit proposals up to Rs 10 lakh including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) loans (fresh, renewal, enhancement and review) will be done by LenS.
- To standardise the system, process and assess formats for credit processing
- To auto-generate the loan documents for each type of credit facilities
- To reduce delay, cost and human errors involved in manual processing, digital record maintenance, security & data privacy.
- Ready to use monitoring and MIS reports for better tracking and transparency.

ADB approves \$190 million loan to upgrade power distribution in Bengaluru

- The Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a loan of \$190 million (approx Rs 1,400 crore) to modernize and upgrade the power distribution system in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The financial-assistance by ADB will be used for the Bengaluru Smart Energy Efficient Power Distribution Project.
- The \$190 million loan includes a \$100 million sovereign loan and a \$90 million non-sovereign guarantee loan to Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (BESCOM). BESCOM is one of five state-owned distribution utilities and the largest in Karnataka. This combination of sovereign and non-sovereign loans is being deployed by ADB in India on a pilot basis for the first time.

RTGS system to be available on 24x7 basis from December 14

- The Reserve Bank of India has announced that the Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system will be made available round the clock on all days of the year with effect from 00:30 hours on December 14, 2020. Presently RTGS system is available for customers between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM.
- RTGS shall continue to be governed by the RTGS System Regulations, 2013. RTGS shall be available for customer and inter-bank transactions round the clock, except for the interval between 'end-of-day' and 'start-of-day' processes, whose timings would be duly broadcasted through the RTGS system. Intra-Day Liquidity (IDL) facility shall be made available to facilitate smooth operations.

Axis Bank launches 'Axis Bank Rupifi Business Credit Card' for MSMEs

- Axis Bank Ltd in partnership with Rupifi and Visa launched 'Axis Bank Rupifi Business Credit Card' for MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). This Contactless Co-Branded credit card, powered by Visa is applicable only to the MSMEs businesses that transact on the aggregator platforms partnered with Rupifi PAN (Permanent Account Number) India for their business purchases. The card offers credit solutions to such MSMEs. It is only for

domestic transactions.

Average Credit Limit

- The average credit limit offered by the card will be between the range of Rs 1 Lakh and Rs 2 lakh per month.
- This will be decided on the basis of the business data of the transaction of the MSME with the aggregator platforms, GMV (Gross Monthly Volume) of the last 6 months and overall revenue among other factors.
- The joining fee is Rs 1000 and the annual fee is not required for this card.

Revolve feature & Interest-free Credit Period

- The card comes with a 51 days interest-free credit period.
- The revolving feature of the card provides the customers with an option to pay the full balance at the end of each billing cycle or to carry over the balance from one month to the next by paying a minimum amount.

RBI Monetary Policy: Policy Rate unchanged

- The six-member Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), headed by Governor Shaktikanta Das, has decided to maintain the status quo on policy rate amid sticky rate of inflation. At this point, the repo rate or the rate at which RBI lends to banks stands unchanged at 4 per cent. The reverse repo rate also stayed unchanged at 3.35 per cent. The MPC committee members voted unanimously in favour of the decision.
- The repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) has been kept unchanged at 4.00%.
- The reverse repo rate under the LAF has been kept unchanged at 3.35%.
- The marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate have been kept unchanged at 4.25%.

RBI Monetary Policy Highlights & Key Decisions:

- Governor Shaktikanta Das proposes to put in place criteria for NBFC dividend distribution, introduces risk-based audit in large NBFCs & co-op banks.
- RTGS will soon be made 24X7 in the next few days.
- The business sentiment of manufacturing firms is gradually improving.
- CPI inflation is seen at 6.8% for Q3 and 5.8% for Q4.
- Real GDP growth for FY21 is projected at -7.5%. Q3 FY-21 GDP is seen at +0.1% while Q4 FY-21 GDP is seen at +0.7%.
- Corporate bond spreads have narrowed to pre-covid levels.
- RBI proposes to enhance limits for contactless card payments from ₹2000 to ₹5000 from Jan 2021.
- On-tap Targeted Long Term Repo Operations (TLTRO) will be expanded to cover other stressed sectors in tandem with Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) scheme.

RBI orders HDFC Bank to halt its digital launches

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued an order to HDFC Bank with regard to certain

incidents of outages in the internet banking, mobile banking and payment utilities of the lender over the past 2 years, the private sector bank informed to the stock exchanges. The RBI also noted the recent outages in the HDFC Bank's internet banking and payment system on November 21, 2020, owing to a power failure in the primary data centre.

The RBI vide Order has advised the Bank to temporarily stop:

- i) All launches of the Digital Business generating activities planned under its program - Digital 2.0 (to be launched) and other proposed business generating IT applications.
- (ii) Sourcing of new credit card customers.
- (iii) In addition to this, the order also states that HDFC Bank's board should examine the lapses and fix accountability.

ADB and India sign \$50 million loan agreement for West Bengal

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India have inked \$50 million policy-based loan agreement to improve financial management procedures and operational efficiencies in West Bengal. Titled as the 'West Bengal Public Finance Management Investment Programme', the project will help to achieve more fiscal savings, promote informed decision making, and improve service delivery in the state.
- A centre for fiscal policy and public finance will be established to deepen the capacity of the state government officials on public finance management while developing a web-based grievance redress system for transport corporations and urban local bodies will provide a credible citizen-government interface.