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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigns
- Italian Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte resigned after losing his Senate majority, plunging the country into political uncertainty just as it’s battling the pandemic and a recession. He tendered his resignation to President Sergio Mattarella, the ultimate arbiter of Italian political crises, who invited him to stay on in a caretaker capacity pending discussions on what happens next.
- Italy was the first European country to face the full force of the Covid-19 pandemic and has since suffered badly, with the economy plunged into recession and deaths still rising by around 400 a day. Parts of the country remain under partial lockdown, the vaccination programme has slowed and a deadline is looming to agree on plans to spend billions of euros in European Union recovery funds.

Kaja Kallas to become Estonia’s first female prime minister
- Kaja Kallas, the leader of the Reform Party will become Estonia’s first female prime minister. The Reform Party, led by Kallas, won the 2019 parliamentary election in Estonia with 34 MPs in the country’s 101-seat parliament, Riigikogu.
- Estonia would thus currently become the only country in the world where both the president Kersti Kaljulaid and the prime minister are women.

Portugal President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa wins second term
- The incumbent President of Portugal, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa has won a second five-year term after winning the 2021 Portuguese presidential election with a landslide victory.
- The 72-year-old former leader of the Social Democratic Party won 61 per cent of the total votes. He is serving as the President of the country since 9 March 2016 and would start his second term on March 9, 2021.

China surpasses United States as largest recipient of FDI
- China was the largest recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2020, according to a report released by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). China overtook the United States to gain the top position in 2020. The country attracted $163 billion inflows in 2020, compared to $134 billion attracted by the United States.
- However, in 2019, the United States had received $251 billion in inflows and China received $140 billion. Overall, the global FDI had fallen by 42% in 2020, attracting an inflow of an estimated $859 billion, compared to $1.5 trillion in 2019.

China overtakes Germany to run world’s largest current account surplus
- China overtook Germany to become the country with the world’s largest current account surplus in the year 2020, as per a survey by the Munich-based Ifo institute. The current account surplus of China more than doubled to $310 billion in 2020, while the current account surplus of Germany shrank for the fifth year in a row in 2020 to $261 billion. The
data underlines a tectonic shift in world trade triggered by the coronavirus crisis as higher demand across the globe for medical protection gear and electronic devices boosted Chinese exports.

- The United States remained the country with the world’s largest current account deficit which rose roughly by a third to $635 billion in 2020 or 3.1% of economic output. Japan ranked third with a current account surplus of $158 billion. Ifo (Information and Forschung) Institute for Economic Research is a research institution based in Munich, Germany, which analyses economic policy.

Mongolian Prime Minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa & his Government Resigns

- The Prime Minister of Mongolia, Khurelsukh Ukhnaa, has resigned along with his entire government, following protests and public outrage over the government’s handling of the C-19 pandemic. The 52-year-old served as the Prime Minister of Mongolia from 4 October 2017 to 21 January 2021.
- Prime Minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa has submitted his resignation and a proposal to dissolve his government after hundreds gathered outside the parliament building to demonstrate against the policies. Parliament, which is controlled by Khurelsukh’s Mongolian People’s Party, voted overwhelmingly to accept his resignation.

Morgan Stanley’s Gorman Tops Dimon as Best-Paid Big Bank CEO

- Morgan Stanley Chief Executive Officer James Gorman leaped past JPMorgan Chase & Co.’s Jamie Dimon as the best-paid CEO of a major U.S. bank.
- Morgan Stanley boosted Gorman’s pay 22% to $33 million for 2020, when the Wall Street bank posted its third consecutive year of record earnings. His pay includes $1.5 million in salary and a $7.88 million bonus, the firm said Friday in a filing. The vast majority is in the form of $23.6 million in long-term awards, which pay out in shares and are partially tied to return on equity and shareholder-return targets.

Indo-French Exercise Desert Knight-21 begins

- Indian Air Force and French Air and Space Force are conducting a bilateral Air exercise, Ex Desert Knight-21 in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. The exercise marks an important milestone in the series of engagements between the two Air forces. It is unique as it includes fielding of Rafale aircraft by both sides and is indicative of the growing interaction between the two premiers Air Forces.
- The French side will participate with Rafale, Airbus A-330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport, A-400M Tactical Transport aircraft and approximately 175 personnel. The Indian Air Force aircraft participating in the exercise will include Rafale, Mirage 2000, Sukhoi-30 MKI among other aircraft.

Infosys receives Google Cloud Partner Status

- Infosys has recently announced that it has been accredited with the Google Cloud Partner Specialization in the data and analytics space. Infosys is among the top global system
integrators which have been accredited with this specialization.

- Infosys has received this recognition as the company has successfully demonstrating end-to-end capabilities on Google Cloud including warehousing on the cloud and data ingestion.
- Infosys has showcased robust methodology, strong industry expertise, technical proficiency, success in specialized data and analytics solutions, and service areas.
- These data and analytics offerings are a part of Infosys Cobalt.
- Along with AI capabilities, these data and analytics offerings help in optimizing costs paving the way for AI and cloud-native digital transformation for enterprises, migrating workloads to Google Cloud, and modernize data landscapes.
- Infosys Cobalt is a set of services, platforms, and solutions for enterprises for enhancing and accelerating their cloud journey. The Infosys Cobalt provides more than 200 industry cloud solution blueprints and 14,000 cloud assets.

Joe Biden takes oath as 46th US President

- Joe Biden became the 46th president of the United States. He swore the oath of office moments after Kamala Harris, who became America’s first woman vice president, turning the page on Donald Trump’s tumultuous four years. At 78, Biden is the oldest president in US history and only the second Roman Catholic president.
- Biden, who was vice president under Barack Obama and first ran for president in 1987, plans to kick off his tenure with a flurry of 17 orders. Biden will immediately rejoin the Paris climate accord and stop the US exit from the World Health Organization and set new paths on immigration, the environment, Covid-19 and the economy.
- Biden, who is the oldest president in American history, took the oath by placing his left hand on his 127-year-old family Bible, which was held by his wife, Jill Biden. He used the same Bible during his swearing-in as vice president and seven times as senator from Delaware.
- Lady Gaga, in a poofy dress that was Valentine red, sang the national anthem and Tom Hanks prepared for a televised evening appearance with the new president.
- Jennifer Lopez sang a pop rendition of “This Land is Your Land,” often considered the unofficial US national anthem, ending it by exclaiming the words of the pledge of allegiance — a nation that promises “liberty and justice for all” in Spanish.

Netherlands PM Mark Rutte and his entire cabinet quits

- The Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte and his entire Cabinet has resigned recently over the childcare subsidies scandal, in which thousands of families were wrongly accused of child welfare fraud. However, the Rutte government will stay on in a caretaker role until parliamentary elections in March 2021.
- The resignation brings to an end a decade in office for Rutte, although his party is expected to win the election, putting him first in line to begin talks to form the next government. If he succeeds in forming a new coalition, Rutte would most likely again become prime minister.

Yoweri Museveni wins sixth term as Uganda’s President

- Uganda’s incumbent President Yoweri Museveni has been declared as the winner of the
country’s presidential election for 2021. Museveni secured 58.64 per cent of the total votes cast, to win the sixth term as the President.

- The 76-year-old leader is serving as the President of the Republic of Uganda since 1986 and is one of Africa’s longest-serving presidents.

India and Japan inks MoC to promote movement of skilled workers

- India and Japan signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to Specified Skilled Worker (SSW), to promote the movement of skilled workers from India to Japan. The MoC was signed between Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and Ambassador of Japan to India Suzuki Satoshi.
- The MoC covers 14 categories of specified skills. The skilled workers from India who meet these skills requirement and Japanese language tests would be eligible for employment in Japan on a contractual basis.
- These workers would be granted the status of Specified Skilled Worker by Japan.
- The 14 specified industry fields include nursing care, building cleaning, material processing, industrial machinery manufacturing, electric and electronic information, construction, shipbuilding and ship-related industry, automobile maintenance, aviation, lodging, agriculture, fisheries, food and beverages manufacturing and food services industry.

Pakistan approves emergency use of Oxford-AstraZeneca C-19 vaccine

- Pakistan has approved the emergency use of Oxford-AstraZeneca C-19 vaccine and the government hopes to make the drug available by the first quarter of the year, as the country’s coronavirus tally surged to 519,291.
- Special Assistant to Prime Minister Imran Khan on Health Dr Faisal Sultan confirmed on Saturday that the Drug Regulatory Authority Pakistan (DRAP) has granted approval for emergency use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine across the country.

US designates UAE, Bahrain as ‘Major Strategic Partners’

- The United States has recently designated the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as the “major strategic partners” of the country. This has been announced before the formal transition of the president’s office from Donald Trump to Joe Biden. This announcement of “major strategic partners” was done by Kayleigh McEnany, the White House Press Secretary.
- Designation as strategic partners will strengthen the existing partnership between the United States, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates.
- Both the countries have been designated for their commitment to countering violent extremism across the region, exceptional security partnership, and exemplified by their hosting thousands of United States airmen, soldiers, marines, and sailors.
- Also, both the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates have been a part of various United States-led coalitions in the last 30 years. It also represents the commitment to the security and economic cooperation of the countries.
• The designation also reflects their determination, extraordinary courage, and leadership in entering into the Abraham Accords.

Donald Trump becomes first U.S. President to be impeached twice
• President Donald Trump was impeached by the U.S. House for a historic second time on January 13, charged with “incitement of insurrection” over the deadly mob siege of the Capitol in a swift and stunning collapse of his final days in office. He was first impeached in 2019 over his Ukraine dealings.
• The House voted 232-197 to impeach Mr Trump. The proceedings moved at lightning speed, with lawmakers voting just one week after violent pro-Mr. Trump loyalists stormed the U.S. Capitol, urged on by the President’s calls for them to “fight like hell” against the election results.
• the U.S. Navy.

Sadyr Japarov wins the presidential election in Kyrgyzstan
• The frontrunner in Kyrgyzstan’s presidential election, Sadyr Japarov, has won by a landslide. According to the Central Election Commission, Mr Japarov had won 79% of votes cast. Mr Japarov, who served time in jail for taking a rival hostage, will also have sweeping new presidential powers after voters by a similar margin opted to amend the constitution in a referendum.
• Kyrgyzstan has been in crisis since parliamentary elections last October. The results of those elections were disputed, leading to protests and the resignation of then-President Sooronbay Jeenbekov.

Bharat Biotech inks pact with Precisa Med to supply Covaxin to Brazil
• Bharat Biotech has announced that it has signed an agreement with Precisa Medicamentos for the supply of its indigenously manufactured C-19 vaccine ‘Covaxin’ to Brazil. The supplies of Covaxin will be prioritized for the public market, through direct procurement by Brazil government.
• A team from Precisa Medicamentos had visited the Bharat Biotech facility in Genome Valley near here last week to discuss export of COVAXIN, India’s first indigenous vaccine for C-19.

France hosts 4th One Planet Summit
• The Government of France organised the fourth ‘One Planet Summit’, through videoconferencing, which aimed at protecting the world’s biodiversity. The Summit was organised in cooperation with the United Nations and the World Bank. The theme of the Summit was “Let’s act together for nature!”
• It was inaugurated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres, French President Emmanuel Macron, and President of the World Bank Group David Malpass. The Summit focused on biodiversity preservation through:
  • The protection of terrestrial and marine ecosystems,
  • The promotion of agroecology,
• The mobilization of funding for biodiversity, and
• The link between deforestation, species and human health.

**Bangladesh declared as ‘Country in Focus’ for 51st IFFI**

- Bangladesh has been chosen as the ‘Country in Focus’ for the 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI). The festival will be held at Goa from January 16 to January 24, 2021. The Country in Focus is a special segment that recognizes the cinematic excellence and contributions of the country. This section at the 51st IFFI will showcase four films from Bangladesh.
- The International Film Festival of India (IFFI), is being held annually since 1952, in Goa. The event is organised jointly by the Directorate of Film Festivals (under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting) and the state Government of Goa.

**Indonesian Jetliner crashes into the sea after takeoff**

- A passenger plane of Indonesia’s Sriwijaya Air carrying 62 people on board crashed into waters off Jakarta. The Boeing 737-500 was on an estimated 90-minute flight from Jakarta to Pontianak, capital of West Kalimantan province on Indonesia’s Borneo island.
- The Sriwijaya Air disappeared from radars four minutes into its journey to Pontianak in West Kalimantan province. It is thought to have dropped more than 3,000m (10,000ft) in less than a minute.

**Twitter deletes new Trump tweets on @POTUS, suspends campaign account**

- Twitter Inc has deleted new tweets posted by U.S. President Donald Trump on official government account @POTUS and suspended the account of his presidential campaign, after booting his personal account of the platform permanently. @POTUS Twitter account is an official Twitter account of US President Donald Trump. The Account is named President Trump.
- The POTUS Twitter account is in the news because President Trump used the account to tweet against “Twitter” after the company permanently banned and suspended the @realDonaldTrump of Trump.
- Trump tweeted that Twitter has conspired with his rivals and suspended his account to silence him.
- Earlier, Twitter released an official statement about the permanent suspension of the @realDonaldTrump Twitter account.
- After the tweets by Trump through the @POTUS account, Twitter deleted his tweets.
- @POTUS account has 33.4 million followers at present.
**Japan commits Rs 2,113 cr support for COVID relief efforts**
- The Government of Japan has committed Official Development Assistance loan of 30 billion Japanese Yen which is approximately Rs 2113 crore rupees. This programme loan aims to support India’s efforts to provide coordinated and adequate social protection to the poor and vulnerable across the country against the severe impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.
- India and Japan have had a long and fruitful history of bilateral development cooperation since 1958. In the last few years, the economic cooperation between India and Japan has strengthened and grown into a strategic partnership.

**Joe Biden names two Indian-Americans in US National Security Council**
- US President-elect Joe Biden named Indian-American Sumona Guha as senior director for South Asia and Tarun Chhabra as senior director for Technology and National Security. Guha was co-chair of the South Asia foreign policy working group on the Biden-Harris campaign and serves on the transition’s State Department Agency Review Team.
- During the Obama-Biden Administration, Chhabra served on the National Security Council staff as director for Strategic Planning and director for Human Rights and National Security Issues, and at the Pentagon as a speechwriter to the Secretary of Defence.
- Guha is a graduate of Johns Hopkins and Georgetown University. Named as senior director for Technology and National Security, Chhabra is a senior fellow at the Centre for Security and Emerging Technology at Georgetown University.

**British Indian minister Alok Sharma given sole charge of UN climate summit**
- Alok Sharma, one of the Indian-origin ministers in UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Cabinet, has relinquished his role as Business Secretary in a mini-reshuffle to take sole charge as President of COP26 – the United Nations climate summit scheduled for Glasgow, Scotland, in November.
- The Agra-born minister, who was until now in charge of dual roles, will focus entirely on what has been dubbed as the largest summit the UK has ever hosted, bringing together representatives from nearly 200 countries, including India.

**Central African Republic president Touadera wins reelection**
- Faustin-Archange Touadera was re-elected as the president of the Central African Republic with more than 53% votes. The 63-year-old president has been in power since 2016 but has struggled to seize control of vast parts of the nation from armed militias.
- The Central African Republic, a producer of gold and diamonds, has a population of 4.7 million.

**Elon Musk overtakes Amazon’s Jeff Bezos to become world’s richest person**
- According to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, Tesla CEO Elon Musk overtakes Amazon’s Jeff Bezos to become the world’s richest person. Elon Musk had a net worth of more than $188.5 billion.
- A 6% rise in Tesla (TSLA) shares early Thursday lifted the value of its CEO’s stock holdings.
and options by $10 billion, taking his net worth to about $188.5 billion. A more modest rise of less than 2% lifted Bezos' Amazon (AMZN) shares by about $3 billion, putting his net worth at $187 billion. Bill Gates is now a distant third at $132 billion, according to Bloomberg.

Indian-American Raj Iyer becomes U.S. Army’s first CIO
- Indian-American Dr Raj Iyer has taken over as the first Chief Information Officer of the US Army, after the Pentagon created the position in July 2020. Dr Raj Iyer is one of the highest-ranking Indian-American civilians in the US Department of Defence.
- Dr Iyer holds a PhD in Electrical Engineering had been serving as the Principal Advisor to the Secretary of the Army and directs representation of the secretary in matters relating to information management/information technology (IT). The position of CIO is equivalent to a three-star General.

Japan to launch the first wood-based satellite by 2023
- Japan’s Sumitomo Forestry company and Kyoto University aims to launch the world’s first wood-based space satellite by 2023 to combat the problem of space junk. Currently, the initiative is in the nascent stage as several wooden materials are being tested by the research team to find a suitable one for space missions. It is also reported that the team is also working towards developing wooden materials extremely resistant to temperature changes and sunlight.
- According to the European Space Agency (ESA) statistical model, there are more than 130 million pieces of anthropogenic space debris—waste residue due to human activities—smaller than a millimetre around our planet. The debris can travel at a speed of more than 22,300 mph and can impact other satellites.

Argentine filmmaker Pablo Cesar to head 51st IFFI’s International Jury
- The International Jury for 51st edition of International Film Festival of India has been announced with eminent filmmakers from across the world. According to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, the Jury will comprise Pablo Cesar of Argentina as Chairman, Prasanna Vithanage of Sri Lanka, Abu Bakr Shawky of Austria, Priyadarshan of India and Rubaiyat Hossain of Bangladesh.
- Pablo Cesar is an Argentine filmmaker. He has contributed to the African cinema by making the critically acclaimed films, Equinox, the Garden of the Roses, Los dioses de agua and Aphrodite, the Garden of the Perfumes.

U.S. Congress passes ‘Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act’
- The U.S. Congress has passed the ‘Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act’ to increase the number of scholarships for Pakistani women in higher education under merit and needs-based programme. The bill was passed by the United States Senate by a voice vote on January 1. The bill now heads to the White House for U.S. President Donald Trump to sign into law.
- The bill requires the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to award at least
50% of scholarships under a Pakistan-based higher education scholarship programme to Pakistani women, from 2020 to 2022, across a range of academic disciplines and in accordance with existing eligibility criteria.

- The bill also requires USAID to consult with and leverage investments by the Pakistani private sector and Pakistani diaspora in the United States to improve and expand access to education programmes in Pakistan.

GoAir announces expansion of services to United Arab Emirates

- Budget carrier GoAir on Thursday announced expansion of its services to the UAE with launch of new flights to Sharjah from Mumbai, Delhi, Kochi and Kannur.
- Currently, flights to the UAE are operated under an Air Bubble Agreement since international commercial flights to and from India remain suspended from March 23 in the wake of the C-19 pandemic.

Amazon acquires podcast network Wondery

- Amazon recently announced that it’s acquiring Wondery, one of the last major independent podcast networks that having podcasts including “Dirty John,” “Dr. Death,” “Business Wars,” and “The Shrink Next Door.”
- The acquisition is a neat one because it sets Amazon up to better compete against Spotify, making a series of acquisitions, including podcast network Gimlet. With this acquisition, Wondery will become part of Amazon Music, which launched podcast support in September this year. “Amazon Music launched podcasts in September 2020, and together with Wondery, we hope to accelerate the growth and evolution of podcasts by bringing creators, hosts, and immersive experiences to even more listeners across the globe, just as we do with music.

NATIONAL NEWS

Microsoft launches its new Taj Mahal inspired Engineering Hub

- Tech major Microsoft has launched its new India Development Center (IDC) facility in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. The new centre will serve as a leading hub for driving advanced engineering and innovation. The centre will build on Microsoft’s commitment to tap India’s world-class engineering talent and create solutions for a global impact.
- IDC NCR is the third development centre of Microsoft in India after Bengaluru and Hyderabad. The IDC NCR workspace architecture is inspired by the Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the world.
- The IDC NCR facility will collaborate with Microsoft teams globally to build products and services for driving digital innovation. The centre will provide opportunities for engineering talent in the areas of Business & Productivity tools, AI, Cloud & Enterprise, Core Services, and the new Gaming division.
- The IDC NCR workspace architecture is inspired by the Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the world. The structure is a unique amalgamation of the latest Microsoft technologies and locally sourced materials.
The intricate artwork by local artisans and graphics inspired by India’s rich cultural heritage elevate the aesthetics of the office. Its stunning marble inlays, vaulted doorways, arches, and marble domes created by stonemasons and carpenters, are a tribute to the country’s historical and rich craftsmanship.

Environment Minister releases National Marine Turtle Action Plan
- National Marine Turtle Action Plan has been recently released by the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) in New Delhi. The Ministry also released the ‘Marine Mega Fauna Stranding Guidelines’ along with the Marine Turtle Action Plan.
- National Marine Turtle Action Plan and Marine Mega Fauna Stranding Guidelines have been released acknowledging the need for a conservation paradigm for marine turtles and marine megafauna.
- At the launch, the minister called for conserving both floral and faunal diversity including marine biodiversity.
- Both these documents include the ways and measures to promote inter-sectoral action for conservation.
- The documents also provide guidance for enhanced coordination amongst the government, all relevant stakeholders, and civil society on the response to cases of entanglement, stranding, injury, or mortality of marine mammals. All of them should also have better coordination to chalk out plans for the conservation of marine turtles.

Prakash Javadekar launches 2021 as Indo-French Year of the Environment
- The Union Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change Prakash Javadekar has launched the Indo-French Year of the Environment, along with Barbara Pompili, the French Minister for Ecological Transition in New Delhi. The basic objective of this partnership is to strengthen Indo-French cooperation in sustainable development, increase the effectiveness of actions in favour of global environment protection and give them greater visibility.
- This collaboration and the Indo-French Environment year will be held under the Ministry of Ecological Transition, in association with the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs along with the support of the Embassy of France in Delhi and its partners from the French side.
- The Indo-French Year of the Environment is the Indo-French partnership on Environment, Biodiversity, Climate Change and other allied areas to be undertaken throughout 2021.
- The Indo-French Year of the Environment will be implemented over the period 2021-2022.

Centre Approves ‘Startup India Seed Fund Scheme’
- The Central Government has approved the Rs 945-crore ‘Start-up India Seed Fund Scheme’ (SISFS), which aims to provide financial assistance to start-ups for the product trials, market-entry, proof of concept, prototype development and commercialization.
- The Rs 945 crore Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) will become operational from April 1 of this year till 2025 and this will be disbursed through selected incubators across India, according to a gazette notification by the government. The scheme will be implemented by
the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DIIT). The funds under the scheme will be disbursed through the selected incubators across the country. The startup will receive seed support only once.

- The incubator should be operational for at least two years on the date of application to the scheme.
- The incubator must have facilities to seat at least 25 individuals. The incubator must have at least five startups undergoing incubation physically on the date of application.
- The incubator must have a full-time Chief Executive Officer, experienced in business development and entrepreneurship.

5th Joint Meeting of the India-Japan Act East Forum

- The 5th joint meeting of the India-Japan Act East Forum (AEF) was held in New Delhi. The meeting was co-chaired by Foreign Secretary Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla, and Suzuki Satoshi, Ambassador of Japan to India.
- During the 5th meeting, the AEF reviewed the progress of ongoing projects in the North Eastern Region of India in various areas including connectivity, hydropower, sustainable development, harnessing of water resources, and skill development. They also exchanged views on cooperation in new areas such as healthcare, agro-industries and SMEs, bamboo value chain development, smart city, tourism and people-to-people exchanges.
- The AEF was established in 2017 to provide a platform for India-Japan collaboration in the North Eastern Region under India’s “Act East Policy” and Japan’s vision for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”.

Economic Survey 2021: Key highlights of Economic Survey

- Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman has presented Economic Survey 2020-21 in the Parliament on 29 January 2021. The major focus of this year’s economic survey is the losses and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey will provide an assessment of how the Indian economy has been impacted by the deadly COVID-19 virus and how it is improving. It will also project India’s gross domestic product growth for 2021-22.
- The Economic Survey document is prepared by the Economics Division of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) under the guidance of the Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Subramanian. The Economic Survey 2020-21 will be followed by the Union Budget 2020-21 which will be tabled on February 1.

The theme of Economic Survey, 2020-21:
- #SavingLives&Livelihoods
- #VshapedRecovery

India’s “Vaccine Maitri” Initiative begins

- Vaccine Maitri Initiative is an initiative launched by India to gift COVID-19 vaccines to neighbouring countries. Recently, Sri Lanka and Bahrain have received the COVID-19 vaccines from India under the initiative. The Vaccine Maitri initiative was launched by India on January 20 to gift COVID-19 vaccines to neighbouring countries.
- Sri Lanka has received 5 lakh Covid-19 vaccines from India as a part of the “Vaccine Maitri” initiative.
- Consignment of vaccines has also been sent to Bahrain. The country will receive 10,800 vaccines under the initiative.
- India has already delivered over 5 million doses to seven countries in the neighbourhood under the initiative before Sri Lanka and Bahrain.
- The 7 countries are - the Maldives (100,000 vaccines), Bhutan (150,000 vaccines), Nepal (1 million vaccines), Bangladesh (2 million vaccines), Myanmar (1.5 million vaccines), Mauritius (100,000 vaccines), and Seychelles (50,000 vaccines).
- Commercial supplies of Covishield have also been sent to Morocco, Brazil, (2 million doses each), and Bangladesh (5 million doses).

PM Modi Chairs 35th PRAGATI Meet
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has chaired the 35th PRAGATI meeting to review multiple projects, grievances and programmes. In the meeting, ten agenda items were taken for review worth Rs. 54,675 crore, related to 15 states. These included nine projects and one programme. Prime Minister also reviewed the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana.
- PRAGATI stands for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation.
- Of the total 9 projects, 3 projects were from the Ministry of Railways, 3 from Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and 1 project each from Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Power Ministry and Ministry of External Affairs.
- The States are Odisha, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Jharkhand, Bihar, Telangana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

Ram Temple tableau of Uttar Pradesh on Republic Day wins 1st prize
- The Ram Temple tableau of Uttar Pradesh that was on display during the Republic Day 2021 has bagged the first prize among all tableaux. The theme of Uttar Pradesh’s tableau was ‘Ayodhya: Cultural Heritage of Uttar Pradesh’. The cultural heritage of ancient holy town Ayodhya, a replica of a Ram temple, a glimpse of ‘Deepotsav’ and various stories from Ramayana epic were depicted in the tableau.
- The Tripura tableau won the second prize for the Republic Day parade. Uttarakhand’s tableau on the theme ‘Dev Bhoomi — The Land of the Gods’ was adjudged third among the states and union territories. The tableau of Central Public Works Department (CPWD), with the theme ‘Amar Jawan’, bagged a special prize for paying tribute to the fallen heroes of the armed forces.

Election Commission rolls out digital voter ID cards “e-EPIC”
- The Election Commission has rolled out the electronic version of the voters’ photo identity card e-EPIC, which can be stored on mobile phones and downloaded on personal computers. The physical card takes time to print and reach the voter, and the idea is to
provide faster delivery and easy accessibility to the document.

- The e-EPIC is a secure portable document format (PDF) version of the EPIC which can be downloaded on mobile or in a self-printable form on the computer.
- The voter can store the card on his/her mobile, upload it as a PDF on Digi locker or print it & self-laminate.
- The e-elector photo identity card is a non-editable digital version of the elector photo identity card and can be saved in facilities such as digital locker as well as can be printed in the PDF format.

Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman opens NCLAT Chennai Bench

- Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman has virtually inaugurated the Chennai Bench of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT). This will be the second NCLAT Bench in the country, after the Principal Bench in New Delhi.
- The NCLAT has jurisdiction over matters under the Companies Act, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and the Competition Commission of India.
- Fresh appeals against the orders of the Benches of the tribunal having jurisdiction in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and the Union Territories of Lakshadweep and Puducherry will have to be filed before the Chennai Bench.
- Justice Bansi Lal Bhat, acting Chairperson, NCLAT; Rajesh Verma, Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs; and Justice Venugopal M, judicial member, and Balvinder Singh, technical member of the NCLAT Chennai Bench, were present.

India pledges $150,000 for UN Peacebuilding Fund for 2021

- India has announced a pledge of USD 150,000 to the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) for the year 2021 to support the activities and programs this year. The Peacebuilding Fund has put forth its five-year strategy, which requires 1.5 billion dollars for 2020-2024. This was announced by TS Tirumurti, India’s permanent representative to the United Nations on January 25, 2021.
- UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed that he was grateful to the countries that committed to providing over $439 million in support of the UN’s work toward peacebuilding & conflict prevention through the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

TCS ranks third most valued IT services brand globally

- Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has been ranked third most-valued IT services brand globally, after Accenture and IBM, according to a report by Brand Finance. Third-ranked TCS is rapidly closing the gap with IBM following a healthy 11% brand value increase to USD 15 billion. Accenture retained the title of world’s most valuable and strongest IT services brand with record brand value of USD 26 billion, while IBM continued at the second place with a brand value of USD 16.1 billion.
- Four Indian IT services companies have secured spots in the top-10 globally, namely, TCS (3), Infosys (4), HCL (7) and Wipro (9). Accenture has retained the title of world’s most valuable and strongest IT services brand with a brand value of $26 billion.
CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan launches ‘PANKH Abhiyan’ for Girl Child

- In Madhya Pradesh, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has launched a new scheme ‘PANKH Abhiyan’ on 24 January, to mark the occasion of National Girl Child Day. The scheme has been launched under the ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhao’ scheme for the empowerment and growth of the girl child. The CM also announced scholarships worth Rs 6.47 crore for 26,099 girls under Ladli Laxmi Yojana.
- ‘PANKH Abhiyan’ is a year-long programme. The letter in the PANKH scheme stands for:
  - ‘P’ – protection
  - ‘A’ – awareness of their rights
  - ‘N’ – nutrition
  - ‘K’ – knowledge
  - ‘H’ – health.

UP becomes first Indian State to have 2 Expressway airstrips

- In Uttar Pradesh, a new 3,300-metre-long airstrip has been constructed near Kurebhar on Purvanchal Expressway. With this new airstrip, Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in India having two airstrips on expressways. Uttar Pradesh also has an airstrip on Lucknow-Agra Expressway. Airstrips on expressways are designed to facilitate emergency landing and take-off of fighter planes.
- Earlier, the Indian Air Force had examined Yamuna Expressway and Agra Expressway. Aircraft like Mirage 2000, Jaguar, Sukhoi 30 and Super Hercules had already landed on Lucknow-Agra Expressway.
- Uttar Pradesh government is trying to connect the entire northern part of the country with expressways.
- The Hindon and Agra airbases of the Indian Air Force will be able to use the runway of all three expressways if needed.
- Also, these airstrips of Uttar Pradesh can serve the Air Force to respond against China and Pakistan in case of any war.

DRDO successfully conducts maiden test launch of Akash-NG Missile

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted successful maiden launch of Akash-NG (New Generation) Missile from Integrated Test Range off the coast of Odisha. Akash-NG is a new generation Surface-to-Air Missile for use by Indian Air Force (IAF) with an aim of intercepting high manoeuvring aerial threats. The launch met all the test objectives by performing high maneuvers during the trajectory.
- The performance of the Command and Control system, onboard avionics and aerodynamic configuration of the missile was successfully validated during the trial. The Multi Function Radar was tested for its capability of integration with the system. The Akash-NG system has been developed with better deployability compared to other similar systems with canisterized launcher and much smaller ground system footprint.
Annual 'Adivasi Mela' Commences In Bhubaneswar

- The 15-day annual tribal fair or 'Adivasi Mela' commenced on Tuesday at Bhubaneswar's Adivasi Exhibition Ground. The fair will remain open for the public from 11 am to 7 pm every day till February 9.
- The organiser of the tribal fair, Guha Punam Tapas Kumar, informed that the fair has been conducted annually since 1951 and is the oldest fair in the country.
- "The Adivasi Mela exhibits lifestyle, artifacts, handlooms and handicrafts of the tribal of the Odisha under one roof."
- "Odisha plays an important role in the development of the scheduled tribes."

Akshay launches mobile action game FAU-G

- On the 72nd Republic Day, Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar took to social media to announce the launch of mobile action game Fearless and United Guards (FAU-G). Akshay took to Twitter and wrote, "Face the enemy. Fight for your country. Protect Our Flag. India’s most anticipated action game, Fearless and United Guards: FAU-G takes you to the frontlines and beyond! Start your mission today."
- The Sooryavanshi actor shared a trailer of the game along with the announcement. The first episode of the game will be based on the Galwan Valley in Ladakh. Further episodes will be set amid Indian battle backdrops.

Pune schools start unique ‘web radio’ to be launched on Republic Day

- Stating that teaching life skills to students, inspiring them to think out of the box was as important as academics, MES (Maharashtra Education Society) Sou Vimlabai Garware School and Vidnyan Bharati have joined hands to launch 'MES Subodhwani', a web radio, which will be broadcast thrice a week.
- To mark Republic Day celebrations this year, one of the oldest educational institutions in the city has launched a unique initiative, a web radio, that will telecast programmes to help students think beyond classroom learning.

Indian Navy conducts exercise AMPHEX – 21 with Army and Air Force

- A large-scale tri-service joint amphibious exercise AMPHEX – 21 was held in Andaman & Nicobar group of islands. The exercise involved the participation of troops of Army, Navy as well as the Indian Air Force. The exercise was aimed at validating India’s capabilities to safeguard the territorial integrity of its island territories. The joint force executed multi-domain, high-intensity offensive and defensive manoeuvres in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.
- The exercise involved multi-faceted maritime operations by synergised employment of amphibious assault ships, surveillance platforms, execution of maritime airstrikes and complex manoeuvres at sea.
- Airborne insertion of Marine Commandos of Navy and Special Forces of the Army, naval gunfire support, the amphibious landing of forces and follow-on operations also formed part of the exercise.
The exercise AMPHEX – 21 was aimed at validating India’s capabilities to safeguard the territorial integrity of its island territories, enhance operational synergy and joint warfighting capabilities amongst the three Services. The exercise KAVACH for the defence of Andaman & Nicobar Islands was also a part of AMPHEX – 21.

Haridwar teen Shrishti Goswami to be one-day CM of Uttarakhand
- Shristi Goswami, a nineteen-year-old Haridwar-based student, become the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand for one day on National Girl Child Day. She is a student of BSc Agriculture, lives in Daulatpur village in Roorkee, Haridwar. The move has received the nod of Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat.
- The one-day chief minister has administered from Gairsain, the summer capital of the state, and will review various schemes run by the state government that include Atal Ayushman Scheme, Smart City project, Homestay Scheme by the tourism department, and other development projects.

Indian Railways’ longest freight train ‘Vasuki’ sets a new record
- The South-East Central Railways (SECR) zone in Chhattisgarh breaks its own previous record by successfully operating the longest ever freight train by amalgamating five rakes of goods trains as one unit of around 3.5 km. Named as ‘Vasuki’, it covered the distance of 224 km between the railway stations of Bilai and Korba and took about seven hours. The ‘Vasuki’, comprising of 300 wagons of long haul rake of five goods trains, ran with the help of one pilot, one assistant loco pilot and a guard.
- South East Central Railway (SECR) zone has also operated two freight trains recently. These freight trains got attention due to their length. The two freight trains were ‘Sesh Naag’ and ‘Super Anaconda’. Super Anaconda was a fully loaded three rake combined freight train. ‘Sesh Naag’ was a 2.8km long four empty BOXN rakes train combined together.

BSF launches Operation ‘Sard Hawa’ at Rajasthan border
- The Border Security Force (BSF) has launched “Operation Sard Hawa” on the western international border of Rajasthan. The Operations aims to check the instances of infiltration due to the dense fog cover in the region and increase security on the border areas in Jaisalmer.
- The week-long operation has been launched on 21 January 2021 and will continue till 27 January 2021, keeping in view Republic Day of India.

UP Government launches ‘Udyam Sarathi App’ for Youths
- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath has launched the ‘Udyam Sarathi App’ on the occasion of the 71st Foundation Day of the state, on 24 January 2021. The app will enable the youths to get every information related to self-employment and the job industry, across the state.
- The Uttar Pradesh Day celebration will run from 24 January to 26 January 2021. The theme of Uttar Pradesh Day 2021 is ‘Respect for self-reliant Uttar Pradesh, women young farmers,
development of all’.

- Udyam Sarathi App will comprise of a varied range of data regarding business opportunities in different departments and sectors, including the state and Central governments, and anywhere and at any time. It has been launched under the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme.

**Budget 2021: Finance minister launches Union Budget mobile app**

- On the occasion of the Halwa Ceremony 2021, marking the final stage of Budget 2021-22, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the 'Union Budget Mobile App' on Saturday, January 23, for quick, easy, and hassle-free access of the official Budget documents for the members of the parliaments as well as the general public. Due to the C-19 pandemic, the budget this year will be paperless for the first time ever in the history of independent India.
- As the budget papers will not be printed, the official mobile app has been launched by the Ministry of Finance for complete access to all budget documents in the upcoming Union Budget 2021-22.

**Maharashtra govt to launch jail tourism at Yerwada prison on R-Day**

- The Maharashtra government is starting “jail tourism” in the state, beginning with Pune’s 150-year-old Yerwada jail in the first phase, from Republic Day on January 26.
- Addressing a press conference here on Saturday, State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said, “The famous Yerwada jail has cells where many stalwarts of the Indian freedom struggle were imprisoned. They include Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Sarojini Naidu and Motilal Nehru among others. It also has a tree below which the Poona Pact was signed by Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar. Similarly, this is the jail where (revolutionaries) the Chaphekar brothers were hanged to death. Also to hang here were Sukha and Jinda, killers of General VK Vaidya and (Pakistani terrorist) Ajmal Kasab. The state government has decided to start jail tourism from Yerwada jail on January 26 with the view to let people see the place.” “Maharashtra is the first state in the country to do so,” he added.

**Odisha’s famous ‘Toshali National Crafts Mela’ begins**

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has inaugurated the annual Toshali National Crafts Mela in Bhubaneswar. The Crafts Mela was inaugurated virtually. The Toshali Crafts Mela has become one of the most popular handlooms and handicrafts fairs in Eastern India. Three artisans were also presented with the State Handicrafts Award-2019 in the event. Three winners are- Dilip Kumar Swain (palm leaf engraving), Divyajyoti Behera (stone sculpting), and Priyanka Patra (terracotta).
- A total number of 250 stalls have been set up at the Janata Maidan venue displaying the best handloom and handicrafts from across the country. Out of the total, 170 stalls represent Odisha textiles and crafts and 80 stalls are of other states.
Harsh Vardhan inaugurates 7th Edition of MASCRADE 2021
- The 7th edition of ‘MASCRADE 2021 – Movement against Smuggled & Counterfeit Trade’ was inaugurated by Dr Harsh Vardhan, the Union Minister of Health and Family welfare. The two-day programme was organized by FICCI CASCADE (Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy), to combat illicit trade, especially in a post COVID era.
- The event provided a platform to deliberate and discuss actionable, innovative policy solutions that can reverse the rising incidences of counterfeit, smuggled and spurious products, causing significant damage to the economy of the nation, health and safety of people worldwide.

Arjun Munda Virtually Launches “Shramshakti” Portal
- The Union Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Arjun Munda has launched a National Migration Support Portal “ShramShakti”, during a virtual programme organised at Panjim, Goa. The portal will help the government in smooth formulation of state and national level programs for migrant workers.
- Shram Shakti portal will address the data gap and empower migrant workers who generally migrate in search of employment and income generation. The government would also be able to link the migrant population with existing Welfare Scheme - under Atam Nirbhar Bharat.
- The minister also launched “ShramSaathi”, a training manual for migrant workers, to ensure that the process of livelihood migration is safe and productive. Apart from this, a dedicated Migration cell was also launched in Goa to facilitate and support migrants who come from different States to Goa. This makes Goa first destination state of India to set up a dedicated migration cell to address diverse issues of migrant workers.

India’s longest Road Arch Bridge inaugurated in Meghalaya
- Meghalaya Chief Minister, Conrad K. Sangma has inaugurated India’s longest road arch bridge “Wahrew Bridge” at Sohbar in East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya on 22 January 2021. The project was sanctioned in 2013 and, the work started in 2014. The construction of the bridge was completed in December 2018.
- The arch bridge has been constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 49.395 crore under the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCP) of the Ministry of Development of North East Region (DoNER). The iconic structure is expected to boost the tourism sector in the State.

Amit Shah inaugurates new 4-lane Thaltej-Shilaj-Rancharda railway overbridge
- Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah has inaugurated the new 4-lane Thaltej-Shilaj-Rancharda railway overbridge in Ahmedabad city of Gujarat through video conferencing. The new overbridge has been built at a cost of Rs 55 crore.
- There was a big problem of traffic on more than one lakh railway crossings in the country. Railway gates would open and close more than 100 times a day, due to which the costly fuel
and precious time was wasted. In view of this, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi decided and under the leadership of Railway Minister Shri Piyush Goyal, a huge campaign was started in which the work of constructing overbridges or underbridges at these one lakh railway crossings was started. Today, this overbridge has been inaugurated under the same scheme.

Karnataka CM Yediyurappa launches Avalokana software
- The Karnataka Chief Minister, BS Yediyurappa recently launched Avalokana software. The software will enable the state government to access data on expenditures and sanctions incurred on 1,800 programmes. The software provides a focused eye view on Sustainable Development goals, Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan, Tribal Sub-plan and Centrally Sponsored Schemes.
- It is a transparent e-governance tool that will provide Assembly constituency-wise release of government grants and allocations to different government programmes.
- This will help the government to decide on releasing funds based on the expenditure incurred by the department.
- It will eventually increase the government hold over resources. The software provides a focused view on scheduled caste sub-plan, sustainable development goals and tribal sub-plan and centrally sponsored scheme.

MeITY and AWS announced Quantum Computing Applications Lab in India
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITY) has announced the establishment of a Quantum Computing Applications Lab in partnership with Amazon Web Services (AWS). The move will give select researchers, scientists access to Amazon’s Bracket cloud-based quantum computing service.
- It is to be implemented by the Department of Science and Technology operating under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- The mission focuses on fundamental science, technology development and addresses the issues concerning the national priorities.
- It will prepare next-generation skilled manpower and encourages entrepreneurship and startup ecosystem development.
- The Union Budget 2020-21 had proposed to spend Rs 8,000 crores on the National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications.
- Quantum Technology is based on principles of quantum physics. That is, it is based on quantum theory. In simple words, it is the behaviour of energy and material in atomic and subatomic levels. It will help achieve information processing that will go beyond the limits of the classical world. A conventional computer will process in bits. On the other hand, a quantum computer will process in quantum bits.

Andaman and Nicobar Command to conduct joint military exercise ‘Kavach’
- The Indian Army is to conduct a large scale joint military exercise Kavach in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal. The exercise is to be held under the aegis of Andaman and Nicobar
Command. The Joint Military Exercise Kavach will involve Indian Navy, Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Indian Coast Guard.

- During the exercise, the joint forces will execute high-density offensive and defence measures in the Andaman sea and Bay of Bengal. Also, they will carry out amphibious landing operations, helicopter-borne insertion of special forces from sea culminating in tactical follow-on operations on land.
- The exercise is to fine-tune the joint war capabilities of all the three forces of India.
- Kavach Exercise will also involve coordinated air and maritime strikes, synergized application of maritime surveillance assets, air defence and landing operations.
- Along with Kavach Exercise, the Joint Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaisance (ISR) Exercise will also be held. The ISR will validate the capabilities of intelligence gathering. Also, it will validate the capabilities of information sharing from space, land, air and sea.

CM to inaugurate first child-friendly police station of U’khand

- Uttarakhand Chief Minister, Trivendra Singh Rawat will inaugurate the first child-friendly police station of Uttarakhand, which is meant to provide a friendly environment to children associated with crimes. The child-friendly police unit has been set up in the Dalanwala police station with a budget of about Rs 5 lakhs on the recommendation of the Child Protection Committee of Uttarakhand.
- According to the chairperson of State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) Usha Negi, the children who are either victims or need proper counselling or visit police station due to other reasons should be provided with a comfortable and unintimidating environment rather than keeping them in a dull and scary atmosphere. To keep children at ease, the walls are painted in bright colours and cartoons and the police personnel will also be dressed in casual clothes rather than their uniforms.

Cabinet approves Rs 5,282-cr investment for 850 MW Ratle project on Chenab river

- The Union Cabinet has approved 850 megawatts (MW) Ratle hydropower project worth an Rs. 5281.94 crore on Chenab river in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir. The project is being implemented under the Centre’s plan to expedite strategically important hydropower projects in the union territory post its reorganization.
- The project will be developed by a new joint venture company between state-run National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) Ltd and Jammu & Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Ltd (JKSPDC), where NHPC will have a 51% stake in the JV firm, while the balance will be held by JKSPDC.

CM Thakur launches HP’s first online youth radio station

- Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has launched Himachal Pradesh’s first online youth radio station "Radio Hills-Youngistan Ka Dil". The Chief Minister appreciated the efforts of young entrepreneurs. The developer of the online radio Karan, and Radio Jockeys Palak, Rahul and Nidhi were also present on the occasion.
- The online radio would go a long way in promoting the culture and traditions of the state,
besides providing an opportunity to the youth to exhibit their talents. The founders of the online radio, Deepika and Saurabh.

**Gujarat to Rename Dragon Fruit as ‘Kamalam’**
- The Gujarat state government has renamed dragon fruit as ‘Kamalam’. The move has kept the internet in splits and many criticized it using the hashtag #SanskariFruitSabzi. As per Gujarat Chief Minister, the dragon fruit has been renamed Kamalam because of the shape of the fruit.
- The state government has applied for the patent of the fruit named Kamalam. This was announced at the launch of the Chief Minister Horticulture Development Mission. The Horticulture Development Mission is a scheme to promote horticulture in the unproductive regions of the state as well.

**Howrah-Kalka Mail Renamed as “Netaji Express”**
- One of the oldest trains of Indian Railways, the Howrah-Kalka Mail has been renamed as the ‘Netaji Express’. Indian Railways have renamed the train just a few days before the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on January 23.
- Howrah-Kalka Mail was started in the 19th Century as one of the early commercial passenger train services in India.
- The Kalka mail has always been popular for connecting Howrah with Kalka and has enjoyed steady patronage.
- It is believed that Netaji took this train from Bihar’s Gomoh after escaping from his house in Kolkata in the year 1941.

**15th India Digital Summit 2021 begins**
- The India Digital Summit, the flagship event of the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) is one of the biggest conferences for the digital industry. Honourable Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & IT and Law & Justice, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, who is the chief guest, will deliver the inaugural address at the Summit.
- The summit, in its 15th year, will bring thought leadership on various digital initiatives that will cover Policies, Business, Investment, Advertising, Digital Commerce, Start-ups Ecosystem, Emerging Tech, and other Digital Trends.
- The theme for this year’s summit, which is being held virtually is ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat – Start of New Decade’ in line with the government’s ‘Make for the World’ Initiatives.
- The staggering increase in the total number of internet users in rural India recently presents us with the unique opportunity to establish India as a global powerhouse of Digital Growth.

**Bhawana Kanth to become 1st woman fighter pilot at R-Day parade**
- Flight lieutenant Bhawana Kanth will become the 1st woman fighter pilot to take part in the Republic Day parade. She will be a part of the Indian Air Force’s tableau in the 2021 Republic Day Parade that will showcase mock-ups of the light combat helicopter, light combat aircraft, and the Sukhoi-30 fighter plane.
At present, Bhawana is posted in Rajasthan and flies the MiG-21 Bison fighter plane.
Bhawana is also one of the first women fighter pilots to be inducted into the Indian Air Force in the year 2016.
She was inducted into IAF in 2016 along with Mohana Singh and Avani Chaturvedi.
Since then 10 women have been commissioned as fighter pilots in IAF.
Induction of Bhawana and other two women fighters was an experimental scheme of induction of women in IAF’s combat stream introduced in the year 2015.

NITI Aayog Releases India Innovation Index 2.0
NITI Aayog released the second edition of the India Innovation Index on 20 January 2021, along with the Institute for Competitiveness. India Innovation Index 2.0 or 2nd edition has released by NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Rajiv Kumar. The index demonstrates the government’s continued commitment towards transforming the country into an innovation-driven economy. The report examines the innovation capabilities and performance of the states and union territories.
The innovation index ranking is based on five enabler parameters:
• Human Capital
• Investment
• Knowledge Workers
• ‘Business Environment
• ‘Safety and Legal Environment
Two performance parameters:
• Knowledge Output
• Knowledge Diffusion
In the India Innovation Index-2020, the States and Union Territories have been divided into the 17 Major States, 9 City-States and Union Territories, and 10 North-East and Hill States.
In the 2020 ranking:
• Karnataka retained its first position in the Major States category. Maharashtra moved one position higher and stood at 2nd spot while Tamil Nadu slid to 3rd position.
• In the North East and Hill States category, Himachal Pradesh stands at first position followed by Uttarakhand and Manipur.
• Delhi stands at the first position while Chandigarh retained its second spot in the Union Territories and small States category.

Kiren Rijiju gets additional charge of Ayush Ministry
Ministry for Sports and Youth Affairs, Kiren Rijiju has been given the additional charge of the Ayush Ministry. He will hold the fort till Shripad Yesso Naik recovers from an accident. The President has directed that this arrangement may continue till Shri Shripad Yesso Naik resumes his work related to Ministry of AYUSH.”
The President, as advised by the Prime Minister, has directed that during the hospitalisation and treatment of Shri Shripad Yesso Naik, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH); and
Minister of State in Ministry of Defence, following a road accident, his portfolio related to Ministry of AYUSH, be temporarily assigned to Shri Kiren Rijiju, Minister of State (Independent Charge) in addition to his existing portfolios.

Maharashtra renames Gorewada international zoo after Bal Thackeray
- The Maharashtra government has renamed Gorewada International Zoo in Nagpur as ‘Balasaheb Thackeray Gorewada International Zoological Park. The zoological park will come up on nearly 2,000 hectares forest land.
- Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will inaugurate the Indian safari at the zoo on January 26. Three special 40-seat capacity vehicles and an online ticket booking facility will be made available to the people as soon after the Indian safari is inaugurated.

Noida Police ties up with Microsoft for tech support
- Police Commissioner Alok Singh signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with representatives of Microsoft India, hoping to bring in simplicity and skills in policing.
- The Gautam Buddh Nagar police and tech giant Microsoft on Monday entered into an agreement to boost policing in this western Uttar Pradesh district, according to an official statement.

PM Modi appointed chairman of Somnath Temple Trust
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was appointed the new chairman of the trust which manages the world-famous Somnath Temple at Prabhas Patan town in Gujarat's Gir-Somnath district, becoming the second PM to hold the post. After former PM Morarji Desai, Narendra Modi is the second Prime Minister who has been appointed the chairman of the temple trust. As per trust records, PM Modi has become the eighth chairman of the trust. As per the records, Desai had served as the chairman between 1967 and 1995.
- The post of the Somnath Trust's chairman fell vacant after the death of the incumbent, former Gujarat Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel, in October last year. Patel had served as the chairman for 16 years (2004-2020). Other trustees include BJP leader LK Advani, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Gujarat-based scholar JD Parmar and businessman Harshvardhan Neotia.

DRDO hands over Motor Bike Ambulance Rakshita to CRPF
- Defence Research and Development Organisation has handed over Motor Bike Ambulance Rakshita to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The bike ambulance will help in overcoming the problems faced by Indian security forces and emergency health care providers. The bike ambulances will provide life-saving aid for the evacuation of injured patients from low-intensity conflict areas.
- Rakshita is fitted with a customized reclining Casualty Evacuation Seat (CES), which can be fitted in and taken out as per requirement.
- Other major features are the head immobilizer, safety harness jacket, hand and foot straps for safety, adjustable footrest, physiological parameter measuring equipment with wireless
monitoring capability and auto warning system for the driver.

- The bike ambulance will help in overcoming the problems faced by Indian security forces and emergency health care providers. The bike ambulances will provide life-saving aid for the evacuation of injured patients from low-intensity conflict areas.

**Harsh Vardhan chairs 148th session of WHO Executive Board**
- Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare digitally chaired the 148th session of WHO Executive Board, through Video Conference. The 148th session of the Executive Board has been organised from 18-26 January 2021.
- The meeting provides a platform to bring together all member states to set the directions and agenda and continue striving for the objective of Health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Also, the WHO has declared the Year 2021 as the Year of Global Solidarity and Survival.

**Nitin Gadkari inaugurates National Road Safety Month 2021**
- The first-ever National Road Safety Month was inaugurated by Union Minister for Defence Shri Rajnath Singh and Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways & MSME Nitin Gadkari. It is the inaugural edition of the National Road Safety Month and is being held in place of National Road Safety Week, which was being observed since the past few years. The objective of the month-long programme is to build awareness about road safety and reduce road accidents in India. It will be held till 17 February 2021.
- During this period, nation-wide activities would be conducted throughout the country in association with State Govt./Union Territory administrations, NHAI, NHIDCL, OEMs and NGOs.
- The centre is also taking several measures to reduce road accidents by Restructuring and Strengthening 4E’s of Road safety, which are: Engineering, Education, Enforcement and Emergency care Services.

**PM Modi launches Rs 1,000-crore ‘Startup India Seed Fund’**
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched Rs 1,000-crore ‘Startup India Seed Fund’ on 16 January 2021, while addressing the ‘Prarambh: Startup India International Summit’ 2021. This initiative will help in setting up new startups and promote their growth.
- The Startup India Seed Fund would support startups in need of initial capital to start and grow their business and help budding entrepreneurs pursue innovative ideas.
- The government has been implementing the Fund of Fund Scheme to help startups raise equity capital. Going forward, the government will also help startups in raising debt capital.

**India’s first COVID-19 Vaccine recipient is Manish Kumar**
- Manish Kumar, a sanitation worker in Delhi, became the first person to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in India after PM Modi flagged off the nationwide vaccination drive on 16 January 2021. Manish Kumar was given the injection at AIIMS in Delhi while Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan was also present.
PM Modi launched the nationwide vaccine drive via videoconferencing and congratulated the people of India on getting two Made in India vaccines. India’s vaccination programme is based on a very important principle that those who are in need of the vaccine will get vaccinated first. Our doctors, nurses, medical & paramedical staff, sanitation workers in hospitals – be it private or hospital are entitled to get vaccinated. This will be done on priority.

Kerala Governor launches 'One School One IAS' scheme
- Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan has inaugurated the ‘One School One IAS’ scheme which has been rolled out under the Vedhik Erudite Foundations Scholarship Programme. According to a notification released an institution considered by top academics and retired IAS and IPS officers in the state is conducting the programme which seeks to refute the general notion that the civil service is for the elite class only.
- The programme will be providing free training to the students who are economically backward but are academically brilliant aspirants of civil service and other competitive exams.
- The scheme is supported by sponsors, which expects an enrollment of 10,000 boys and girls across the state.
- The beneficiaries of the programme will be selected by a panel which will be headed by the heads of the respective educational institutions.

NASA targets final test of ‘world’s most powerful rocket’
- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is looking to carry out the eighth and final test in its “Green Run” test series. This eighth stage termed “hot fire,” will bring to an end a series of tests which, NASA says, will gradually bring together the core stage of the Space Launch System (SLS) to life for the very first time. The core stage of the SLS will form the backbone of what NASA says will be the “most powerful rocket in the world” and will power its next-generation human Moon Missions.
- The stage will then be assembled with the other parts of the rocket and NASA’s Orion spacecraft for Artemis I, which will be the first integrated flight of Orion-SLS and the first under the Artemis programme, under which NASA will take the first woman and the next man to Moon, by 2024.
- The 212-foot-tall SLS core stage includes the liquid hydrogen tank and liquid oxygen tank can hold 733,000 gallons of propellant to power the RS-25 engines.
- It is the rocket that NASA projects will be carrying a new generation of astronauts to the moon and handle missions beyond the scope of existing commercial crew vehicles.
- This rocket is a little shorter than the Saturn V rockets but is more powerful.
- This new rocket will be producing 15% greater thrust during liftoff in comparison to Saturn V. When the engines are fired up, 1.6 million pounds of thrust will be generated.
- When the 4 RS-25 engines at the bottom of the SLS be ignited, the period of testing for the rocket will close.
- This core includes oxygen and liquid hydrogen tanks, 4 engines and computers, and avionics
of the rocket.

- All these will be turned on as 2.6 million litres of supercooled propellant will be loaded into the rocket and ignited. However, the rocket will remain fixed at the Stennis Space Center of NASA.

PM Modi flags off 8 trains connecting Statue of Unity

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has flagged off eight trains connecting the Statue of Unity in Kevadiya, Gujarat with different regions of the country through video conferencing. PM Modi informed that it was the first time in history that so many trains from different locations were flagged off for a common destination.

The eight trains flagged off will connect Kevadiya with
- Varanasi,
- Dadar,
- Ahmedabad,
- Hazrat
- Nizamuddin,
- Rewa,
- Chennai, and
- Pratapnagar.

- PM also inaugurated other railway projects in Kevadiya, including Dabhoi-Chandid gauge converted broad gauge rail line, Chandod-Kevadiya new broad gauge rail line, Pratapnagar-Kevadiya newly electrified section, and new station buildings of Dabhoi Junction, Chandod and Kevadiya.

Petroleum Ministry launches ‘SAKSHAM’ campaign

- The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has launched a month-long mass awareness campaign titled ‘SAKSHAM’ to spread awareness about green and clean energy. The campaign has been organised by the Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA), to motivate consumers to switch to cleaner fuels and bring in behavioural change to use fossil fuel intelligently. The campaign will spread awareness about seven key drivers that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had recently mentioned.

- SAKSHAM stands for Sanrakshan Kshamata Mahotsav.

- The pan-India campaign would include various activities such as cyclotron, farmer workshops, seminars, painting competition, CNG vehicle driving contest, etc to spread awareness among masses about the advantages of using clean fuels.

- They include moving towards a gas-based economy, cleaner use of fossil fuels, greater reliance on domestic sources to drive biofuels and increased use of electric vehicles.

Kite festival Shakrain celebrated in Dhaka

- On this occasion, people engaged in kite flying and fireworks among many other recent additions like ‘DJ Party’ to celebrate this occasion. The kite flying competition is followed by winter cake festival -- pithapuli in which rice cake pudding is eaten by people.
This is a centuries-old tradition in several parts of Bangladesh celebrated on the last day of the Bengali month of Paush. People in the old Dhaka city of Shakhari Bazar, Laxmibazar, Bangshal and Sutrapur among others celebrated this festival with great joy.

The Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) organised the festival for the first time this year with the slogan ‘Let’s Fly a kite, Cherish Tradition’. The festival was held in all the 75 wards of DSCC with the Mayor Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh inaugurating the festival by flying the kite in the city.

Indian-American Garima Verma named digital director in Office of the First Lady

Incoming First Lady, Jill Biden has named Indian-American Garima Verma as her digital director and Michael LaRosa press secretary, the Biden transition team has announced. She served as audience development and content strategist on the Biden-Harris campaign. Before joining the campaign, Verma was a volunteer with the content team, designing graphics for distribution to Biden-Harris volunteers across the country.

Verma, who was born in India, grew up in Ohio and the Central Valley of California. She previously worked in the entertainment space, marketing films at Paramount Pictures and television shows at The Walt Disney Company’s ABC Network, and media agency Horizon Media. Verma has also served as an independent consultant in marketing, design and digital for a number of small business and non-profit clients.

No foreign leader as chief guest on Republic Day this year

According to External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava, due to the global C-19 situation, it has been decided that this year there will not be a foreign Head of State or Head of Government as the Chief Guest for the Republic Day event. President Ramnath Kovind will take the salute at the parade this time. This will be the first time in over five decades that India will not have a chief guest at the Republic Day parade.

This comes days after United Kingdom (UK) Prime Minister Boris Johnson cancelled his visit to India. Boris Jonhson was scheduled to be the chief guest at India’s Republic Day parade on January 26.

Rajnath Singh unveils India’s 1st indigenously developed driverless metro car

Union Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh has unveiled India’s first ‘Driverless Metro Car’ on 15 January 2021 during a function held at BEML’s Bangalore Complex. The indigenously designed & developed state-of-the-art Driverless Metro trains are being manufactured at BEML Bangaluru manufacturing facility, for Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA).

BEML recently opened its Depot office at Charkop Metro Depot, MMRDA, Mumbai for commissioning, testing and round-the-clock services for Driverless Metro cars. BEML bagged a total order of 576 cars for Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA)’s MRS1 project and the supply is scheduled progressively up to January 2024.
Piyush Goyal inaugurates the ‘Prarambh: Startup India International Summit’

- The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs and Food and Public Distribution, Piyush Goyal has inaugurated the two-day ‘Prarambh’, Startup India International Summit in New Delhi on 15 January 2021. The Summit has been organized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under M/o Commerce & Industry.
- The inaugural event was participated by the members of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) countries.
- The ‘Prarambh’ Summit will provide a platform to the startups and young minds from around the world to come together and collaborate to work collectively to come with new ideas, innovation and invention.
- The focus of the Summit will be on enhancing multilateral cooperation and engagement with countries from around the globe to collectively develop and strengthen the startup ecosystems.
- The Summit marks the fifth anniversary of the Startup India initiative, launched by the Prime Minister on 16 January 2016.

Centre launches Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 3.0

- The Government of India launched the third phase of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana on 15 January 2021. The scheme has been rolled out for the current financial year, ending March 2021, and will be implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
- Under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana-3.0, skills training would be provided in 600 districts across all states, (except four states including Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal) to 8 lakh candidates over next three months with an outlay of Rs 948.90 crore with a focus on Covid-related skills.
- The training will be imparted through 729 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs), empanelled non-PMKK training centres and more than 200 industrial training institutes (ITIs).
- Further, a five-year PMKVY will be launched in 2021-22 with an enhanced target of skilling 1.5 crore youth.

Kerala becomes 8th State to complete ease of doing business reforms

- Kerala has become the 8th State in the country to successfully undertake “Ease of Doing Business” reform stipulated by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance. Kerala has become eligible to mobilise additional financial resources of Rs.2,373 crore through Open Market Borrowings. Permission for the same was issued by the Department of Expenditure on 12th January 2021.
- Kerala has now joined the seven other States namely, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, who have completed this reform. On completion of reforms facilitating ease of doing business, these eight States have been granted additional borrowing permission of Rs.23,149 crore.
Haryana CM inaugurates country's first air taxi service

- Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday inaugurated air taxi services from Chandigarh to Hisar from Chandigarh Airport under Centre's UDAN scheme.
- "For the first time in the country, a small aircraft in the form of air taxi is being used for services."
- "In 2nd phase, services for Hisar to Dehradun will be started on 18 January. In the 3rd phase, two more routes from Chandigarh to Dehradun and Hisar to Dharamshala will be added on 23 January. The company also plans to include Shimla, Kullu and more Haryana routes.

NITI Aayog and Flipkart collaborate to enhance WEP

- NITI Aayog and Flipkart, have come together to launch the revamped Women Entrepreneurship Platform. The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is a unified access portal which brings together women from different parts of India to realise their entrepreneurial aspirations.
- The idea of the platform was first mooted by Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog who announced the setting-up of a Women Entrepreneurship Platform in NITI Aayog at the conclusion of the 8th Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) held in Hyderabad in 2017, with an overarching theme of ‘Women first, prosperity for all’.
- The revamped version shall also include an additional feature to offer mentorship to the women mentees with specific knowledge concerning a problem area through a dedicated online mechanism facilitated under FICCI-FLO’s Empowering the Greater 50% mission.
- Women entrepreneurs today face unique obstacles, from a lack of networking opportunities and mentors to the challenge of balancing work and family.
- When women come together or form communities, they are better equipped to tackle challenges that come their way. Shared experiences from mentors and professionals further help.
- ‘Community’ on the WEP platform aims to connect knowledge-seeking women entrepreneurs who have questions or seek clarifications on multiple aspects of setting up new businesses (like registering businesses, GST, funding, effects of the pandemic, etc.), or progressing already established businesses; to knowledge providing women entrepreneurs who have experience in setting up businesses and hence can contribute by solving queries.

Naveen Patnaik inaugurates India’s first ‘Fire Park’ in Bhubaneswar

- The Chief Minister of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik virtually inaugurated a first of its kind ‘Fire Park’, to educate and bring awareness on basic fire safety measures among the people, particularly the students. The ‘Fire Park’ is located inside the premises of the Odisha Fire and Disaster Academy in Bhubaneswar.
- The minister also launched an online portal, ‘AgnishamaSeva’ of Odisha Fire Service. The fire park will facilitate demonstrations on use of first aid fire-fighting equipment, rescue and disaster operations, visit the exhibition hall, screening of films and distribution of leaflets on fire safety.
What’s on the show:
• Demonstrations on use of first aid fire-fighting equipment
• Demo on rescue and disaster operations
• Visit the exhibition hall
• Screening of films and distribution of leaflets on fire safety
• The Fire Park will be opened to the public on every Saturday from 3.30 pm to 5.30 pm

IRDAI sets up panel to examine availability of health insurance products
• Insurance regulator Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) has set up a panel of experts called ‘Health Insurance Advisory Committee’ to examine the availability of health insurance products in the country, considering the need of the Indian society and recommend suitable products and processes. The expert committee will be headed by IRDAI Chairperson, Subhash Chandra Khuntia and will have a Member (Non-Life) as the vice-chairperson. The committee, which has a term of one year.
• Nachiket Mor (Visiting Scientist, Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health),
• A K Chand (Professor and Neurosurgeon, Bangalore),
• B K Mohanti (Former Professor and Oncologist, AIIMS),
• K Hari Prasad (Anaesthetist, Hyderabad), and Pankaj Sharma (IRDAI).

Suriname’s Indian-origin President to be Republic Day chief guest
• President of the Republic of Suriname, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, will be the chief guest at India’s Republic Day parade on January 26. India had initially invited Boris Johnson to be the chief guest but the British PM had to cancel his visit in view of the grim coronavirus situation back home.
• Earlier this week, Santokhi was the chief guest at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention, held by the Ministry of External Affairs and he delivered the keynote address. He was sworn in as the president of Suriname in July 2020, when his party, the Progressive Reform Party, won 20 of the 51 seats in the elections.

Manipur: CM Biren Singh virtually inaugurated Cherry Blossom Festival
• The 4th edition of the Cherry Blossom Festival, Mao in Manipur was virtually inaugurated by Chief Minister N Biren Singh. However this year, the authority decided to scale down the festival due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Festival featured the picturesque landscape of Mao adorned with beautiful cherry trees laden with blooming flowers which have traditionally attracted visitors from across the world.
• Manipur has been celebrating the festival every year since 2017.
• The festival which featured the picturesque landscape of Mao town adorned with beautiful Cherry Blossom flowers was streamed live from 2 pm on various social media platforms.
• The Mao area of Senapati district in Manipur is known for Cherry Blossom, a plant which is popularly known as Sakura in Japan.
First ever Ice climbing festival celebrated in Nubra valley
- In Leh, the first-ever Ice climbing festival was celebrated in Nubra valley. The Seven Day event was organized by Nubra Adventure Club. Ice climbing is a popular winter sport abroad. To promote winter tourism in Nubra valley, Nubra Adventure Club, with the help of Social activist Dr Nordan Otzer, has organized the Seven Day Ice Climbing Festival. Trainer Rigzin Tsewang said that Nubra has the potential to be the ice climbing capital in the Himalayas.
- 18 participants across Nubra valley including 4 women have taken part in Ice climbing. All were trained in basic ice climbing skills during the festival at three locations, Pudong Cake at Panamik, Artificial Glacier at Ayee Village and first ascent at” Nubra Adventure Club Crag” located near Warshi Village. Three trainers Rigzin tsewang, Tsewang Namgyal and Kran Kowshik imparted ice climbing skills. Participants were awarded certificates as well.

Nitin Gadkari to launch “Khadi Prakritik Paint” developed by KVIC
- Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari will be launching an innovative new paint developed by Khadi and Village Industries Commission. The eco-friendly, non-toxic paint, called “Khadi Prakritik Paint” is a first-of-its-kind product, with anti-fungal, anti-bacterial properties.
- Based on cow dung as its main ingredient, the paint is cost-effective and odourless and has been certified by the Bureau of Indian Standards.
- Khadi Prakritik Paint is available in two forms - distemper paint and plastic emulsion paint.
- Production of Khadi Prakritik Paint is aligned with Prime Minister’s vision of increasing farmers’ income.

RS Sharma to head empowered panel for Covid-19 vaccine
- The Union government has appointed RS Sharma, former Trai chief, as the chairperson of an empowered committee for the administration of Covid-19 vaccine. A ten-member team has been constituted to be headed by Sharma. This has come days ahead of the mega vaccination drive is to start in India. He has also been included as a member of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration of Covid-19 that was formed in August 2020.
- RS Sharma was the first person to officially initiate a discussion on vaccination delivery in the government in the summer of 2020 when Covid-19 cases peaked.
- The top health ministry and UIDAI officials are part of the empowered committee.
- The panel can invite eminent persons as and when required to ensure delivery of the vaccine through the Co-Win technology platform.

Coastal defence exercise “Sea Vigil 21” kicks off
- A major exercise to test military readiness at sea along the coastline of the country starts. This is the second edition of the biennial pan-India coastal defence exercise “Sea Vigil-21” will be conducted on January 12 and 13. The two-day exercise involving all stakeholders, states and Central government agencies will set the tempo of operations, including “transition from peace to conflict”.

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The exercise is a build-up towards the next step and level exercise called “Tropex” (Theatre-level Readiness Operational Exercise), which is expected to be conducted at month-end or early February. Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs, Shipping, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Fisheries and Customs, state governments and other agencies of Centre and state are coordinating.

The exercise, inaugural edition of which was conducted in January 2019, will be undertaken along the entire 7,516-km coastline and Exclusive Economic Zone of India.

It will involve all 13 coastal states and Union Territories along with other maritime stakeholders, including the fishing and coastal communities.

Exercise ‘Sea Vigil-21’ is expected to provide a realistic assessment of our strengths and weaknesses and thus will help in further strengthening maritime and national security. The exercise is being coordinated by the Indian Navy.

The entire coastal security set up was re-organised after the 26/11 terror attack at Mumbai which was launched using the sea route.

Assets of the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, Customs and other maritime agencies will participate in the exercise.

Harsh Vardhan launches Coastal Research Vessel Sagar Anveshika

Union Minister for Earth Sciences, Harsh Vardhan has launched Coastal Research Vehicle (CRV) ‘Sagar Anveshika’ at the Chennai Port. The vehicle will be used to carry out environment indexing and bathymetric (mapping underwater features) in both coastal and offshore waters.

It will be used for research purposes by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) and has been built by Titagarh Wagons, Kolkata, West Bengal. NIOT already has 6 Research Vessels – Sagar Kanya, Sagar Sampada, Sagar Nidhi, Sagar Manusha, & Sagar Tara.

Anveshika has been built under the Indian Register of Shipping (IRClass) and is a DP (Dynamic Positioning)-Capable vessel.

Anveshika will add to the capacity and capability for exploring the ocean which is a huge source of water, energy, food, minerals.

Utilizing the Research Vehicle, Marine Scientists can travel six kilometres below the sea. The scientists can also stay underwater for more than 16 hours to conduct research activities.

Anveshika will enable scientists to conduct various oceanographic research missions aboard, it houses modern laboratories equipped with the latest instruments.

India’s 7th Trade Policy Review (TPR) at WTO

The second session of the 7th Trade Policy Review (TPR) of India concluded at the World Trade Organization (WTO). This was the final session of the 7th trade policy review. Trade Policy Review is a key mechanism under the monitoring function of WTO. During this trade policy review, WTO examines the trade and related policies of the member countries with an aim to improve their adherence to WTO rules and to provide constructive feedback.
Important Points Trade Policy Review (TPR) of India:

- The official delegation of India for the 7th TPR was headed by Anup Wadhawan, the Commerce Secretary.
- The Commerce Secretary responded to all the issues rose by the Members during the 1st TPR session of India.
- The Commerce Secretary also urged the members to provide a permanent solution to Public Stock Holding (PSH) for food security.
- India is committed to simplify and streamline the overall domestic business environment and has an aim to make a place in the top 50 in the World Bank’s Doing Business Report.
- Before this, the last Trade Policy Review of India was held in the year 2015.

Preeti Pant Panel to study adverse findings of NFHS-5

- The Health and Family Welfare Ministry has recently formed a technical expert group to study the adverse findings from the National Family Health Survey-5. The Ministry has set up the technical committee of medicine and nutrition experts under the leadership of Joint Secretary Preeti Pant.

About National Family Health Survey-5:

- The expert group also includes State programme officers from Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Karnataka.
- The committee will examine the findings of the National Family Health Survey-5 as well as suggest policies and courses of action to improve on indicators related to anaemia, malnutrition, C-section, and stunting.
- The newly formed technical expert group will conduct meetings regularly and will provide its recommendations soon.
- As of now, no meeting has been held and no date has been finalized for the first meeting.

National Family Health Survey-5:

- The factsheet of the 1st phase of National Family Health Survey-5 was released in December 2020.
- The sheet covered 22 States/UTs and provided information on 131 indicators like family welfare, population, nutrition, reproductive and child health, etc.
- Before the National Family Health Survey-5, four surveys have been conducted in the years 1992–93, 1998–99, 2005–06, and 2015–16.
- All the NFHS rounds were conducted by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai.

BMC to set up 5 new stations to monitor air quality

- These stations are being set up under the Centre’s National Clean Air Program, which was
launched by the Union Environment Ministry in 2019. The programme aims to reduce the pollution levels across the country to less than 20% in the next five years.

- To get more area-specific air quality data, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) plans to set up continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations (CAAQMS) at five places in the city. BMC officials said these five CAAQMS will come up at Mahul village in Chembur, Shivaji Nagar in Deonar, Pant Nagar in Ghatkopar; Charkop in Kandivali and Byculla Zoo. The stations will also have display boards showing air quality index (AQI) with its impact and weather information for 24 hours. The BMC has invited tenders for appointing agencies to set up stations. It would cost the civic body about Rs 10 crore.

5-year-old Pune prodigy sets world record with unique memory

- She is only five, but her age didn’t deter her from creating a world record. Meet Presha Khemani, daughter of a city-based chartered accountant and a homemaker, who has aced it to the World Records India Book by naming 150 countries and their capitals after identifying their flags in just 4.17 minutes.
- The little genius won the ‘Youngest Kid to Identify Flags and Country Names’ title for her incredible feat.

Kerala: To set up Kalaripayattu Academy to boost traditional martial art form

- To give a boost to the traditional martial art form of Kerala, the state government is setting up a Kalaripayattu Academy at Vellar Craft Village here, under the Department of Tourism.
- Kalaripayattu, also known as ‘Kalari’, is known for its long-standing history within Indian martial arts culture and is believed to be the oldest surviving martial art in the world.
- According to the Department of Tourism, the 3,500 square feet gallery is expected to be completed in two months, where Kalari Asans (gurus) led by Padma Shri Meenakshiamma will conduct classes.

DRDO develops products to help Indian army battle extreme cold in Eastern Ladakh

- With over 50,000 Indian troops are deployed in Eastern Ladakh to fight against China, the Defence Research and Development Organisation has developed multiple products such the Him-Taapak heating devices and snow melters to help the soldiers fight the enemy in form of the extremely low temperatures.
- The Him Tapak space heating device (Bukhari) has been developed for the Indian Army deployed in Eastern Ladakh, Siachen and high altitude areas and it has placed an order of more than ₹420 crores for these appliances, DRDO's Defence Institute for Physiology and Allied Sciences (DIPAS) Director Dr Rajeev Varshney.

West Bengal CM Inaugurates 26th Kolkata International Film Festival

- West Bengal CM, Mamata Banerjee has inaugurated the 26th Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF). The inaugural ceremony was also virtually attended by Bollywood superstar and West Bengal’s brand ambassador Shah Rukh Khan from Mumbai. Legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray's classic ‘Apur Sansar’ will be the inaugural film of the festival in which 131
movies from 45 countries will be screened till January 13.
- Films will be screened at Rabindra Sadan, Nandan, Sisir Mancha and Rabindra Okakura Bhavan in Salt Lake. Six films by Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini and movies on sitarist Ravi Shankar, singer Hemanta Mukherjee and flicks of comedian Bhanu Bandyopadhyay will be screened.

PM Modi To Address National Youth Parliament Festival On Jan 12
- "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the National Youth Parliament Festival 2021 on 12th January at 10 AM.
- "The event will be covered live on Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal's Twitter/Facebook pages," the ministry said in another tweet.
- Earlier today, Prime Minister Modi spoke at the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention. During the event, Modi said that the country is ready to save humanity with two "Made in India" C-19 vaccines.

Mamata govt allows 100% occupancy in cinema halls in West Bengal
- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has allowed 100 per cent occupancy in cinema halls in the state but asserted following precautionary measures in the view of C-19.
- She was speaking at the inauguration of the 26th edition of the Kolkata International Film Festival 2021 via video conference on Friday.
- "Due to the pandemic, only 50 per cent occupancy in cinema halls is allowed.
- Actor Shahrukh Khan also participated in the event virtually. The Kolkata Film Festival, which was started in the year 1995, is being organised virtually in the view of C-19 pandemic.

J&K LG, Manoj Sinha launches Mobile Application 'Satark Nagrik'
- Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha has launched Mobile Application ‘Satark Nagrik’ and Departmental Vigilance Officers Portal of J&K Anti Corruption Bureau. The Lt Governor observed that the UT Government is taking comprehensive measures for ensuring transparent, accountable, and responsive governance.
  About Mobile Application ‘Satark Nagrik’
- The mobile application launched today has been developed with a purpose to facilitate seamless flow of information about corruption and enable citizens to submit their grievances with ease and mobility.
- Any citizen having an android based device can download the application from play store.
- A unique ID number will be allotted at the time of registration of grievance which later can be used to track the status of grievance.
  About Departmental Vigilance Officers Portal:
- The Departmental Vigilance Officers (DVO) Portal has been designed to enable an online communication channel with the DVOs of various departments.
- In certain cases, the complaints are related to ongoing works, current recruitments, and
payments yet to be made against contracts etc.
- By referring these matters to DVOs, violations/shortcomings can immediately be rectified and loss to the state exchequer can be prevented.

Ramesh Pokhriyal inaugurates International Akhand Conference ‘EDUCON-2020’
- Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’ has inaugurated the two-day Virtual International Akhand Conference ‘EDUCON 2020’ through video conferencing. This two-day International Conference is being organized by the Central University of Punjab, Bathinda (CUPB) in collaboration with the Global Educational Research Association (GERA). The focal theme of EDUCON-2020 is Envisioning Education for Transforming Youth to Restore Global Peace.
- This conference is the first of its kind in India where scholars across the world would be continuously having a non-stop marathon dialogue sessions for 31 hours exploring the possibilities of the use of ICT in the higher education to promote the equitable quality education in India.
- Further, the conference will also provide a platform for discussions on emerging trends in education viz., likely scenario of higher education and school education by 2050, developing disruptive technologies for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) Education, training youth for strategic future jobs in Universities, the skill training programme for future graduates and relevance of ancient education system in 21st century.

India to chair 3 key subsidiary bodies of UN Security Council
- The Permanent Representative of India to the UN, T S Tirumurti has announced that India has been asked to chair three important committees of the UN Security Council (UNSC), during its tenure as a non-permanent member of the powerful 15-nation UN body.
  The three highly significant committees include:
  1. Taliban Sanctions Committee
  2. Counter-Terrorism Committee
  3. Libyan Sanctions Committee
- Among these, India will chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee of UNSC in 2022, which coincides with the 75th anniversary of India’s independence. India began its two-year term at UNSC from January 01, 2021. It is the eighth time that the country has joined UNSC as the non-permanent member. In 2021, along with India, Norway, Kenya, Ireland and Mexico joined as non-permanent members in the Council.

PM Modi dedicates new Section of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has dedicated the 306-km New Rewari-New Madar section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) to the nation. Through video-conferencing, Modi also flagged off the world’s first double-stack long-haul 1.5-km-long container train hauled by electric traction from New Ateli-New Kishangarh.
- The New Rewari-New Madar section of the WDFC is situated in Haryana, approximately 79
km in Mahendragarh and Rewari districts and Rajasthan approximately 227 km in Jaipur, Ajmer, Sikar, Nagaur, and Alwar districts.

**Karnataka Government launches Krishi Sanjeevani Vans to test soil, water**
- The Chief Minister of Karnataka, B.S. Yediyurappa flagged off 40 Krishi Sanjeevani vans in Bengaluru. These vans have been launched by the state Agriculture Department with Central assistance under National Krishi Vikas Yojana to take up this novel programme.
- To take labs to the agriculture fields, study the conditions and address the needs of the farmers about pest control, the fertility of the soil, weeds and suitable crops in the existing conditions so that farmers get support for their farming techniques.
- Depending on the soil, water and pests inflicting the crops, the Agriculture Department personnel can suggest remedies.

**PM Modi inaugurates Kochi-Mangaluru natural gas pipeline**
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the 450-km Kochi-Mangaluru natural gas pipeline built at a cost of Rs 3,000 crore via video conferencing. The event marks an important milestone towards the creation of One Nation One Gas Grid. Natural gas pipeline network will be doubled in 5-6 years and CNG stations will be raised to 10,000 from current 1,500.
- The pipeline will carry natural gas from Kochi in Kerala through Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargod districts to Mangaluru in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka.
- It has been built by GAIL (India) Limited. It will carry natural gas from the LNG Regasification Terminal at Kochi. The pipeline will supply environment-friendly PNG.
- The pipeline grid will help improve clean energy access as well as also aid in the development of city gas projects.

**MP Govt launches ‘Launch Pad Scheme’ to make youth self-reliant**
- The government of Madhya Pradesh has launched a ‘Launch Pad Scheme’ for the boys and girls coming out of child care institutions and having completed 18 years of age. This scheme has been launched by the Women and Child Development Department of the state with the objective to provide a platform to these youth, through which they will be able to become self-reliant by continuing their education and training.
- The District Administration will provide space to these youths for the opening of coffee shops, stationery, photocopying, computer typing and DTP work.
- All the 52 districts of the state have been divided into 5 clusters with headquarters at Indore, Sagar, Gwalior, Jabalpur and Bhopal.
- An amount of Rs 6 lakh will be provided by the Women and Child Development Department for the installation of each launch pad.
- These launch pads will be operated through non-governmental organizations.
40th Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica flagged off

- The 40th Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica was flagged off on January 05, 2021, from Mormugao Port, Goa. The chartered ice-class vessel MV Vasiliy Golovnin has been chosen for the prestigious 40th Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica (ISEA) mission journey and will reach Antarctica in 30 days.
- The expedition journey has 43 members onboard.
- India’s major fuel supplier, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL) has supplied Jet A1 fuel, lubes and Marine Gas Oil (MGO) for the mission.
- Apart from its scientific mission, this expedition shall carry out the humanitarian responsibility of bringing back the 48-strong winter crew from their 15-month tenure, and resupply the bases with food, fuel, provisions and spares for operations and maintenance of life support systems.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurates Ramalingeswara Park in Berhampur

- The Ramalingeswar Park was inaugurated in Berhampur of Ganjam district in Odisha on Monday by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik through Video Conferencing. The park has added glitter to the Silk City.
- Beautification of the park is a 5T initiative by the Government of Odisha. This is said to be the New Year gift to the residents of the Silk City from the Chief Minister.
- Situated in the middle of Berhampur city the Ramalingeshwara Park has been beautified with a cost of Rs. 12 crore. Spread in 1500 sq. ft area the park has a huge statute of Lord Shiva in the centre of the pond. Besides, the water fountains have added beauty to the park.

Ramesh Pokhriyal launched Toycathon-2021 to promote manufacturing of toys

- The Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’ and Union Minister WCD and Textiles Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani jointly launched Toycathon-2021 and the Toycathon Portal. Toycathon is being organized to develop India as the global Toy manufacturing hub. Toycathon will provide a platform to conceptualize innovative toys based on the Indian value system which will inculcate the positive behaviour and good value among the children.
- The Toycathon will be based on nine themes:
  1. Indian Culture, History, Knowledge of India and Ethos;
  2. Learning, Education and Schooling;
  3. Social and human values;
  4. Occupations & specific fields;
  5. Environment;
  6. Divyang ;
  7. Fitness and sport;
  8. Out of the box, creative and logical thinking and
Bajaj Auto becomes world’s most valuable two-wheeler company

- Indian multinational two-wheeler and three-wheeler manufacturing company, Bajaj Auto has become the most valuable two-wheeler company in the world, after it crossed a market capitalization of more than Rs. 1 lakh crore, on January 01, 2021.
- Bajaj’s share price on NSE closed at Rs. 3,479 per share on the first day of 2021, leading to a market capitalization of more than Rs 1,00,670.76 crore. Thus, Bajaj Auto is not only the most valued company in the two-wheeler segment but also the first-ever two-wheeler company in the world to have reached this market cap milestone.

PM Modi inaugurates National Metrology Conclave 2021

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has addressed the National Metrology Conclave, via video conferencing on January 04, 2021. National Metrology Conclave 2021 was organised by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL), New Delhi, to mark its 75th year of inception.
- This year theme: ‘Metrology for the Inclusive Growth of the Nation’.
- As a part of this conclave, PM Modi also dedicated ‘National Atomic Timescale’, and ‘Bhartiya Nirdeshak Dravya’ to the nation, and laid the foundation stone of the ‘National Environmental Standards Laboratory’.

Delhi government sets up Tamil Academy

- Delhi government Department of Art, Culture, and Language has set-up a Tamil academy to promote the language and culture of the southern state of Tamil Nadu. Delhi has a large population of people from Tamil Nadu and we want to present a platform to the people of Delhi to get a taste of the art and culture of Tamil Nadu.
- The Delhi government has appointed a former councillor and member of Delhi Tamil Sangam N Raja as the Vice-Chairman of the academy.
- The Department of Art, Culture, and Language of the Delhi govt has decided that the new academy will introduce various awards to promote and reward the good works of people in Tamil language and culture.
- The government will also provide language courses through this academy.

PM Modi lays foundation stone of Light House projects (LHPs)

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of Light House projects (LHPs) at six sites across six States through video conference on 1st January 2021. The LHPs will be implemented at Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Rajkot (Gujarat), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Ranchi (Jharkhand), Agartala (Tripura) and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh).
- The project is being constructed under the Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC)-India. It has been conceptualised by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- GHTC-India envisions providing an ecosystem for the adoption of innovative technologies in the housing construction sector in a holistic manner.
- Under the programme, over 1,000 houses would be built in each of the six cities in 12 months along with allied infrastructure facilities.
The houses are called lighthouse projects in technical language. Houses being built under the Light House Projects (LHPs) will take less time to build and will be resilient, affordable and comfortable as they use the best of new-age alternative global technologies, materials and processes in the construction sector.

INDIAN AIR FORCE LAUNCHES E-GOVERNANCE (E-OFFICE) PAN IAF
- The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria PVSM AVSM VM ADC formally launched the IAF e-Governance (e-Office) portal at Air HQ, Vayu Bhavan on 31 Dec 20. The implementation undertaken as part of Digital India and e-governance initiative will transition the entire Indian Air Force to a ‘paperless office’ workflow.
- The launch of e-Governance in IAF marks a paradigm shift from the current method of correspondence, filing and documentation to a digital one. The platform would achieve enhanced transparency, improved efficiency, increased accountability, assured data integrity and rapidly accessible archives along with a major reduction in the use of paper.

Agriculture Ministry inaugurates virtual Agri-hackathon Atmanirbhar Krishi
- Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers’ Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar inaugurated the Virtual Agri-hackathon 2020 organised by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation and Farmers’ Welfare in association with IARI, Pusa, New Delhi.
- Speaking on the occasion, Narendra Singh Tomar said that Agri India Hackathon is the largest virtual gathering to create dialogues and accelerate innovations.

Odisha govt plans memorial for ‘martyrs’ C-19 warriors
- Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday announced plans to build a memorial in the State Capital for the C-19 warriors who laid their lives in the line of duty.
- The Chief Minister made this announcement during a discussion with family members of martyred C-19 warriors of five districts through video conference. Expressing his gratitude to the family members of martyred warriors, Naveen said names of those who lost their lives will be inscribed in the memorial to keep their memory live.

India exports first shipment of moringa powder to US
- India has started exports of Moringa powder, keeping in mind its rising global demand and nutritional properties, the commerce ministry said on Thursday.
- "Two tonne of organic certified Moringa powder were sent to the US through air consignment on December 29.

Delhi’s air quality in December best in 4 years: CPCB
- Pollution levels in Delhi this December were the lowest in the last four years, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- The average air quality index (AQI) for December stood at 308. It was 337 last year, 360 in 2018 and 316 in 2017, the CPCB data showed.
- The capital recorded four "severe" air quality days this December as compared to eight each

- There were 10 "poor" air days this December as against seven, four and nine in 2019, 2018 and 2017, respectively.

Cabinet nod to transport hub at Greater Noida

- The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the construction of a multi-modal logistics and transport hub in Uttar Pradesh’s Greater Noida at an estimated cost of Rs3,883.80 crore.
- “The multi-modal logistics hub project will be developed as a world-class facility that will provide efficient storage/transitoning of goods to/from the Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC) and offer a one-stop destination to freight companies and customers,” an official statement said. It will provide standard container handling activities and value-added services to reduce logistics costs with improved efficiency of operations, the statement added.

Railways launch upgraded IRCTC website

- Union railways minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday launched the revamped version of the e-ticketing website of the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).
- The new website claims to have complete user personalization linked to the user login, such as the booking of meals, retiring rooms and hotels too have been integrated and can be directly booked along with the tickets.

Government Extends Deadline For FASTag Till February 15, 2021

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highway (MoRTH) has extended the deadline for the collection of toll charges on the National Highways using FASTag. The deadline was originally until January 1, 2021 which has now been extended to February 15, 2021.
- Under the original deadline, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) was slated to completely switch over to FASTag payment at toll plazas from January 1 onwards, which meant FASTags needed to be retrofitted on all four-wheelers and commercial vehicles.

India’s 1st Testbed TiHAN launched at IIT Hyderabad

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, has sanctioned Rs. 135 crores to IIT Hyderabad under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS) to set up a Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation and Data Acquisition Systems.
- Two acres of land has already been allocated in the IIT Hyderabad campus and the facilities are planned in phases.
- All Smart poles are enabled with communication providing technology with some Poles
designed with sprinklers to simulate rain scenarios. The developed testbed will be available for use by all the industries, R&D labs, academia conducting research and development in the broad areas of autonomous navigation.

India’s first pollinator park opens in Uttarakhand
- The country’s first pollinator park with over 40 species of butterflies, honeybees, birds and insects has been developed over four acres at Haldwani, Uttarakhand. The objective behind developing the park is to conserve various pollinator species, create awareness among people in general about the importance of conservation of these species and to promote further research on various aspects of pollination, including a threat to habitat and impact of pollution on pollinators.
- There are at present 40 species of pollinators at the park, including common jezebel, common emigrant, red pierrot, common sailor, plain tiger, the common leopard, the common moron, common grass yellow, common blue bottle, common four-ring, peacock pansy, the painted lady, pioneer white, yellow-orange tip and lime butterfly.
- Pollinators provide pollination services to over 180,000 different plant species. Without them, existing populations of plants would decline, even if soil, air, nutrients, and other life-sustaining elements were available.
- The importance of pollinators was recognised long back in the west and to conserve pollinators, parks, gardens, strips and pathways were created on a large scale in countries like the USA.

SPORTS
ITBP wins IHAI National Ice Hockey Championship
- The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has won the Ice Hockey Association of India (IHAI) 10th National Ice Hockey Championship trophy after a win over Ladakh in the finals in Gulmarg. The match was held at Gulmarg Ice Rink. Ladakh has been considered as the capital of ice hockey in India where local men and women play this game with great enthusiasm.
- The championship was held at an altitude of 8,694-feet and temperatures below freezing point. Top eight teams of ice hockey in India participated in the event. Top teams of Ice

Carolina Marin wins Yonex Thailand Open badminton tournament 2021
- Reigning Olympic champion Carolina Marin bolstered her chances of defending her title in Tokyo later this year after claiming the Thailand Open in Bangkok over top seed Tai Tzu-Ying. The Yonex Thailand Open Super 1000 badminton tournament was held from 12 January 2021 to 17 January 2021. It was the first badminton tournament of 2021 by Badminton World Federation (BWF).
- **Winners of Singles Title:**
  - Men’s Category: Viktor Axelsen (Denmark) defeated Angus Long (Hong Kong) to clinch the Men’s Singles Title.
Women’s Category: Carolina Marin (Spain) defeated Tai Tzu-Ying (Taiwan) to bag the Women’s Singles Title.

Winners of Doubles Title:
- In the Men’s Doubles, Taiwan’s Lee Yang & Wang Chi-Lin beat Malaysia’s Goh V Shem & Tan Wee Kiong to bag the Doubles Title.
- In the Women’s Doubles, Indonesia’s Greysia Polii & Apriyani Rahayu defeated Thailand’s Jongkolphan Kititharakul & Rawinda Prajongjai to clinch the Doubles Title.

Winners of Mixed Doubles:
- Thailand’s Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai defeated Indonesia’s Praveen Jordan & Melati Daeva Oktavianti to clinch the mixed doubles title.

Hockey in India participated in the Championship organized from January 16 to 22, 2021.

Khelo India Zanskar Winter Sport & Youth festival 2021 begins
- In Ladakh, the inaugural edition of the Khelo India Zanskar Winter Sport & Youth Festival 2021 kicked off on 18th January 2021. The 13-Day Zanskar Winter Sports Festival aims to open a new arena in Ladakh for adventure and Nature loving tourists and a boost for local Youth to hone up their skills in winter sports to represent India.
- A series of snow-based activities will be held for the next 13 days to promote tourism and economic activities in the Snowbound, picturesque Zanskar.

Oldest living Olympic champion Agnes Keleti turns 100
- The oldest surviving Olympic champion, Ágnes Keleti, celebrates her 100th birthday. She is one of her country’s most successful Olympians, having won 10 medals for Hungary in gymnastics, at the Olympic Games Helsinki 1952 and Melbourne 1956. Her haul included five golds.
- Keleti won the floor event in Finland before producing an astonishing display in Australia, winning four golds – in the uneven bars, balance beam, floor, and team event. At 35, she became the oldest female gymnast to win an Olympic title.

Dhaka Marathon 2021: Jigmet Dolma from Ladakh wins 4th position
- Jigmet Dolma from India secured the fourth position in the Dhaka Marathon 2021. Jigmet Dolma is an SPO of Ladakh police. In the marathon, Hicham Lakohi of Morocco came first in the elite competition of the marathon in men’s category while Angela Jim Asunde from Kenya won the women’s category in the same event. In the full marathon, among the SAARC and local runners, Bahadur Singh of India became the champion in the men’s category and Pushpa Bhandari of Nepal became the champion in the women’s category.
- The marathon was organized to commemorate the return of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from Pakistan jail to Bangladesh in 1972. The full marathon covered 42.19 kilometres while the half marathon covered 21.09 kilometres. Athletes from all over the world including India, Morocco, Kenya, France, Nepal, Ethiopia among others participated in various categories of the event. Home Minister of Bangladesh Asaduzzaman Khan inaugurated the event at Dhaka Army Stadium.
Jay Shah named BCCI’s Official Representative on ICC Board

- Jay Shah has been named as the official representative of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for the International Cricket Council (ICC) Board meetings. Shah is the Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).
- He will replace BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, who was currently representing India at the ICC Board, but he suffered a heart condition recently and had to be admitted to hospital where he underwent primary angioplasty.

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

- Australia’s Claire Polosak is set to become the first female match official in a men’s Test match when she takes up the fourth umpire’s role in the third Test between India and Australia. The 32-year-old from New South Wales has already earned the distinction of being the first woman on-field umpire in a men’s ODI match in ICC’s Division 2 league between Namibia and Oman played at the Windhoek in 2019.
- The duties of a fourth umpire include bringing on the new ball, carrying drinks on to the field for the umpires, checking the batteries in the light meter, observing the pitch during the lunch and tea intervals to make sure there is no interference, and bringing on new bails.
- The fourth umpire can also take over the third umpire’s position if something happens to one of the on-field umpires, in which case the third umpire takes over on-field duties.
- As per ICC rules for Test matches, the fourth umpire is appointed by the home cricket board from their nominees to the International Panel of ICC Umpires and from the host country.

Khelo India Ice Hockey Tournament begins in Chiktan, Kargil

- Khelo India Ice Hockey Tournament organised at Chiktan in Kargil, Ladakh. For the first time, the women team of Chiktan also participated in the Khelo India Games in Kargil district.
- There are 13 teams from different villages of Chiktan participating in the tournament, which include 11 men’s teams and 2 women’s teams.
- The tournament was inaugurated by SDM Shakar Chiktan and the Chief Guest of the event Kacho Asgar Ali khan in the presence of ZPEO Chiktan Ghulam Rasool along with in-charge police post-Chiktan.

Leon Mendonca becomes India’s 67th Grandmaster

- Goa’s 14-year-old Leon Mendonca has become India’s 67th chess Grandmaster by winning the third and final norm at a tournament in Italy. Mendonca, who achieved the feat at 14 years, 9 months and 17 days, is the second GM from the coastal State. Chennai player G. Akash, had in July, become the country’s 66th Grandmaster. He became the 29th Youngest GM in the world. The 1st GM from Goa is Ivana Maria Furtado, she achieved it in 2011.
- The player achieved his first GM norm at the Rigo Chess GM Round Robin, while the second came at the event in Budapest in November and the final one at the Vergani Cup in Italy.
Sergey Karjakin of Russia holds the record for the World’s Youngest ever GM having qualified for the title at the age of 12 years and 7 months (achieved the title in 2003).

GM is a title awarded by FIDE (International Chess Federation). It is the highest title a chess player can obtain apart from World Champion.

**Lewis Hamilton knighted in UK honours list**
- Lewis Hamilton has been knighted in Britain’s traditional New Year Honours list after equalling Michael Schumacher’s record of seven Formula One world titles.
- The list recognises outstanding achievements in various fields including showbusiness, sport and politics, as well as the contributions of a larger number of everyday citizens.
- There are many awards this year for those seeking solutions to the problems posed by coronavirus as the pandemic drags on.
- Hamilton, 35, surpassed Schumacher’s record number of career race wins during a stellar season in 2020 that was shortened due to the coronavirus pandemic.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**ISRO to launch city college’s academic satellite**
- ISRO chairman K Sivan is likely to inaugurate the ‘SriShakthiSat’ ground station at Sri Shakthi Institute of Engineering and Technology in Coimbatore. The station will help monitor the satellite developed by the institute, which is set to be launched by the ISRO. A satellite communication lab was established in the college in 2010.
- The satellite can detect fire and leaks on underground pipelines and collect info on bank thefts. ISRO is expected to launch this satellite, along with two other satellites built by JPR Institute, Chennai & GH Raisoni College of Engineering, Maharashtra.

**DRDO Successfully Test Flights indigenously developed “SAAW”**
- The DRDO successfully conducted captive and release trial of indigenously developed Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW) from Hawk-I aircraft of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) off the Odisha coast. This was the 9th successful mission of SAAW conducted by DRDO till now and the first test conducted from the Hawk-i aircraft.
- The 125 Kg class smart weapon SAAW was successfully test-fired from Indian Hawk-Mk132 of HAL.
- SAAW is indigenously designed and developed by DRDO’s Research Centre Imarat (RCI) Hyderabad.
- It is capable of engaging ground enemy airfield assets such as radars, bunkers, taxi tracks, and runways among others, up to a range of 100 km.

**DRDO develops India’s first Indigenously-Developed 9mm Machine Pistol**
- India’s first indigenous 9mm Machine Pistol has been jointly developed by DRDO and Indian Army. Infantry School, Mhow and DRDO’s Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE), Pune have designed and developed this weapon using their
respective expertise in the complementary areas. The weapon has been developed in a record time of four months. The weapon is aptly named “Asmi” meaning “Pride”, “Self-Respect” & “Hard Work”.

- The Machine Pistol fires the in-service 9mm ammunition and sports an upper receiver made from aircraft-grade Aluminium and lower receiver from carbon fibre.
- The 3D Printing process has been used in designing and prototyping of various parts including trigger components made by metal 3D printing.
- The weapon has huge potential in Armed forces as a personal weapon for heavy weapon detachments, commanders, tank and aircraft crews, drivers/dispatch riders, radio/radar operators, Closed Quarter Battle, counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations etc.
- This is also likely to find huge employability with the central and state police organizations as well as VIP protection duties and Policing.
- The Machine Pistol is likely to have a production cost under rupees 50000 each and has potential for exports.

**Pakistan successfully test fires “Fatah-1” Rocket System**
- The Pakistan Army successfully conducted the test flight of an indigenously developed Guided Multi Launch Rocket System, Fatah-1. The Fatah-1 weapon system is capable of precisely delivering conventional warheads deep into “enemy territory.”
- According to Director General of Army, Media Wing, Major General Babar Iftikhar, Fatah-1 weapon system can hit targets up to a range of 140 km.

**India & Israel successfully test MRSAM air defence system**
- India and Israel successfully tested a Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) defence system. The MRSAM missile defence system has been developed jointly by DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) to deal with airstrikes by enemy countries. Currently being used by all three wings of the Indian Army as well as Israel Defence Forces (IDF), the air and missile defence system was a joint venture of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the IAI.
- MRSAM is an air and missile defence system that can destroy enemy aircraft from a distance of 50 to 70 km.
- It provides ultimate protection against a variety of aerial platforms.
- The MRSAM includes command and control, an advanced phased-array radar, mobile launchers and interceptors with advanced RF seeker.

**GRSE delivers 8th landing craft utility ship to Indian Navy**
- Kolkata-based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) has delivered the Landing Craft Utility (LCU) MK IV class vessel ‘IN LCU L-58’ (Yard 2099) to the Indian Navy. The amphibious ships, to be based in the strategic location of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which is close to various routes leading to the South China Sea. LCU L-58 is the final ship in the series of 8 LCUs being manufactured by GRSE for the Indian Navy.
- The LCU ships, equipped with state-of-the-art technology, were developed in-house with
90 per cent of its parts indigenously manufactured.
- These ships are very unique in their design and class in the world. A very specific kind of requirement was given by the Indian Navy — the speed of 15 knots, a displacement of 900-odd tonnes and a low draught for beaching in the shallowest of waters.
- The ships are designed to accommodate 216 personnel and have two indigenous CRN 91 guns to provide artillery fire support during landing operations.

**BEL and Indian Navy inks pact for initial supply of Laser Dazzlers**
- The Indian Navy has signed a contract with the Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), to procure Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation Dazzlers (Laser Dazzlers). Initially, agreement has been signed for 20 Laser Dazlers. The Laser dazzler technology has been developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and would be manufactured by BEL, Pune plant. It is the first time that this unique product is indigenously designed and developed for the Armed Forces.
- They are used as a non-lethal method for warning and stopping suspicious vehicles/boats/aircraft/UAVs/pirates etc. from approaching secured areas during both day and night.
- It is capable of dazzle and thereby suppress the person’s/optical sensor’s action with disability glare in case of non-compliance to orders.
- While this technology can disorient/confuse/blind a person temporarily, it can also dazzle and distract aircraft/UAVs.

**Navy, DRDO conduct maiden trial of air dropped container ‘SAHAYAK-NG’**
- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) along with the Indian Navy conducted the successful maiden test trial of ‘SAHAYAK-NG’ India’s first indigenously designed and developed Air Dropped Container from IL 38SD aircraft (Indian Navy) off the coast of Goa. The trial was conducted by the Indian Navy to enhance its operational logistics capabilities and provide critical engineering stores to ships that are deployed more than 2000 kilometres from the coast.
- SAHAYAK-NG is an advanced version of SAHAYAK Mk I.
- The newly developed GPS aided air dropped container is having the capability to carry a payload that weighs up to 50 kilograms and can be dropped from heavy aircraft.
- Two DRDO laboratories, Naval Science and Technological Laboratory, Visakhapatnam and Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment, Agra were involved in the development of the SAHAYAK-NG container along with the industry partner M/s Avantel for GPS integration.

**OBITUARY**

**Oscar winning-actor Cloris Leachman passes away**
- Oscar winning-actor Cloris Leachman has passed away. The late star was known as one of Hollywood’s most prolific performers having won an Academy Award, a Golden Globe, and eight Primetime Emmy Awards.
Leachman’s character Phyllis in The Mary Tyler Moore Show, which she claimed was close to her own persona, brought the actress two Emmys as a featured actress in a series during the mid-’70s and made Leachman a household name. Leachman also won a supporting actress Oscar for a far different character, an embittered small-town housewife in Peter Bogdanovich’s The Last Picture Show.

Malayalam singer Somadas passes away

Popular Malayalam singer Somadas Chathannoor died of a cardiac arrest on Sunday. The 42-year-old singer, a native of Chathannur of Kollam passed away at 3am on Sunday. He was receiving treatment at Government Medical College Hospital Kollam following complications arising out of COVID-19, the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Although he had recovered and tested negative for the novel coronavirus, COVID-19 had caused an infection to his kidneys.

Former India and Mohun Bagan goalkeeper Prasanta Dora passes away

Former Indian National Football team goalkeeper, Prasanta Dora has passed away. He was represented Tollygunge Agragami, Calcutta Port Trust, Mohammedan Sporting, Mohun Bagan and East Bengal in domestic football. He has also adjudged the Best Goalkeeper when Bengal lifted back-to-back Santosh Trophy titles in 1997-98 and 99. At the national level, Dora made five appearances in competitions such as SAFF Cup and SAF Games.

Carlos Holmes Trujillo: Colombian defence minister dies with Covid-19

A long-serving politician, Mr Trujillo was a key figure in Colombia’s struggle to combat organised crime. He was part of the reform of Colombia’s constitution in 1991 which was a condition of a peace deal with prominent guerrilla group M-19. A former mayor of the city of Cali, he held a range of government positions including interior minister, foreign minister and education minister. As defence minister, he coordinated military and police operations against drug trafficking, illegal armed groups and illicit mining.

Veteran Bureaucrat, poet and Hyderabad historian Narendra Luther passes away

Noted historian, author, poet and retired bureaucrat Narendra Luther has passed. A 1955 batch IAS officer, Luther was closely associated with the history and culture of erstwhile Hyderabad state and its rulers. He had served in various positions before retiring as the chief secretary of the undivided Andhra Pradesh in 1991. He has penned a number of books on the history, heritage and architecture of Hyderabad.

Legendary American talk-show host Larry King passes away

The iconic American radio and television host, and paid spokesman, Larry King, has passed
away. He rose to fame in 1978 as a radio host of The Larry King Show and then hosted Larry King Live on CNN for about 25 years from 1985 to 2010.

- King has quizzed thousands of world leaders, politicians, entertainers, athletes, and everyday people for CNN and other news outlets in a career spanning more than six decades.

Popular Bhajan Singer Narendra Chanchal passes away
- The iconic Indian Bhajan singer Narendra Chanchal, who specialized in religious songs and hymns, has passed away. He sang a Bollywood song Beshak Mandir Masjid for the 1973 film Bobby and won Filmfare Best Male Playback Award.
- Some of his ever-popular bhajans include Chalo Bulawa Aaya Hai, Tune Mujhe Bulaya Sherawaliye, Ambe Tu Hai Jagadambe Kali, Hanuman Chalisa, Sankat Mochan Naam Tiho, Ram Se Bada Ram Ka Naam among others. Besides several bhajans, Chanchal had also given voice in several Hindi films as well.

Malayalam actor Unnikrishnan Namboothiri passes away
- Veteran Malayalam actor, Unnikrishnan Namboothiri has passed away while contracting COVID-19. He made his acting debut in 1996 with Desadanam. However, he became a household name among the Malayalam film audience for his performance as a witty grandfather in Kalyanaraman (2002).

Former Arunachal Governor Mata Prasad passes away
- Former Arunachal Governor Mata Prasad has passed away at the age of 95.
- He served as minister in the Congress government in Uttar Pradesh in 1988-89 and appointed as Governor of Arunachal Pradesh in 1993.

Dr V Shanta, renowned Indian oncologist, passes away
- Dr V Shanta, renowned Indian oncologist and doyen of cancer care, has passed away at the age of 93. Dr V Shanta was also the chairperson of Adyar Cancer Institute.
- Dr V Shanta was known for her work on cancer care and for building the Cancer Institute with her mentor. The institute is known for providing state-of-the-art health care to all patients, irrespective of their economic condition.

Hyderabad’s best-known historian Narendra Luther, passes away at 88
- Hyderabad’s most respected historian Narendra Luther passed away on Tuesday at a private hospital in Hyderabad at the age of 88. Also a bureaucrat, poet and an authority on all things Hyderabad.
- An IAS officer in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, he moved to Hyderabad in 1959 and developed deep roots with the city. He penned 13 books about Hyderabad’s history and had
an undying love for the city’s rockscape.

**Former Union Minister and Industrialist Kamal Morarka passes away**
- Former Union minister and noted industrialist Kamal Morarka has passed away. He served as the Minister of State in Prime Minister’s Office under Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar from 1990 to 1991.
- The 74-year-old leader, a businessman who was also a former BCCI vice president. He was incumbent president of Samajwadi Janata Party (Chandra Shekhar). He was elected to Rajya Sabha in 1988.

**Legendary classical musician Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan passes away**
- Legendary Indian classical musician and Padma Vibhushan awardee Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan passed away. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1991, the Padma Bhusan in 2006, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2018.
- In 2003, he was also awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, which is the highest recognition given to practising Indian artists by the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

**Social Activist and Padma Shri Awardee D Prakash Rao passes away**
- Noted social activist and Padma Shri winner, D Prakash Rao has passed away. He was basically a tea seller based in Cuttack, who spent his entire earning to educate slum children, through the school ‘Asha O Ashwasana’, which he started in 2000.
- He was conferred with the prestigious Padma Shri award in 2019 for his contribution towards boosting the value of education among slum kids in Cuttack. Apart from this, Rao was also a well-known blood donor.

**Indian American writer Ved Mehta passes away**
- Indian American writer Ved Mehta passed away. The Indian-American novelist overcame blindness & was widely known as the 20th-century writer most responsible for introducing American readers to India.
- Ved Mehta, a longtime writer for The New Yorker whose best-known work, spanning a dozen volumes, explored the vast, turbulent history of modern India through the intimate lens of his own autobiography.

**Pulitzer Prize-winning author & journalist Neil Sheehan passes away**
- He won a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award in 1989 for “A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam.”

**Padma Shri Awardee Telugu Journalist Turlapati Kutumba Rao passes away**
- Veteran journalist and orator (public speaker) Sri Turlapati Kutumba Rao has passed away.
He is known for his service to journalism in the Telugu language. He has written over 4000 biographies and delivered over 16000 public speeches which have been recorded by the Telugu Book of Records as a world record.

- Rao has received a number of honour for his field of work, including the fourth highest Indian civilian award of Padma Shri, in 2002, making him the first journalist from the state of Andhra Pradesh to receive the award.

**Former Gujarat Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki passes away**

- Veteran Congress leader Madhavsinh Solanki, who served as former External Affairs Minister of India and the Chief Minister of Gujarat, has passed away. He had served as External Affairs Minister of India from June 1991 to March 1992.
- He had been the Chief Minister of Gujarat for three times between 1976 to 1990.
- He was the longest-serving chief minister of the state before Narendra Modi.

**Veteran Indian Fashion Designer Satya Paul passes away**

- Veteran Fashion designer Satya Paul, best known for reinventing the Indian saree for contemporary women, has passed away.
- Satya Paul launched the first saree boutique in India, L’Affaire, in 1980. In 1986, he launched India’s first designer label, under the brand ‘Satya Paul’, which has now become one of the premier brands in the country.

**Veteran Professor Chitra Ghosh passes away**

- Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s niece and eminent academician Chitra Ghosh has passed away. She made pioneering contributions to academics and community services and dedicated her life in serving the people, teaching & inspiring the youth.
- Professor Bose was the former head of the political science department at Lady Brabourne College in Kolkata.

**Oldest living first-class cricketer Alan Burgess passes away**

- The world’s oldest living first-class cricketer Alan Burgess has passed away at the age of 100. A right-handed batsman and slow left-arm bowler, Alan appeared in 11 first-class matches for Canterbury from 1940/41 to 1951/52 and also for New Zealand Services in England in 1945. He took 6-52 on debut against Otago at Lancaster Park in a match that began on Christmas Day 1940.
- Alan Burgess was a tank driver for New Zealand’s forces in England during the Second World War. Following his death, India’s Raghunath Chandorkar is now the oldest first-class cricketer alive.
World Cup winning hockey player Michael Kindo passes away
- Olympic bronze and World Cup-winning hockey player Michael Kindo passed away. He played 3 Men’s Hockey World Cup in 1971, 1973 & 1975 where India bagged bronze, silver & gold medals.
- He also represented in 1972 Olympic Games where India secured a bronze medal. Kindo received the Arjuna Award in 1972.

Former Maharashtra Minister Vilas Patil Undalkar passes away
- Former Maharashtra cabinet minister and seven-time Congress MLA Vilas Patil Undalkar has passed away. The veteran Congressman, Undalkar, who was popularly known as ‘kaka’, was elected seven times from Karad-South Assembly constituency for a record 35 consecutive years, from 1980 to 2014.
- Undalkar held the Cooperation and Law and Justice portfolios in the State Cabinets during the previous Congress-led state governments.

Ace mountaineer Colonel Narendra ‘Bull’ Kumar passes away
- Ace mountaineer Colonel Narendra ‘Bull’ Kumar, who helped India secure the Siachen Glacier, passed away. He was responsible for the success of Operation Meghdoot in 1984. He was the first Indian to climb Mount Nanda Devi. He climbed Mount Everest in 1965, Mount Blanc (highest peak in the Alps), and later Mount Kangchenchanga. He earned the nickname ‘Bull’ for relentlessly charging into everything he did.
- Col Kumar, who was awarded the Kirti Chakra, Padma Shri, Arjun Award and the McGregor medal, carried out multiple expeditions in the Siachen glacier area in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Former Union Minister Buta Singh passes away
- Former Union Minister and senior Rajasthan Congress leader Buta Singh passed away. The veteran politician Buta Singh served as Home Minister of India in the Rajiv Gandhi government from 1986 to 1989.
- Buta Singh had also served as the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. He was a four-time MP from Jalore-Sirohi Lok Sabha constituency. He served as the Chairperson of the National Commission For Scheduled Cast from 2007 to 2010.

Hollywood director Joan Micklin Silver dies at 85
- Joan Micklin Silver, who forged a path for female directors and independent filmmakers with movies including Hester Street and Crossing Delancey, has died. She was 85.
- Silver died from vascular dementia Thursday at her home in New York. She used a combination of talent, fortitude and luck to create 1975’s Hester Street, her first feature, released when she was 40 years old.

Uliyin Osai director Ilavenil passes away in Chennai
- Tamil director and writer Ilavenil passed away yesterday in Chennai. He was in his 70s. He
suffered a heart attack.
- The director is known for his film Uliyin Osai, which was written by Karunanidhi, and produced by S. P. Murugesan. The film released on 4th July, 2008 and it featured Vineeth and Keerthi Chawla in the lead roles.

Legendary Music Director Shantanu Mohapatra passes away
- Legendary Odia musician, Shantanu Mohapatra passed away. He was the first Odia music composer to work with legends like Lata Mangeshkar, Manna Dey and Md Rafi and also the first to work in Hindi, Bengali, Assamese and Telugu film industries.
- Mohapatra has composed music for hundreds of Odia film songs and Jatra (opera) shows in a career that spanned over three decades. Mohapatra, who retired as the Director of Odisha Mining Corporation, received several awards including the Odisha Film Critic Award for his contribution to Odia music.

Veteran broadcaster Indira Joseph Venniyoor passes away
- Veteran broadcaster, Indira Joseph Venniyoor passed away. She was a renowned broadcaster, All India Radio veteran & first English news announcer of Travancore Radio when its English service began in 1949.
- She was the wife of well-known literary scholar & art critic the late E.M.J. Venniyoor.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

Senior IAS officer Rajeev Ranjan is new Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary
- Senior IAS officer Rajeev Ranjan was named as the next chief secretary by the Tamil Nadu government on Sunday.
- He will be replacing K Shanmugam who will be retiring from the post but will continue as an advisor to the government for a year. Last week, the Union government had approved the repatriation of the IAS officer to his parent cadre on the state government's request.

Swaminathan Janakiraman and Aswini Kumar Tewari appointed as MDs of SBI
- The appointments committee (ACC) of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Swaminathan Janakiraman and Ashwini Kumar Tewari as new Managing Directors (MDs) of State Bank of India (SBI) for a period of three years. Prior to this, Swaminathan Janakiraman was the deputy managing director (Finance) at SBI and Ashwini Kumar Tewari was serving as MD & CEO of SBI Card, a subsidiary of SBI.
- SBI is headed by a Chairman and four managing directors. Dinesh Kumar Khara is the current Chairman of the bank. The other two MDs of the bank are C.S. Setty and Ashwani Bhatia. The two posts were vacant since October 2020.

Lt Gen Chandi Prasad Mohanty appointed as new Army Vice-Chief
- Lieutenant General Chandi Prasad Mohanty has been appointed as the new Vice-chief of Army staff. He would assume the office on February 1, 2021, from Lt General SK Saini, who is superannuating on 31 January 2021. Lt General CP Mohanty is an alumnus of Rashtriya...
Indian Military College, Dehradun, and National Defence Academy. He is a June 1982 batch Infantry Officer from the Rajput Regiment.

- Vice-Chief of Army Staff is the deputy head and the second-highest-ranking officer of the Indian Army. The position is held by the senior officer in the rank of Lt-General, of the Commander in Chief grade.

Justice Geeta Mittal appointed as new Chairperson of BCCC

- Broadcasters industry body Indian Broadcasting Foundation has appointed former Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir High Court Justice Gita Mittal as the new Chairperson of Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC).
- BCCC is the independent self-regulatory body set up by IBF to examine content-related complaints relating to all non-news general entertainment channels in India.
- Mittal succeeds former Supreme Court Judge, Justice Vikramajit Sen, whose tenure as BCCC Chairperson has ended. She served as the first woman Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir High Court and is also the first woman Chairperson of BCCC.

ACC appoints Sanjeev Kumar as new CMD of TCIL

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Sanjeev Kumar as the new Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) of Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL). According to an order from the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT), Kumar has been appointed to the post for a period of five years from the date of assumption of the charge of the post, or till the age of superannuation, or until further orders, whichever is earlier. He is currently serving as Director (Technical) in Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL).
- Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL) is a Miniratna PSU under the administrative control of the Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications. TCIL, a premier telecommunication consultancy and engineering company is making available its vast and varied telecom expertise to friendly developing countries.

Govt appoints Siddhartha Mohanty as managing director of LIC

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has appointed Siddhartha Mohanty as the managing director of India’s largest insurer Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) from February 1 onwards. He is currently CEO of LIC Housing Finance Limited. He will serve as the MD of LIC till his superannuation on June 30, 2023. He will be replacing TC Suseel Kumar, who is set to retire on January 31, 2021.
- LIC has four MDs and one chairman. Currently, MR Kumar is serving as the chairman of the corporation and TC Suseel Kumar, Vipin Anand, Mukesh Kumar Gupta, and Raj Kumar are serving as the MDs of LIC.

JSW Sports signs cricketer Rishabh Pant to manage commercial interests

- Rishabh Pant was signed by JSW Sports, the sports arm of JSW Group. The multi-year association between the two parties will see JSW Sports manage all commercial interests
and marketing rights of the 23-year-old cricketer, who most recently played a starring role in India’s magnificent Test series win in Australia. As part of the association, JSW Sports will manage the athlete’s image positioning and all his commercial engagements, including brand endorsements and appearances, social media monetisation, and business deals.

- Ever since its inception in 2012, JSW Sports has worked towards maximising India’s sporting potential by working with promising Indian talents across Olympic sports, football, and kabaddi; including Olympic medalist Sakshi Malik and wrestling star Bajrang Punia.

**Sundaram Finance names Rajiv Lochan as MD**
- The board of Sundaram Finance has named Rajiv Lochan (director Strategy) as managing director with effect from April 1. Sundaram Finance Ltd has made top-level changes as the current managing director T.T. Srinivasaragahvan will be retiring on March 31, 2020.
- While the current deputy managing director Harsha Viji will assume the office of executive vice-chairman, and take responsibility for the overall strategy and direction of Sundaram Finance Ltd., and other group companies in financial services.

**Vishwvariv Ahuja re-appointed as RBL Bank chief**
- The board of directors of RBL Bank has approved the re-appointment of Vishwvariv Ahuja as the Managing Director and CEO of the bank for three years. The re-appointment is with effect from June 30, 2021, to June 29, 2024, and the same is being recommended to the Reserve Bank of India and shall be subject to their approval, the bank said in a regulatory filing. He has been MD & CEO of RBL Bank since June 30, 2010.
- Prior to joining RBL Bank, he was the MD & CEO of Bank of America, India, from 2001 to 2009. As per the regulatory filing, under Ahuja’s leadership, the deposits of the bank have grown almost 40 times, while advances have grown more than 45 times since 2011.

**Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw selected as one of USIBC vice-chair**
- The US-India Business Council (USIBC) has selected three top corporate leaders as the Vice-Chairs of 2021 Global Board of Directors of USIBC with immediate effect. The three new appointees will now work with USIBC President Nisha Biswal and the Council’s policy directors, for strengthening US-India commercial relationship for the future.

**The three newly appointed VCs are**
- Biocon Executive Chairperson: Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw.
- Amway CEO: Milind Pant.
- Vice-chair at Nasdaq: Edward Knight.
- USIBC has strengthened its leadership team as it plans to work with the new Joe Biden-led US administration. The Council advocates for strengthening US-India commercial relationship for the future. The vice-chairs will work to amplify the voice of the industry on international trade and investment issues and emphasise the key role that businesses can play in strengthening democratic institutions and combatting the global pandemic.
UN Rights Body elects Fiji in First Ever Presidential Vote

- The UN Human Rights Council elected Fiji’s ambassador as its 2021 president in an unprecedented secret ballot after a diplomatic stand-off blocked the usual consensus decision. Fiji’s ambassador in Geneva, Nazhat Shameem Khan, who served as the council’s vice president in 2020 and is considered a rights champion, won with 29 out of 47 votes.
- She ran against two other candidates from the UN’s Asia-Pacific regional group of countries: Bahrain’s ambassador Yusuf Abdulkarim Bucheeri and his counterpart from Uzbekistan, Ulugbek Lapasov, who received 14 and four votes respectively.
- The president mainly oversees council meetings but is also in charge of appointing the independent experts who investigate countries’ alleged rights abuses and can determine how hard to crack down on cases of state intimidation against those who cooperate with the body.

TEPC appoints Sandeep Aggarwal as new Chairman

- The Telecom Equipment and Services Export Promotion Council (TEPC) has appointed Sandeep Aggarwal as the new Chairman. Aggarwal, the Managing Director and Promoter of Delhi-based Paramount Communications, will take over from Shyamal Ghosh, ex-Telecom Secretary.
- TEPC is an independent body set up by the government to promote and develop the export of telecom equipment and services.

Indian-American Vidur Sharma Appointed As Covid Testing Adviser By Biden

- Joe Biden has named Indian-American health policy expert Vidur Sharma as testing advisor in his C-19 Response Team, as the US President-elect laid out his ambitious goal to intensify vaccinations across the country to tackle the spread of the deadly pandemic.
- The announcement of Sharma’s appointment as Policy Advisor for Testing was made by Biden on Friday along with additional members of the White House C-19 Response Team.
- During the Obama administration, Sharma served as a health policy advisor on the Domestic Policy Council.

Intel appoints Pat Gelsinger as new CEO

- Intel has appointed Pat Gelsinger as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective Feb. 15, 2021. Gelsinger will also join the Intel board of directors upon assuming the role. He will succeed Bob Swan, who will remain CEO until Feb. 15.
- Gelsinger is an industry veteran with more than four decades of technology and leadership experience, including 30 years at Intel where he began his career.
- Pat is a proven technology leader with a distinguished track record of innovation, talent development, and deep knowledge of Intel.
- He will continue a values-based cultural leadership approach with a hyper-focus on operational execution.
Dushyant Dave resigns as SC Bar Association (SCBA) President
- Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president, Dushyant Dave has resigned from his post with immediate effect, he has forfeited his right to continue. Acting SCBA Secretary Rohit Panday confirmed the development that the senior advocate has resigned with immediate effect.
- The SCBA is an Indian bar association, comprising the practising lawyers of the Supreme Court of India.
- The SCBA has been in the vanguard of the movement for upholding, maintaining and consolidation of the constitutional values of democracy, rule of law and independence of Judiciary. In its meeting dated 4th May 1951.
- The Committee in its resolution observed that no attempt should be made to abridge or limit the Fundamental Rights.
- The Committee further pointed out that the Constitution was in operation only for a short period of sixteen months and the Supreme Court had no occasion to pronounce on the validity of various State laws.

Abhishek Yadav appointed as AIFF’s first Deputy General Secretary
- Former India striker Abhishek Yadav has been appointed as the first deputy general secretary of All India Football Federation (AIFF) after the sports body decided to create a new post in its hierarchy. The 40-year-old former international, who has played with the likes of Bhaichung Bhutia, Sunil Chhetri, Mahesh Gawli and Climax Lawrence, has been serving as national team’s director since January 2018.
- Yadav has also served as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the 2017 U17 Indian World Cup team, collaborating closely with Luis Norton de Maros, the head coach.

JK Maheshwari sworn in as Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court
- Justice Jitendra Kumar Maheshwari was sworn in as the new Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court. Governor Ganga Prasad administered the oath of office to Justice Maheshwari during a function held in Raj Bhavan.
- Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami of the Sikkim High Court has now been transferred for appointment as the Andhra Pradesh High Court’s Chief Justice.

Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia appointed as Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court
- Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia appointed as Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court informed the Ministry of Law and Justice. The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind in the exercise of the power conferred by clause (1) of Article 217 of the Constitution of India, appointed Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, Judge of the Uttarakhand High Court, as Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court.
- Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, was enrolled as an Advocate on July 7, 1986, and practised in the Allahabad and Uttarakhand High Courts in Civil, Constitutional, Service, and Labour matters and has specialized in Service and Constitutional matters. He was appointed as a permanent judge of the Uttarakhand High Court on November 1, 2008.
Hima Kohli appointed as 1st Woman Chief Justice of Telangana High Court

- The senior-most judge of Delhi High Court, Justice Hima Kohli has been appointed as the new Chief Justice of Telangana High Court. She is the first woman to be sworn in as CJ of Telangana HC.
- Justice Kohli was administered the oath of office by Telangana Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan. She replaces CJ Raghvendra Singh Chauhan, who has been appointed as the CJ of Uttarakhand HC.

Biden selects Judge Merrick Garland for attorney general

- President-elect Joe Biden will nominate federal appeals judge Merrick Garland to be the next U.S. attorney general. He serves as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, one of 13 federal appeals courts.
- Vanita Gupta, the head of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, will be nominated by Biden as the Associate Attorney General, the No. 3 people in the department.

Arup Kumar Goswami sworn in as CJ of Andhra Pradesh High Court

- Justice Goswami was transferred from the Sikkim High Court a few days ago. He replaced J.K. Maheswari who has been posted as the Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court.
- Chief Justice Goswami began his career as an advocate with the Bar Council of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura in 1985.

Alex Ellis appointed new British high commissioner to India

- Alexander Ellis has been appointed British high commissioner to India and will take up the key role later this month. He has held several posts, including deputy national security adviser in the cabinet office, director-general in the department for exiting the European Union, and the British ambassador to Portugal.
- Ellis succeeds Philip Barton. In August 2020, Barton was promoted as permanent undersecretary in the UK’s newly formed foreign, commonwealth and development office.

Karan Bajwa to head Google Cloud in Asia Pacific

- Google Cloud has announced the elevation of Karan Bajwa as its new leader for the Asia Pacific. Presently, Bajwa leads Google Cloud in India. He will lead all regional revenue and go-to-market operations for Google Cloud, including on Google Cloud Platform (GCP) and Google Workspace. He succeeds Rick Harshman who leaves the organisation for a new opportunity.
- At present, Bajwa is based in Gurgaon but will relocate to Singapore in 2021. He will continue to lead Google Cloud in India until a new senior leader for the business is appointed.
Lt Gen Shantanu Dayal to take charge as Deputy Chief of Army Staff

- Lt Gen Shantanu Dayal has been named the new Deputy Chief of Army Staff (DCOAS). Lt Gen Dayal is the Corps Commander of the Tejpur based 4 Corps. He will take the place of Lt Gen SS Hasabnis who superannuated on December 31 as soon as his replacement arrives.
- Indian Army has undergone a major reshuffle at the top within the Army Headquarters and at the various other formations including the Corps Commanders, administrative and training institutions witnessing the change of guard.
- The other significant change is in the newly-created Department of Military Affairs (DMA) with Chief of Defence Staff as its first Secretary. Lt Gen Taranjit Singh, the first Army officer to join as the Additional Secretary in the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) under the Ministry of Defence.

GJC elects Ashish Pethe as New Chairman

- The All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC), the national apex body of the gems and jewellery industry, has announced the appointment of Ashish Pethe as chairman and Saiyam Mehra as vice chairman for a period of two years. Pethe has been closely associated with GJC and was the Zonal Chairman West, which he will continue even after this new position.
- The entire e-Voting election process was conducted by an authorised independent person (Chief Election Authority), and the voting platform was created by a digital agency, both appointed by GJC.
- All India Gem And Jewellery Domestic Council is a national trade federation for the promotion and growth of trade in gems and jewellery across India. GJC represents over 6,00,000 players comprising manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, distributors, laboratories, gemologists, designers, and allied services to the domestic gems and jewellery industry.

Sanjay Kapoor elected All India Chess Federation president

- Sanjay Kapoor was elected president of the All India Chess Federation (AICF) while Bharat Singh Chauhan retained the secretary’s post. Kapoor, representing Uttar Pradesh Chess Association, defeated incumbent PR Venketrama Raja in a close contest. Kapoor received 33 votes as against 31 of Raja.
- Chauhan beat Ravindra Dongre 35-29. Apart from the president, secretary and treasurer, six vice-presidents and six joint secretaries were also elected.

Pankaj Mithal sworn in as CJ of J&K, Ladakh Court

- Justice Pankaj Mithal has been appointed as the new Chief Justice (CJ) of the Common High Court for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh in Jammu on January 04, 2021.
- Chief justice Mithal has been appointed in view of the retirement of chief justice Gita Mittal recently. Chief Justice Mithal was administered the oath of office by Lieutenant Governor of J&k, Manoj Sinha.
Umesh Sinha named deputy election commissioner
- Umesh Sinha has been named as the deputy election commissioner in the Election Commission of India. Sinha, a 1986-batch IAS officer (retired) is at present serving as secretary-general in the commission.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet cleared the extension in the term of reemployment of Sinha as deputy election commissioner on contract basis for a period of six months beyond December 31, 2020. His term will end on June 30, 2021. At present Sinha is also part of a committee set up by the Election Commission to look into the issue of revising the election expenditure of candidates during campaigning.

Suneet Sharma takes over as new Chairman & CEO of Railway Board
- The appointments committee of the Cabinet has approved Suneet Sharma appointment as Chairman & CEO of Railway Board, Ministry of Railways and ex-officio Principal Secretary to Government of India. He took over in his new role with effect from January 01, 2021. The extended one-year tenure of Sharma’s predecessor, Vinod Kumar Yadav, who also became the restructured Board’s first CEO, ended on December 31, 2020.
- Prior to this, Suneet Sharma worked as General Manager, Eastern Railway.
- Suneet Sharma joined the Indian Railways in 1979 as a Special Class Apprentice while he was studying engineering at IIT Kanpur. A graduate in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering he has more than 40 years of experience serving in the Indian Railways in various capacities. He has done stints in Operational working, maintenance in Sheds, Depots and Workshops.

Shri Suneet Sharma takes over the charge of new Chairman & CEO of Railway Board
- Shri Suneet Sharma, has taken over the charge of new Chairman & Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Railway Board (Ministry of Railways) and ex-officio Principal Secretary to Government of India. The appointments committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Shri Suneet Sharma as Chairman & CEO of Railway Board. Prior to this, Shri Suneet Sharma worked as General Manager, Eastern Railway.
- Shri Suneet Sharma joined the Indian Railways in 1979 as a Special Class Apprentice while he was studying engineering at IIT Kanpur. A graduate in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering he has more than 40 years of experience serving in the Indian Railways in various capacities.

IMPORTANT DAYS

73rd Martyrs’ Day observed on 30 January
- Martyr’s Day or Shaheed Diwas is observed every year on January 30 in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, who was assassinated at Gandhi Smriti in the Birla House by Nathuram Godse in 1948. The day is observed to remember the sacrifices made by freedom fighters in the struggle for India’s independence and to pay our respects to them.
- Notably, Martyrs’ Day is also observed in India on March 23 to pay respect to Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar, who was hanged death on this day in 1931.
**International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust**

- International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust (International Holocaust Remembrance Day) is observed on 27 January every year since 2006 to commemorate the anniversary of the tragedy of the Holocaust that occurred during the Second World War. A genocide occurred during World War II in which Nazi Germany, aided by its collaborators, systematically murdered some six million European Jews, around two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe, between 1941 and 1945.
- The theme of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2021 is “Facing the Aftermath: Recovery and Reconstitution after the Holocaust”.

**International Custom Day: 26 January**

- The International Customs Day (ICD) is observed on 26 January every year. The day is celebrated to recognise the role of customs officials and agencies and focus on the working conditions and challenges that customs officers face in their jobs. This year International Custom Day theme: “Customs bolstering Recovery, Renewal and Resilience”.
- The day was instituted by the World Customs Organization (WCO) to commemorate the day in 1953 when the inaugural session of the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC) was held in Brussels, Belgium. In 1994 the CCC was renamed World Customs Organization (WCO).

**Republic Day 2021: India celebrates its 72nd Republic Day**

- The nation celebrated the 72nd Republic Day with a grand military parade and exhibition of its history, cultural diversity and strategic weaponry at the Rajpath, Delhi. This day is celebrated by all Indians and 26th of January has been declared as a national holiday by the government of India. The Republic Day Parade ceremony will commence with Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting the National War Memorial. The National Flag was unfurled followed by the National Anthem with a booming 21-gun salute.
- The Indian Republic Day is celebrated all across India with lots of patriotism and fervour. At Rajpath, in Delhi, magnificent parades by regiments of the Indian Army, Navy, Air Force, police, and paramilitary forces are witnessed. India’s defensive prowess is on display too, with the latest missiles, aircraft, and weapon systems. Beautiful tableaus, representing the uniqueness of all the states of India are also showcased during the parade. The celebration usually ends with numerous air shows and flypasts by the Indian Forces.
- India became independent on 15th of August, 1947. Even after independence, the country did not have a sound constitution.
- The laws, before the enactment of the constitution, were running on the basis of Government of India Act 1935. Having realized the need for a permanent constitution and its own governing body, the government of India appointed a Drafting Committee on 28th of August 1947 to draft it and Dr, B. R. Ambedkar as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee.
- After almost 3 years, the 308 members of the Assembly, after many consultations and a few modifications finally signed a constitution on 24th of January 1950, which came into
effect on 26th of January 1950.

- And, that day, is being celebrated as Republic Day in India ever since then. This day defines the importance of having a proper constitution that all the citizens must abide by.

**National Tourism Day of India: January 25**

- The Indian government established January 25 as the National Tourism Day to raise awareness about the importance of tourism for the country’s economy. The day is observed to cultivate awareness among the global community on the importance of tourism and its social, political, financial and cultural worth.
- India offers several forms of tourism such as cultural, nature, heritage, educational, business, sports, rural, medical, cruise, and eco-tourism. The ministry of tourism is the nodal agency in India to form national policies for the promotion and development of tourism. It also coordinates with central, state agencies and the public sector.

**National Voters’ Day observed on 25 January**

- India observes “National Voters’ Day” every year on January 25 to encourage more young voters to take part in the political process. 2021 marks the 11th National Voters’ Day (NVD).
- The theme of NVD 2021 is, ‘Making Our Voters Empowered, Vigilant, Safe and Informed’. The day has been started from January 25, 2011, to mark the Foundation day of Election Commission of India (ECI), which was established on 25th January 1950.

**International Day of Education: 24 January**

- The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 January as International Day of Education, in celebration of the role of education for peace and development. The first-ever International Day of Education was celebrated on 24 January 2019 as per the resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly on December 3rd 2018 to celebrate the role of education in development.
- The third International Day of Education will be marked under the theme ‘Recover and Revitalize Education for the C-19 Generation’. Now is the time to power education by stepping up collaboration and international solidarity to place education and lifelong learning at the centre of the recovery.

**National Girl Child Day : January 24**

- In India, the National Girl Child Day (NGCD) is observed annually on January 24. The day aims to focus on the inequalities faced by girls, to promote the education, health & nutrition of the girl child, and to spread awareness about the rights of a girl child. The day was observed for the first time in 2008 as an initiative by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Government of India.
- Spread awareness among people about all the inequalities faced by girls in the country.
- Promote awareness about the rights of a girl child.
- Increase awareness on the importance of girl education, health, and nutrition.
Parakram diwas is celebrated on 23 January

- Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s, 125th birth anniversary on 23 January 2021 is observed as Parakram Diwas. The day is celebrated to honour and remember Netaji’s indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation.
- Netaji’ was born on January 23, 1897, in Cuttack in Odisha. He graduated from Kolkata and proved his mettle by becoming an Indian Civil Services (ICS) officer. But he left the comfort and amenities that came with his job and decided to be part of the freedom struggle.
- With the slogan “Give me blood and I will give you freedom”, he awakened the country towards fighting against the British.
- Netaji built a force known as the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army) giving the slogan of “Dilli Chalo”. Thousands of soldiers of his 60,000-strong army sacrificed their lives for the country.
- At the time of India’s Independence, Clement Attlee the British Prime Minister said that the loyalty of the Indian army and navy to the British state was declining due to the increasing military activities of Bose’s Azad Hind Fauj and this was one of the major reasons that nudged Britishers into leaving India.

Goi decides to celebrate January 23 as Parakram Diwas

- The birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, on January 23, as ‘Parakram Diwas’ every year, the Ministry of Culture announced. The day is celebrated to honour and remember Netaji’s indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation. Earlier this month, the Ministry of Culture held a high-level committee, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in a befitting manner.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit West Bengal on January 23 to attend Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s birth anniversary celebrations at the Victorial Memorial in Kolkata. The PM is also likely to visit National Library located in Belvedere Estate, Alipore.

NDRF Celebrates its 16th Raising Day

- The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) celebrated its 16th Raising Day on 18th January. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), a specialized multi-skilled, humanitarian force of the country, came into existence on January 19th, 2006 has been playing a vital role in Disaster Management and Community awareness for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the country.
- The NDRF has earned good name and fame nationally and internationally with its selfless service and unmatched professionalism in disaster management. NDRF has saved more than One lakh lives in its 3100 operations and rescued/evacuated over 6.7 lakh people during disasters.

IFFI 2021 to celebrate the work of legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray

- The 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI) will be celebrating the work of legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray by screening five of his classics. As part of the tribute, the festival will

- 12 films for Festival Kaleidoscope & 50 films for World Panorama section were unveiled too.

**Indian Army Day: 15 January**
- The Army Day in India is celebrated on 15 January every year, to salute the valiant soldiers who sacrificed their lives to protect the country and its citizens. This year marks the 73rd Indian Army Day. The Army Day is celebrated at all Army Command headquarters to honour our country’s soldiers who set the greatest example of selfless service and brotherhood, and above all, love for the country.
- The day is marked to commemorate the day when General (later Field Marshal) KM Carriappa took over the command of Army from General Sir FRR Bucher, the last British Commander-in-Chief in 1949 and became the first Commander-in-Chief of Indian Army post Independence.
- The Indian Army is one of the most powerful militaries of the world, competing with superpowers like the US, Russia and China. The motto of the Indian Army is ‘service before self’ and its mission is to ensure national security and national unity, defend the nation from external aggression and internal threats, and maintain peace and security within its borders. Salute to the brave soldiers, who risk and sacrifice their lives to protect us. Even the Prime Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1965 had given the slogan like “Jai Jawan Jai Kisan”.

**Armed Forces Veterans Day: 14 January**
- In India, the Armed Forces Veterans Day is observed each year on 14 January since 2017 to acknowledge and honour the selfless devotion and sacrifice of our veterans in the service of the nation. The day was initially called Armistice Day. 2021 marks the 5th Armed Forces Veterans Day.
- The day is observed as a mark of respect and recognition of the services rendered by Field Marshal KM Cariappa OBE, the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Armed Forces who retired on 14 January 1953.

**National Road Safety Month 2021: 18 January – 17 February**
- The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways observes the National Road Safety Week every year in the second week of January. However, in 2021, the Government has decided to observe National Road Safety Month instead of National Road Safety Week.
- Accordingly, the National Road Safety Month will be observed from 18th January, 2021’ to 17th February’ 2021. During this period nation-wide various activities will be conducted throughout the country in association with the Central/ State Governments/ UT administrations, and other stakeholders.
National Youth Day: 12 January

- National Youth Day is celebrated in India every year on 12 January to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The day was declared by the Government of India in 1984 while the event was first celebrated in 1985. The main aim behind this is to make sure that the students across the country can be encouraged to learn about the life, the ideas and philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and apply them in their lives.

- In 2021, we are observing 158th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekanand (12 January 1863). The theme for National Youth Day 2021 is ‘Channelizing Youth Power for Nation Building’.

“World Hindi Day” celebrated globally on 10th January

- The World Hindi Day is celebrated annually on January 10 since 2006 to promote the language at the global stage. The day marks the anniversary of first World Hindi Conference which was inaugurated on January 10, 1975, by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi.

- However, the celebration of first World Hindi Day was commenced on 10 January 2006 by former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. It must be noted that the National Hindi Day is celebrated in India on September 14 every year. On that day in 1949, the constituent assembly adopted Hindi, written in Devanagari script, as the official language of the Union.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrated on 9 January

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas or NRI Day is celebrated every year on January 9 to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community in the development of India. The day is celebrated every year to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community in the development of India. The aim of celebrating the day is to provide a platform for NRI to express their perceptions about India and thereby involve them in Indian developmental activities. The theme of 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention 2021 is “Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat”.

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is celebrated on January 9, as Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa on the day in 1915. In 2015, the day was declared biennial. In 2018, the day was widely celebrated in Singapore. In 2019, the event was celebrated in Varanasi.

Journalist Day Observed in Maharashtra on 6 January

- The Journalist Day is observed by Maharashtra state government on 6th January every year in the memory of late journalist Balshastri Jambhekar. The first newspaper in the Marathi language named ‘Darpan’, was published on January 6, 1832, the date which also marks the birth anniversary of Balshastri Jambhekar.

- Balshastri Jambhekar is also known as ‘The Father of Marathi Journalism’, for his efforts in starting journalism in Marathi language, in the form of first Marathi newspaper and first Marathi monthly.
World Braille Day: 4 January

- World Braille Day is observed globally on 4th January since 2019. The day is celebrated to raise awareness of the importance of Braille as a means of communication in the full realization of the human rights for blind and partially sighted people. The day is marked remembering the birth anniversary of Louis Braille, the inventor of Braille – for people with visual disabilities. Louis Braille was born on 4th January 1809 in the town of Coupvray in northern France.
- Braille is a tactile representation of alphabetic and numerical symbols using six dots to represent each letter and number, and even musical, mathematical and scientific symbols. Braille (named after its inventor in 19th century France, Louis Braille) is used by blind and partially sighted people to read the same books and periodicals as those printed in a visual font.
- Braille is essential in the context of education, freedom of expression and opinion, as well as social inclusion, as reflected in article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

DRDO Celebrates 63rd Foundation Day on 1st January 2021

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) observed the 63rd Foundation Day of its establishment on January 01, 2021. DRDO was established in 1958 with just 10 laboratories to enhance the research work in the Defence sector. At that time, it was tasked with designing and developing cutting edge defence technologies for Indian Armed Forces.
- As of now, DRDO is working in multiple cutting edge military technology areas, which include aeronautics, armaments, combat vehicles, electronics, instrumentation, engineering systems, missiles, materials, naval systems, advanced computing, simulation, cyber, life sciences and other technologies for defence.

SUMMITS AND MOU’S

India Inks Strategic Partnership Agreement with IEA

- India has inked a strategic partnership agreement with the International Energy Agency (IEA), the world’s premier energy monitor, on 27 January 2021. The objective of the MoU is to strengthen cooperation in global energy security, stability and sustainability as well as strengthen mutual trust and cooperation between IEA members and the Government of India.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Power Secretary Sanjiv Nandan Sahai and IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol. This deal will help India to gain full membership of IEA.

India, Singapore sign pact on submarine rescue support

- The 5th edition of the Defence Ministers’ Dialogue (DMD) between India and Singapore was successfully held on 20 January 2021 through a video conference, in an effort to deepen military cooperation.
During the meeting, the ‘Implementing Agreement on Submarine Rescue Support and Cooperation’ was signed between the two Navies. The agreement was signed between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Singaporean counterpart Dr Ng Eng Hen.

**India and Japan inks MoU to enhance cooperation in ICT**

- India and Japan have signed an MoU to enhance cooperation in the field of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) via videoconferencing. The MoU was signed between Union Minister for Communications, Electronics and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad and the Japanese Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications Takeda Ryota.
- Both countries will enhance mutual cooperation in the field of 5G technologies, telecom security, submarine optical fibre cable system to islands of India, spectrum management, smart cities, high altitude platform for broadband in unconnected areas, disaster management and public safety etc.

**Dr Ajay Kumar co-chairs 13th India-Vietnam Defence Security Dialogue**

- The 13th India-Vietnam Defence Security Dialogue was held in a virtual format. The virtual event was co-chaired by Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar along with Vietnamese Sr Lt Gen Nguyen Chi Vinh, Deputy Defence Minister, Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
- Defence Secretary and the Deputy Defence Minister expressed satisfaction at the ongoing defence cooperation between the two countries in spite of the limitations imposed by COVID 19.
- Both countries exchanged views on the plan of action from the recently concluded Virtual Summit between Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc in December 2020.
- Both the sides reviewed the progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives and expressed commitment to further elevate engagements between the Armed Forces under the framework of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- Both sides agreed that in the recent past our respective countries have made notable strides in Defence Industry and Technology cooperation and look forward to even greater cooperation in this field.

**IREDA-NHPC Partnership in Green Energy Projects**

- NHPC Limited has signed an MOU with the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) for providing assistance in setting up renewable energy (RE) projects for the next 5 years. The agreement was signed in the presence of Abhay Kumar Singh, NHPC CMD, and IREDA, CMD, Pradip Kumar Das.
- NHPC will help in the knowledge and technology transfer and provide consultancy and research services.
- NHPC has undertaken an ambitious plan to make a significant impact on the renewable energy landscape of the country.
- Under the plan, NHPC will develop 7.5 GW of renewable energy projects in the next 3 years.
NHPC has already successfully commissioned a renewable capacity of 102.5 MW on an ownership basis and has contracted 2000 MW as an intermediary procurer basis.

Tata Power partners with SIDBI to offer easy & affordable financing scheme for MSME
- Tata Power, India’s largest integrated power company, announced its partnership with SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India) to offer easy and affordable financing scheme for MSME customers in the rooftop solar segment. This scheme will empower MSMEs to adopt sustainable energy for their businesses and promote greener.
- Easy and affordable financing has been one of the barriers for penetration of Solar in the MSME sector in the country.
- In order to address this challenge, Tata Power and SIDBI have joined hands to design a unique Solar financing solution for the MSME customers helping them switch to rooftop solar without any collateral at an interest rate less than 10%.
- This will also be complemented with a quick sanction and disbursement process (within 7 days with disbursement in 4 days).
- This financing scheme is exclusively for MSME customers of Tata Power for both off-grid and on-grid connections.

Trifed Signs MoU with Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram for Setting up of TRIFOOD Parks in Madhya Pradesh
- Continuing its mission to improve the livelihoods of the tribals (both forest dwellers and artisans) and work towards tribal empowerment, TRIFED under Ministry of Tribal Affairs has decided to explore a convergence and build a partnership with Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Kendra, a pioneering organization that has been working for the welfare of tribals in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand since 1952.
- In this regard, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was exchanged between the two organisations on January 3, 2021 to work together for setting up of TRIFOOD Parks in 5 districts in Madhya Pradesh.

Indian Army inks pact with Goa Shipyard to get 12 fast patrol boats
- Indian Army has inked a contract with Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) to procure 12 Fast Patrol Boats for surveillance and patrolling of large water bodies, including those in high altitude areas like Pangong Tso lake in Ladakh. Pangong Tso’s 134-km length is divided into eight ‘fingers’, military parlance for mountain spurs jutting into the water body that is contested by both sides. The lake is frozen with the onset of winters, and the Army plans to deploy around two dozen such boats by next summer.
- The indigenously-built boats will be delivered by May 2021 by Defence sector Public Sector Undertaking (PSU), GSL.
- The GSL will also carry out maintenance of these boats for four years.
- The need for these new high-speed boats to patrol the Pangong Tso lake was felt in the wake of the military tussle between the Indian and the Chinese troops, leading to the tense
situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Meghalaya wins National Award for Best Electoral Practices 2020
- The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Meghalaya was selected for a Special Award for Information Technology applications in Elections by the Election Commission of India (ECI), in the National Best Electoral Practices Awards-2020. President Ram Nath Kovind virtually conferred the award to Meghalaya CEO F.R. Kharkongor at the National Voters’ Day Award function held in New Delhi.
- The award recognises the sustained and consistent IT application efforts in electoral activities being made by the Office of the CEO in the entire Enrolment to Elections (E2E) process and for leveraging technology for the benefit of all categories of voters, both general and persons with disabilities (PWDs).
- The ECI has consistently been championing the use of technology covering the non-election period, such as voter portal, voter helpline app, SMS, 1950 helpline, political party registration and online tracking.

Rajendra Kumar Bhandari wins Subhash Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2021
- The Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2021 has been conferred upon Dr Rajendra Kumar Bhandari in the Individual category and Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS) in Institutional category. The award carries a cash prize of Rs 51 lakh and a certificate for an institution and Rs 5 lakh and a certificate in case of an individual.
- The Government of India announces the award every year on January 23, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, to recognise and honour the invaluable contribution and selfless service rendered by individuals and organisations in India in the field of disaster management.

51st International Film Festival of India Concludes
- The 51st edition of International Film Festival of India (IFFI) was held from 16 January to 24 January 2021 at Shyamaprasad Stadium near Panaji in Goa. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the festival was held in hybrid mode, there was the physical and virtual screening of 50 films out of 224 films across various categories. Bangladesh was a country of focus at the festival. Four films of Bangladesh was included in ‘country of focus’ section.
- Golden Peacock Award for Best Film: Into the Darkness
- Silver Peacock Award for Best Actor (Male): Tzu-Chuan Liu, The Silent Forest
- Silver Peacock Award for Best Actor (Female): Zofia Stafiej, I Never Cry
- Silver Peacock Award for Best Director: Chen-Nien Ko, The Silent Forest
- Best Debut Director Award: Cássio Pereira dos Santos, Valentina
- Special Mention Award: Kripal Kalita, Bridge
- Special Jury Award: Kamin Kalev, February
• ICFT UNESCO Gandhi Award: Ameen Nayfeh’s 200 Meters
• Indian Personality of the Year Award: Biswajit Chatterjee
• Lifetime Achievement: Vittorio Storaro (Italian cinematographer).

**Group Captain Kesavan Harisankar awarded Vishisht Seva Medal**

• Group Captain Kesavan Nair Harisankar of Southern Air Command has been awarded with the prestigious Presidential award Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM) on the occasion of Republic Day.
• The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, in the coming days, will confer the VSM on Group Captain Harisankar at a function to be held at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
• The honour is conferred in recognition of distinguished service of high order and lifetime achievements in service to the nation and is a prestigious peacetime military award in the country.
• Group Captain Harisankar is functioning as Command Engineering Officer and presently posted at Southern Air Command since July 2020.

**Ministry of Home Affairs Padma Awards 2021 announced**

• The Ministry of Home Affairs has announced a list of 119 personalities who will be conferred the Padma Awards by President Ram Nath Kovind this year. These awards cater to various disciplines including art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports and civil service. While ‘Padma Shri’ is awarded for distinguished service in any field, ‘Padma Bhushan’ is awarded for distinguished service of a high order.
• On the other hand, ‘Padma Vibhushan’ is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service. Among the 2021 awardees, 29 are women, one is a transgender, 10 are foreigners/NRIs/OCI and 16 have passed away. There will be no recipient of the Bharat Ratna in 2021. The Padma Awards shall be formally conferred by the President in the Rashtrapati Bhawan in March or April.

**Padma Vibhushan awards List**
1. Shinzo Abe, Japan
2. S P Balasubramaniam (Posthumous), Tamil Nadu
3. Belle Monappa Hegde, Karnataka
4. Narinder Singh Kapany (Posthumous), USA
5. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Delhi
6. B. B. Lal, Delhi
7. Sudarshan Sahoo, Odisha

**Padma Bhushan Awards List**
1. Krishnan Nair Shantakumari Chithra, Kerala
2. Tarun Gogoi (Posthumous), Assam
3. Chandrashekhar Kambara, Karnataka
4. Sumitra Mahajan, Madhya Pradesh
5. Nripendra Misra, Uttar Pradesh
Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2021

- The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP) for the year 2021 has been conferred to 32 children, hailing from 32 districts of 21 States/UTs. The PMRBP award is given by the Government of India to the children with exceptional abilities and outstanding accomplishments, in the fields of innovation, scholastic, sports, arts & culture, social service and bravery.

Distribution of 32 awards based on the respective categories

- Art & Culture – 7
- Innovation – 9
- Scholastic achievements – 5
- Sports – 7
- Bravery – 3
- Social Service 1

Nikhil Srivastava named joint winner of Michael and Sheila Held Prize

- Nikhil Srivastava, a young Indian mathematician, has been named winner of the prestigious 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize along with two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison-Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs. Srivastava is currently Associate Professor of Mathematics at the University of California.

- Srivastava from the University of California, Berkeley, Adam Marcus, the Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne (EPFL) and Daniel Alan Spielman from Yale University will receive the 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize.

- The Michael and Sheila Held Prize is presented annually and honours outstanding, innovative, creative, and influential research in the areas of combinatorial and discrete optimisation, or related parts of computer science, such as the design and analysis of algorithms and complexity theory. The prize was established in 2017 by the bequest of Michael And Sheila Held. The prize consists of a medal and USD 100,000.

Shyam Srinivasan is Business Standard Banker of the Year

- Shyam Srinivasan, managing director and chief executive officer (CEO) of Federal Bank, is the Business Standard Banker of the Year for 2019-20. The award was given for his bank’s consistent healthy performance at a time when most of its peers witnessed large stress on asset quality, registered losses, or even invited regulatory actions.

- The unanimous decision was taken by a high-profile jury of five, chaired by former RBI deputy governor S S Mundra. He was chosen for his bank’s consistent healthy performance at a time when most of its peers witnessed losses or other issues.
Nihal wins Gazprom Brilliancy Prize
- Nihal Sarin became the winner of the Gazprom Brilliancy Prize, a special trophy awarded to the best game from the FIDE Online World Cadets and Youth Championship (December, 20) by the General Partner of the competition.
- His victory against Francesco Sonis received 5 votes out of 9.

IFFI: Biswajit Chatterjee awarded ‘Indian Personality of the Year’
- Inaugurating the 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI) here on Saturday, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Prakash Javadekar, announced a new ‘Indian Personality of the Year’ award, which he announced was being conferred upon veteran actor, director and singer Biswajit Chatterjee.
- During his address, Javadekar also made a strong pitch for the film industry as well as other private companies to start participating in the annual festival from its next edition.

Shri Amresh Kumar Chaudhary has been awarded prestigious "Chief of Army Staff Commendation"
- Incumbent Chief Controller, Shri Amresh Kumar Chaudhary has been awarded prestigious "Chief of Army Staff Commendation" for his outstanding contribution to Armed Forces during critical period of Covid19 pandemic and it’s various operations.
- Shri Amresh Kumar Chaudhary is currently working as Chief Controller in Mil Rail.
- Shri Amresh Kumar Chaudhary is a very sincere, hard-working, proactive and result-oriented official with highest degree of integrity.

AIIMS Bhubaneswar receives Kayakalp Award for 3rd time
- The All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Bhubaneswar has proved its mettle once again for promoting cleanliness, hygiene and creating sustainable practices in public health facilities by winning the Kayakalp Award Scheme. AIIMS Bhubaneswar will get an award of Rs 2 crore for the performance.
- The institute has been adjudged as the best central government hospital under B category for cleanliness for a third consecutive year. It had earlier received the award in 2018 as well as in 2019 for becoming second cleanest hospital in the country among category B hospitals (less than 1000 beds) and received Rs one crore as prize money.

Oscar nominee ‘Another Round’ to be opening movie at 51st IFFI
- The 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI) will open on 16th January, with the Indian premiere of the movie ‘Another Round’ by Thomas Vinterberg. The movie starring Cannes Best Actor Award winner Mads Mikkelsen is among a star-studded line up of movies being showcased at IFFI. The movie is also Denmark’s official entry to the Oscars. The festival will also witness the World Premiere of ‘Mehrunisa’. The film by Sandeep Kumar will premier mid-fest.
- The festival will close on 24th January with the India Premiere of the historical drama ‘Wife
of a Spy’ by Kiyoshi Kurosawa.

51st IFFI is being organised from 16th to 24th January in Goa.
- This edition is being organised in a hybrid mode for the first time and will comprise of both online and in-person experience. The festival will be loaded with a line-up of famous movies with a total of 224 films from across the globe.
- This includes 21 non-feature films and 26 feature films under the Indian Panorama section. Media registration for the festival has opened recently and is available till 10th January.

Indian Army Chief MM Naravane receives Guard of Honour at ROK Army Headquarters
- Chief of Army Staff General MM Naravane has received a Guard of Honour at Republic of Korea Army Headquarters at Gyeryong.
- He called on General Nam Yeong shin, Chief of Staff of Korean Army and discussed issues of bilateral defence cooperation. The Army chief visited the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) near the border with North Korea. General Naravane visited the 30th Armoured Brigade and DMZ. During his three day visit, he met senior military and civilian leadership of the Republic of Korea and discussed avenues for enhancing defence relations between the two countries.

Mother Teresa Memorial Awards for Social Justice 2020
- Harmony Foundation hosted the Mother Teresa Memorial Awards for Social Justice. The Awards in its 16th year is the only award endorsed by Sister Prema, the Superior General of the Missionaries of Charity, the organization started by Mother Teresa. The theme for this year’s awards was, ‘Celebrating Compassion In Times Of C-19 ‘.
- Dr Anthony Fauci (USA) is the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, USA. He and his task force were among the first ones to realize the seriousness of this pandemic.
- Father Fabio Stevenazzi (Milan, Italy), decided to return to medical practice in order to help those infected with C-19 has thrust him to be the modern-day example of St Charles Borromeo who in 1576 during the Great Plague that hit the city of Milan and cut the population by half, stayed behind to nurse the sick and renovate hospitals.
- Dr Pradeep Kumar (Chennai) took it upon himself to give a befitting burial to his colleague with the help of two ward boys, at a cemetery in the city in the middle of the night.
- IPS Sanjay Pandey (DG Home Guards, Maharashtra) went beyond the call of duty as a police officer to open the first relief camp in the Mumbai city suburbs for migrant workers whose livelihood were disrupted by the lockdown to contain the pandemic.
- Vikas Khanna (Manhattan, USA) heart still moves to serve the lonely and underprivileged here in India.
- KK Shailaja (Minister of Health, Kerala), her extraordinary efforts and pro-activeness in dealing with the pandemic by following experts and scientific advice helped countless Keralites survive the terrors of this pandemic, serving as an example for governments of other states countries to follow.
Pt Satish Vyas conferred Tansen Samman at the World Music Festival
- In Madhya Pradesh, 96th Tansen Music Festival began in Gwalior with strict C-19 guidelines in place. In the inaugural ceremony renowned sanoor player, Pandit Satish Vyas was conferred upon the prestigious Tansen Samman.
- Bhopal-based institution Abhinav Kala Parishad was honoured with Raja Mansingh Tomar award. The festival pays tribute to Tansen, one of 9 gems in Akbar’s court.

RANKING

Reliance Jio ranked 5th strongest brand globally
- Billionaire Mukesh Ambani’s four-year-old telecom venture Reliance Jio has been ranked the fifth strongest brand globally behind the likes of Ferrari and Coca-Cola. As per the ranking, Reliance Jio has emerged as the 5th strongest brand in the world. Reliance Jio has made its entry to the world’s strongest brands. Reliance has been ranked as the 5th strongest brand in the world. It has a Brand Strength Index (BSI) score of 91.7 out of 100.
- The Brand Finance’s Global 500 ranking of the strongest brands globally, which determined the relative strength of brands, is topped by WeChat, according to its annual report on most valuable and strongest global brands.
- As per the Brand Finance Global 500 2021 ranking, Apple has been named as the most valuable brand in the world.
- The brand value of the company is US$263.4 billion. Amazon is the second most valuable brand followed by Google.
- TATA has retained its spot as the most valuable brand of India. It has been placed at the 77th position globally and has a brand value of US$21.3 billion.
- WeChat is the strongest brand in the world with a BSI score of 95.4. WeChat has surpassed Ferrari to rank as the strongest brand.
- Ferrari is the 2nd strongest brand in the world.
- Russian bank Sber and Coca-Cola are the 3rd and 4th strongest brands respectively.

India Ranks 86 among 98 Countries in Lowy Institute’s Covid-19 Response Index
- India has been ranked at 86th position among 98 countries in the new Coronavirus Performance Index released by Australia-based Lowy Institute. Countries were ranked based on the publicly available and comparable data on Covid-19 response. The Lowy Institute is an independent international policy think tank, located in Sydney.
- New Zealand, Vietnam and Taiwan are the top three countries respectively in the index. Brazil was ranked at the bottom of the list for worst handling of the pandemic than any other country. China was excluded from the list due to lack of publicly available data.

India Secures 86th Rank in Corruption Perception Index 2020
- India has been ranked 86th among 180 countries in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2020, released by Transparency International. This year, India’s rank has slipped six places
compared to 2019, when it was ranked at 80th spot. The CPI score for India in 2020 is 40. India is sharing its position jointly with Burkina Faso, Morocco, East Timor, Trinidad and Tobago and Turkey.

**Top Country:**
- New Zealand and Denmark have jointly secured the first position with scores of 88.

**Lowest Country:**
- Somalia and South Sudan rank lowest at 179th position with scores of 12.
- The CPI index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and business people. The index uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.

**India Ranks 7th in Global Climate Risk Index 2021 of Germanwatch**
- India has been placed among the top 10 most affected countries by climate change, in the Global Climate Risk Index 2021 published by the Bonn-based environmental think tank Germanwatch. India ranked as the seventh worst-hit country in terms of climate change in 2019.
- The Global Climate Risk Index 2021 is the 16th edition of the annual report and has taken into account the data available for 2019 and from 2000 to 2019. The index analyses and ranks to what extent countries and regions have been affected by impacts of climate-related extreme weather events (storms, floods, heatwaves etc.)
- Top 3 countries: Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Bahamas were the top three most affected countries in 2019 respectively.
- Top 3 Countries most affected in the past 20 years: Between 2000-2019, Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Haiti were the countries most affected by the impacts of such weather events.
- The Global Climate Risk Index indicates a level of exposure and vulnerability to extreme weather events, which countries should understand as warnings in order to be prepared for more frequent and/or more severe events in the future.

**The Global Risks Report 2021 released**
- The World Economic Forum (WEF) has released the Global Risks Report 2021, 16th Edition. The findings of the report are based on the Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS) undertaken by over 650 members of WEF’s diverse leadership communities. The Report is prepared with Strategic Partners, Marsh McLennan in Partnership with SK Group and Zurich Insurance Group.
- The report is being released before WEF’s upcoming virtual Davos Agenda scheduled to be held between January 25-29, 2021. The main objective behind the publishing of the report is to enable better preparation by Government & other International Communities during the times of crisis.
- The Top 3 Risks by Likelihood (Very Likely to happen in the next 10 years) are Extreme Weather, Climate Action Failure & Human Environmental Damage.
- The Top 3 Risks by Impact (amount of impact they are expected to create) are Infectious
India ranks 4th in ‘Break Out Economies’

- Rapidly digitalising India was ranked 4th in “Break Out Economies” in the third edition of the Digital Evolution Scorecard developed by Tufts University’s Fletcher School in partnership with Mastercard. China which leads the countries in the “Break Out Economies” group is more evolved digitally due mainly to its combination of rapidly growing demand and innovation.
- Third rank Indonesia, and India, which ranks number four in momentum, have displayed increasing digital momentum suggesting the potential to rapidly digitalise for both post-COVID economic recovery and longer-term transformation.
- “Break Out Economies” are those that are digitalising very quickly and yet have a lot of room to grow before matching those in the developed economies, such as those in Europe and in more developed Asian countries like Singapore, South Korea, and Hong Kong.
- The objective of the study was to help governments, businesses and investors understand what they need to emerge ahead of the competition.
- To do this, the researchers analysed 90 economies based on a combination of 160 indicators across four supply key drivers: Supply Conditions, Demand Conditions, Institutional Environment, and Innovation and Change.
- A combination of proprietary and public data from more than 45 different databases, as well as analyses conducted by the Fletcher School’s Digital Planet team, was used to explore key questions across the core subject areas.

India Ranks 85 in Henley Passport Index 2021

- The Henley Passport Index 2021 has been released by Henley & Partners, based on the exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA). As per the latest report, India has been ranked 85th among 110 countries, in the Henley Passport Index for 2021, with a visa-free score of 58. The index presents the original ranking of the world’s most powerful passports, according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.
- Japan has once again topped the list of being the most powerful passport in the world, for the third consecutive year. Japanese citizens can travel to as many as 191 countries visa-free. Singapore is in second place (190) and South Korea ties with Germany in third place (189). Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan are the countries with the worst passport, with a passport score of 29, 28 and 26 respectively.

Mukesh Ambani ranked 12th in the Bloomberg Billionaires Index 2021

- India’s richest man Mukesh Ambani, the chairman and Managing Director of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) dropped down to 12th spot in the Bloomberg Billionaires Index 2021 (as on 2nd January 2021). The net worth of Ambani dropped from 90 billion USD (around Rs. 6.62 lakh crore) (in early 2020) to 76.7 billion USD (around Rs. 5.6 lakh crore). The drop in the net worth of Mukesh Ambani was due to the correction in the shares of RIL
which has fallen to Rs.1995.50 on 30th December 2020, which is 16% from its all-time high of Rs 2369.35.

Top 3 in the Bloomberg Billionaires Index:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Net worth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jeff Bezos</td>
<td>190 Billion USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Elon R Musk</td>
<td>170 Billion USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bill Gates</td>
<td>132 Billion USD</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Asia’s Richest person:
- Zhong Shanshan, referred to as “Lone Wolf”, has replaced Ambani as Asia’s richest person, he is one of the fastest in the history to achieve the feat.
- Zhong Shanshan is Chinese billionaire whose net worth is 78.2 billion USD, which is attributed to the listing of Beijing Wantai Biological Pharmacy Enterprises Co and Nongu Spring Co, a bottled water firm.

**BOOKS AND AUTHORS**

**Goa CM releases book 'Manohar Parrikar - Off the Record'**
- Goa Chief Minister, Pramod Sawant has released a book ‘Manohar Parrikar- Off the Record’ at a function organized at Institute Menezes Braganza hall in the city. The book has been written by senior journalist Waman Subha Prabhu.
- The book ‘Manohar Parrikar- Off the Record’ is a collection of memories of Mr Prabhu who happened to be with late Parrikar during the journey of his life. In the book, the author has endeavoured to narrate the multi-faceted personality of late Manohar Parrikar. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, while speaking, said Late Manohar Parrikar was a great visionary who had dreamt to serve Goa.

**Ramchandra Guha’s latest book ‘The Commonwealth of Cricket’**
- Ramchandra Guha’s latest book ‘The Commonwealth of Cricket’ would be launching virtually in the Tata Literature Live (The Mumbai Lit fest) this month. His latest book juxtaposes his life with his abiding love for the game & this conversation could not come at a better time with India and Australia in the midst of an enthralling test series.
- In his upcoming book, ‘The commonwealth of cricket: The most subtle and sophisticated game known to mankind’, Guha has penned down his personal account of being intimately involved with the game starting from the time he was a child growing up in Dehradun to his days in college, from his encounters with the best Indian and foreign cricket players to becoming part of the BCCI.
- As he traces his multifaceted encounters with the game through anecdotes, memoirs and evocative portraits of cricketing legends, he charts the extraordinary social and historical
changes that cricket underwent in India and the world.

**Manipur Guv released book “Making of a General A Himalayan Echo”**
- Manipur Governor, Dr Najma Heptulla has virtually released a book titled “Making of a General-A Himalayan Echo” authored by (Retd) Lt General Konsam Himalaya Singh at Durbar Hall, Raj Bhavan, Imphal. The book elegantly summons the essence and imperatives of superior command of one of the most formidable forces in the world.
- The book is the memoir of Lt Gen (Dr) Konsam Himalay Singh who has traced his journey from a small village in Manipur to becoming the first person from North East India to hold the rank of a Three-Star General of the Indian Army.
- The book has also highlighted about Manipur, the “Land of Emeralds”.

**A book titled “The Population Myth: Islam, Family Planning and Politics in India” by Ex-CEC**
- Former chief election commissioner (CEC) S Y Quraishi has come out with his book titled “The Population Myth: Islam, Family Planning and Politics in India”. The book will hit the stands on February 15, 2021. It has been published by HarperCollins India.
- The book evaluates India’s demographics from a religious perspective and seeks to demolish two basic myths that ‘Islam is against family planning’ and “Muslim rate of growth” is linked to capture political power.
- The book is a detailed analysis of the ‘Muslim rate of growth’ in the light of population data and national and international reports.
- The book examines the crucial and urgent question of the politicisation of demography in India.
- Quraishi, who was CEC from July 30, 2010, to June 10, 2012, introduced a number of electoral reforms, such as the creation of a voter education division, expenditure monitoring division, the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management, and launched the National Voters Day.

**“Modi India Calling – 2021” Book Released**
- A coffee table book named “Modi India Calling – 2021” has been released on the occasion of 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. The book contains various photographs of Prime Minister Narendra Modi captured during his “107 overseas and bilateral visits”.
- The book is the idea of BJP leader Vijay Jolly and it was released by Adesh Gupta, the Delhi BJP president. The book has been published by Maneesh Media and has 450 pages containing thousands of photographs of the PM Modi. Jolly has also said that he wishes to form a similar book on Rahul Gandhi and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal.

**RBI officer Giridharan pens novel ‘Right Under our Nose’**
- A general manager at RBI, R Giridharan has authored his debut book “Right Under our Nose”. In “Right Under Your Nose”, a murderer eliminates scientists right under the nose of the police and leaves forensics baffled.
- In response, the chief minister calls upon Vijay, who is given an impossible deadline to solve
the case before Parliament resumes in a week.

**A book on India’s tours Down Under by R. Kaushik**
- A book titled ‘India’s 71-Year Test: The Journey to Triumph in Australia’ and one which reflects on India’s previous 12 tours Down Under, was launched.
- The book, a Bradman Museum initiative, is authored by senior cricket scribe R. Kaushik, and it chronicles a rivalry that has given a fillip to Test cricket.

**Amit Shah releases ‘National Police K-9 Journal’**
- Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday released the inaugural issue of “National Police K-9 Journal.”
- The publication of the Police K9 Journal is another step in creating an ecosystem in the country to train and learn on augmenting this vital resource. The journal comprises different sections in Hindi and English, the Home Ministry said in a release.
- “This is a unique initiative which will further enrich the subjects related to Police Service Canine (K-9) (PSK) teams in the country,” Amit Shah said while inaugurating the book.

**A book titled “Vahana Masterclass” launched by Italian Writer Alfredo Covelli**
- Alfredo Covelli, an Italy based author has launched his new book Vahana Masterclass for children and Young Audience. The books will be illustrated and published by Scholastic India. Alfredo had a keen interest in our Indian culture and mythology which inspired him to write a story on Lord Ganesh for children.
- The book narrates the story of the Ganesha looking for a new vahana to accompany him to all the great adventures around the cosmos.
- After millenniums of service, the great VahanaMushika, holy mount of Lord Ganesha is about to retire to live the rest of his life in meditation.
- For this reason, 4 young mice (3 months each) are selected from different parts of India: intelligent Anand from Kolkata (selected by Goddess Kali), devoted Kanu from Gujarat (selected by Lord Krishna), brave Karthik from Chennai (selected by the other Vahanas), and compassionate Gitanjali from Uttarakhand (selected by Prakriti, nature).

**BANKING AND ECONOMY**

**Airtel announces 5G ready network in Hyderabad**
- Bharti Airtel took an edge by becoming the first telecom operator in India to demonstrate 5G services successfully. Bharti Airtel announced that it orchestrated live fifth-generation (5G) service over a commercial network in Hyderabad.
- Bharti Airtel explained that it used state of the art dynamic spectrum sharing so as to operate both 4G and 5G networks in the same spectrum block.
- One of India’s major telecom companies managed to do this atop the existing spectrum in the 1800 MHz band through the Non-Stand Alone (NSA) network technology.
- Airtel claimed that it took only a few seconds to download a full-length film during its...
demonstration of the 5G network.

- The company said that the 5G network could deliver ten times the speed and latency attained previously with 100 times the concurrency when compared to the technology in use.
- The government is conducting the auction of 2,251 MHz of spectrum through the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) at a reserve price of Rs 3.92 trillion from March 1, 2021.
- The government has not included the spectrum in the 3,300-3,600 MHz bands recommended for 5G by the telecom operators.

**Bharti AXA General Insurance launches ‘Krishi Sakha’ App for farmers**

- Bharti AXA General Insurance has launched Krishi Sakha App, a one-stop-shop for Indian farmers that offers them relevant information to cater to their daily farming needs. It also provides guidance to farmers to adopt best farming practices and enhance their productivity. The farmers through this app will also have access to the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) portal for crop insurance-related information.
- Bharti AXA ‘Krishi Sakha’ aims at helping Indian farmers make informed decisions through customized information related to their farming requirements.
- It shares relevant information about the scientific way of farming, crop cultivation, sowing, or harvesting of major crops. It guides the farmers about weather forecasting, market and crop prices and government schemes related to insurance and agriculture.

**Dhanlaxmi Bank Board approves appointment of J K Shivan as MD and CEO**

- Board of Directors of Kerala-based Dhanlaxmi Bank have given the approval to appoint J K Shivan as managing director and CEO of the Bank. It may be recalled that the shareholders of the Kerala-based had voted against MD & CEO Sunil Gurbaxani On September 30, 2020. Then, in December that year, the lender appointed Shivan as the new MD & CEO.
- However, the banking regulator, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), had asked the Dhanlaxmi Bank Board to get shareholders’ approval before appointing J K Shivan as the next chief of the bank.

**HSBC inaugurates international banking unit in Gujarat**

- Global financial services major HSBC has inaugurated its International Banking Unit (IBU) branch at GIFT City near Gandhinagar city in Gujarat. HSBC is one of the earliest global financial institutions setting up a branch at India’s GIFT City and was the first bank to get a licence from the newly set up International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA). HSBC’s IBU branch at Gujarath International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) will be operational for customer transactions with effect from January 27.
- HSBC has been present in the country for more than 160 years and its fourth branch globally was opened in India. HSBC operates in all of the leading international financial service hubs in the world and looks forward to the development of GIFT City as a globally competitive international financial centre.
Tata Power Solar wins Rs 1,200 crore order to set up 320 MW project

- Tata Power Solar Systems Ltd (Tata Power Solar), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Power, on Saturday announced that it has received an order worth Rs 1,200 crore from state-run power giant NTPC.
- The company has received a Letter of Award (LoA) to build 320MW of ground mounted Solar PV project for NTPC, as per an official press release.
- The order value of the project is approximately ₹1,200 crore ($162 million).
- The commercial operation date for the project is set for May 2022.

WIPRO group knowledge partner of MP

- In Madhya Pradesh, WIPRO group is all set to act as knowledge partner of the State Government. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, while holding a discussion with Mr Azim Premji of WIPRO through video conference today, informed that the company has taken initiative for establishment of a university in the State. For this purpose, the State Government will extend all possible support to the Foundation.
- The Wipro Group will also set up a Software Development Centre in Bhopal. The Chief Minister said, such centres will go a long way in providing more opportunities to the youth in the Information Technology sector.
- Azim Premji Foundation has been allotted 50 acres of land for the proposed university in Bhopal. Its First Phase will start soon. The goal is to start the university in the next 18 months. The Chief Minister said, this university will emerge as an important institution in the field of higher education in the State.

RBI slaps penalty of Rs 2 crore on Standard Chartered Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 2 crore on Standard Chartered Bank–India for delays in reporting of frauds. The penalty has been imposed on the bank for non-compliance with certain directions issued by it contained in the ‘Reserve Bank of India (Frauds – Classification and Reporting by commercial banks and select FIs) Directions 2016’.
- The notice was issued to the bank advising it to show cause as to why penalty should not be imposed on it for such non-compliance with the directions. After considering the bank’s reply to the notice and oral submissions made in the personal hearing, the RBI concluded that the charge of non-compliance with the aforesaid RBI directions was substantiated and warranted imposition of monetary penalty.

SBI, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank remain as (D-SIBs)

- The RBI state-owned SBI, along with private-sector lenders ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank continue to be Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) or institutions which are ‘too big to fail’. SBI, ICICI Bank, and HDFC Bank continue to be identified as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs), under the same bucketing structure as in the 2018 list of D-SIBs.
- SIBs are subjected to higher levels of supervision so as to prevent disruption in financial
services in the event of any failure.

- The Reserve Bank had issued the framework for dealing with D-SIBs in July 2014.
- The D-SIB framework requires the central to disclose the names of banks designated as D-SIBs starting from 2015 and place these lenders in appropriate buckets depending upon their Systemic Importance Scores (SISs).
- SIBs are seen as ‘too big to fail (TBTF)’, creating the expectation of government support for them in times of financial distress. These banks also enjoy certain advantages in funding markets.

**Axis Bank launches Aura Credit Card with health, wellness benefits**
- Axis Bank has unveiled a credit ‘AURA’ exclusively loaded with several health and wellness benefits for its users at an affordable price. Axis Bank has partnered with Poshvine to offer benefits and specialists such as Decathlon, Practo, Fitternity, IndushealthPlus, 1MG etc., to offer a complete and unique health & wellness solution to the cardholders.
- Cardholders will get a discount on annual medical checkup through IndushealthPlus.
- It offers up to 4 free online video consultations for a month, with round the clock access to doctors on all 21 specialities. This is offered by Procto.
- It also offers 4 free online interactive fitness sessions for a month by Fitternity.
- Through this card, the users can have access to 16 recorded training sessions for one month and can choose from a wide range of sessions such as yoga and cross-functional training programs, etc.

**Airtel Payments Bank launches ‘Airtel Safe Pay’**
- To protect Airtel customers from the growing incidents of online payment frauds, Airtel Payments Bank has launched ‘Airtel Safe Pay’, a safe way to pay digitally. With ‘Airtel Safe Pay’, Airtel customers making UPI or net banking-based payments through Airtel Payments Bank, no longer have to worry about money flowing out of their accounts without their explicit consent.
- An India-First innovation, ‘Airtel Safe Pay’ leverages Airtel’s ‘telco exclusive’ strength of network intelligence to provide an additional layer of payment validation, compared to the industry norm of two-factor authentication.
- This offers the highest level of protection from potential frauds such as phishing, stolen credentials or passwords, and even phone cloning that catches customers unaware.
- Using ‘Airtel Safe Pay’, Airtel Payments Bank customers can make secure digital payments across millions of merchants, online retailers and utilities, and even send money.

**ICICI Bank launches ‘InstaFX’ mobile app**
- ICICI Bank has launched a new mobile application ‘InstaFX’ for authorised money changers to help customers of any bank get ‘ICICI Bank Forex Prepaid Card’ swiftly. ICICI is the bank is the first in the country to offer such facility to money changers. A money changer is a person or organization whose business is the exchange of coins or currency of one country, for that of another.
• The ‘InstaFX’ app will enable the authorised money changers, who are partners of the Bank, to complete the KYC verification and validation of customers digitally and on a real-time basis.
• The ‘ICICI Bank Forex Prepaid Card’ gets activated swiftly within a few hours, as against the industry practice of up to two-days, thus it will significantly improve customer convenience, even if they are not customers of ICICI bank.

ADB, EIB join hands to protect oceans, support blue economy
• The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) has formed a new clean and sustainable ocean partnership to support initiatives in Asia and the Pacific to help meet the SDGs and the climate goals of the Paris Agreement.
• The partnership will strengthen the capacity of ADB and EIB to support high-impact projects.
• Both institutions will finance activities aimed at promoting cleaner oceans through the reduction of land-based plastics and other pollutants discharged into the ocean, as well as projects to improve the sustainability of socioeconomic activities that take place in oceans or use ocean-based resources.

ICICI Bank ties up with fintech Niyo to issue prepaid cards to MSMEs
• ICICI Bank, a leading Indian private sector bank, and Niyo, a new age fintech company announced a tie-up to issue prepaid cards to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) workers. MSMEs will now be able to get ‘ICICI Bank Niyo Bharat Payroll Card’ powered by Visa, for their blue-collar workers.
• With this, MSMEs can upload the salaries of their workers on the card, which the workers can then utilise as per their need seamlessly.
• These workers are mostly under-banked and are deprived of banking facilities.
• The ‘ICICI Bank Niyo Bharat Payroll Card’ allows an individual to receive funds up to Rs 1 lakh into the card account. It offers convenience and safety of digital banking to the blue-collar workforce while providing a state-of-the-art salary disbursement solution to the employers.
• Any MSME can tie-up with Niyo to avail of the prepaid card. After the tie-up, cards are issued to the workers at their workplace itself while their KYC verification is done simultaneously using a biometric device.
• Once activated, workers can use the card to withdraw funds at ATMs, make online transactions on e-commerce portals and make payment by swiping the card at Point of Sale (PoS) machines.

YES Bank launches wellness themed credit card
• Yes Bank has announced its partnership with Aditya Birla Wellness Private Limited to launch the ‘YES BANK Wellness’ and ‘YES BANK Wellness Plus’ Credit Cards – aimed at the holistic health, self-care and wellness of consumers. This is an innovative step to encourage and promote self-care, mental and physical well-being.
• Consumers can now enjoy the bouquet of complementary health benefits by simply registering on the Aditya Birla Multiply App.
• Benefits include reward points, diet plans, consultations etc
• The mobile app allows consumers to avail complimentary benefits such as annual health check-up, round the clock doctor or counsellor helpline, in-studio or home-based workout sessions, personalized diet plans, among others, right at their fingertips.

GM to invest C$1 billion in Canada plant to manufacture electric vans
• General Motors Co and labor union Unifor said on Friday they have reached a tentative deal for the automaker to invest nearly C$1 billion ($785.42 million) in its CAMI Assembly Plant in Ingersoll, Ontario, to manufacture commercial electric vans.
• Under the tentative deal, which is yet to be ratified by the union workers, GM has agreed to begin large-scale commercial production of EV600, an electric van, at its CAMI plant, Unifor said in a statement.
• The Detroit automaker said in a separate statement that work would begin immediately at the plant.

Tesla sets up India subsidiary in Bengaluru
• Elon Musk-owned electric vehicle (EV) company Tesla has registered a fully-owned subsidiary in Bengaluru, Karnataka. Tesla, the world’s most valued carmaker has incorporated a fully owned subsidiary ahead as a first step to set up an R&D unit and a manufacturing plant for its electric vehicles in the country.
• Tesla’s global senior director David Jon Feinstein, chief accounting officer Vaibhav Taneja and Bengaluru-based entrepreneur Venkatrangam Sreeram are on the board of the India unit, Tesla India Motors and Energy Pvt Ltd. The office, situated on Lavelle Road in Bengaluru, is registered with a total paid-up capital of Rs 1,00,000 and authorised share capital of Rs 15 lakh.

RBI forms six-member working group to regulate digital lending frauds
• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up a working group to study digital lending activities of the regulated and unregulated players, due to the growing instances of frauds in digital lending space. The group will suggest steps to regulate digital lending including online lending platform and mobile lending. The group will evaluate digital lending activities and assess the penetration and standards of outsourced digital lending activities in RBI regulated entities.
  The six-member panel comprises of following four RBI internal and two external members:
  1. Jayant Kumar Dash, Executive Director, RBI (Chairman)
  2. Ajay Kumar Choudhary, Chief General Manager-in-Charge, Department of Supervision (Member)
  3. P Vasudevan, Chief General Manager, Department of Payment and Settlement Systems, RBI (Member)
  4. Manoranj Mishra, Chief General Manager, Department of Regulation (Member Secretary)
  5. Vikram Mehta, Co-founder, Monexo Fintech (External Member)
6. Rahul Sasi, Cyber Security Expert & Founder of CloudSEK (External Member)

First time in history, Union Budget 2021 to be paperless
- Union Budget 2021, slated to be presented on February 1, is going to be completely paperless in the wake of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. This will be the first time since independence that the budget papers will not be printed. The Centre has received permission for the same from both houses of parliament. The decision has been taken as several people (approximately 100) would be required to stay at the printing press for around a fortnight amid the COVID-19 fear.
- The budget papers are usually printed at the ministry’s in-house printing press in the North Block. This year’s budget may reportedly witness several conventions being broken as the traditional ‘Halwa’ ceremony, which is a given every year is also not likely to take place, or a low-key function may be held with limited gathering in attendance.

India’s retail inflation drops to 4.59 % in December
- India’s retail inflation fell sharply to 4.59 per cent in December, mainly due to declining food prices, government data showed. Retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 6.93 per cent in November.
- Food inflation declined to 3.41 per cent in December in 2020, compared to 9.5 per cent in the previous month, according to the data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) factors in retail inflation while arriving at its monetary policy.

RBI cancels the licence of Vasantdada Nagari Sahakari Bank
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cancelled the licence of Maharashtra-based Vasantdada Nagari Sahakari Bank, with immediate effect. Vasantdada Nagari Sahakari Bank Ltd will now not be allowed to conduct the business of ‘banking’, including acceptance of deposits and repayment of deposits, with effect from the close of business on January 11, 2021.
- RBI has requested the Commissioner for Cooperation and Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS), Maharashtra to issue an order for winding up the bank and appoint a liquidator for the bank.
- The Bank has failed to comply with the requirements of Section 11(1) read with Section 56 of BR Act and thus would be unable to pay its present depositors in full in its current financial position.
- With the cancellation of licence and commencement of liquidation proceedings, the process of paying the depositors of Vasantdada Nagari Sahakari Bank Ltd., Osmanabad, Maharashtra as per the DICGC Act, 1961 will be set in motion. Every depositor is entitled to repayment of his/her deposits up to Rs 5,00,000 from the DICGC. More than 99% of the depositors of the bank will get full repayment of their deposits from DICGC.

Bandhan Bank unveils account for army personnel
- Private lender Bandhan Bank has signed an agreement with the Indian Army to provide
banking services to the personnel of the force. The bank got the mandate to maintain and a Bank Shaurya Salary Account of the Army personnel. Bandhan Bank Shaurya Salary Account will have a zero balance facility. The Shaurya Salary Account also offers protection for self and assets.

- They will be offered other preferential services such as six per cent interest on balance over Rs one lakh, unlimited free ATM transactions across ATMs, waiver of issuance and annual charge on Shaurya Visa Platinum Debit Card and unlimited free NEFT/RTGS/IMPS/DD transactions.
- This includes free personal accident insurance of Rs 30 lakh, air accident cover of Rs 1 crore and free educational benefit of up to Rs 1 lakh per year for four years to a dependent child in case of accidental death of the account holder.

IHS Markit: Indian economy to rebound with 8.9% growth in FY22

- London-based financial services company IHS Markit has projected the Indian economy to rebound by 8.9 per cent in the fiscal year 2021-22, beginning April 2021. This upward estimate is based on the backdrop of the significant improvement in domestic economic activity in the fourth quarter of 2020 by India.

IDFC Mutual Fund unveils new investor awareness campaign #PaisonKoRokoMat

- IDFC Mutual Funds has launched its latest pan-India investor awareness campaign titled #PaisonKoRokoMat. With this new campaign, IDFC Mutual Fund aims to shift the conversation regarding wealth creation from the traditional to the contemporary.
- This new campaign of IDFC Mutual Fund urges savers to become investors and explore the smart and modern mutual fund vehicle for their investments.
- The 360-degree campaign focuses on looking beyond the traditional ways of growing your money and using your goals to allocate your money across asset classes and investment solutions.
- The campaign has been conceptualised and created by TBWAIndia.

PNB Collaborates with IIT Kanpur to set up Fintech Innovation Centre

- Punjab National Bank has partnered with IIT Kanpur and the Foundation for Innovation & Research in Science & Technology (FIRST) to set up a ‘Fintech Innovation Centre (FIC)’ at the institute’s campus. PNB and IIT Kanpur will jointly work to set up this innovation centre as a vehicle for research and development of technological solutions, with the help of FIRST, to address challenges and explore opportunities in the Banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) space.
- PNB intends to create new products or solutions with technological innovations by creating an FIC involving IITK’s experienced faculty members with the help of FIRST.
- The collaboration of technical prowess from IIT Kanpur and financial expertise of PNB makes it an apt “Fin-Tech” partnership that will help build innovations and entrepreneurial excellence.
The FIC will be supported by a holistic ecosystem of financial institutions, academia, VC funds, technology companies and key government organizations.

**RBI introduces Legal Entity Identifier for NEFT, RTGS transactions above Rs 50 crore**
- The Reserve Bank of India has introduced Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) for all payment transactions of value Rs 50 crore and above undertaken by entities (non-individuals) via Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT). Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) are the Centralised Payment Systems operated by RBI. This instruction shall come into effect from April 01, 2021.
- The Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) is a 20-digit number used to uniquely identify parties to financial transactions worldwide.
- Reserve Bank has introduced LEI in a phased manner for participants in the over the counter (OTC) derivative and non-derivative markets as also for large corporate borrowers.
- LEI can be obtained from Legal Entity Identifier India Ltd. (LEIL) which is wholly owned subsidiary of Clearing Corporation of India Ltd (CCIL).

**World Bank Projects Indian Economy to Contract By 9.6% in 2020-21**
- World Bank has projected the Indian economy to contract by 9.6 per cent in the fiscal year 2020-21, in its Global Economic Prospects report. World Bank estimates Growth to recover to 5.4 per cent in 2021.
- Apart from this, the global economy is estimated to expand by 4 per cent in 2021 by the World Bank. According to the report, global growth is projected to moderate to 3.8 per cent in 2022.

**SMCB becomes India’s 1st urban co-operative bank to transition to SFB**
- Uttar Pradesh-based, Shivalik Mercantile Co-operative Bank (SMCB) has become the first urban co-operative bank (UCB) in India to receive a licence from RBI to operate as a Small Finance Bank (SFB). The RBI had given an 18-month timeline to commence business.
- SMCB received the commercial banking license from banking regulator Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on January 06, 2021, to transition to an SFB, under the voluntary transition scheme. The Shivalik Small Finance Bank (SSFB) will start its banking operations from April 2021.
- SSFB operates through 31 branches and over 250 banking agents in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, and Uttarakhand with 400,000 customers. As on March 31, 2020, the total deposit base of the bank stood at Rs 1,140 crore and total advances stood at Rs 719 crore.

**World Bank approves $105 million loan to improve Waterways in West Bengal**
- The World Bank has signed a $105 million project with the Government of India and the Government of West Bengal to improve the inland water transport infrastructure in Kolkata, West Bengal. The $105 million loans from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a maturity of 17 years, including a grace
period of 7 years.

- The West Bengal Inland Water Transport, Logistics and Spatial Development Project will improve passenger and freight movement across the Hooghly river as well as improve accessibility in the Kolkata Metropolitan Area, enhance the quality of life of its residents and contribute to the growth of the state’s logistics sector. The project will cover the five most populous districts of southern West Bengal, including its urban agglomeration — the Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA) where around 30 million people or one-third of West Bengal’s population live.

- In the first phase, the project will enhance the capacity and improve the safety of the Inland Water Transport system; including rehabilitating existing jetties, buying new ferries with enhanced design; and installing electronic gates in 40 locations.

- In the second phase, it will support long-term investments for passenger movements, including in terminals and jetties; improve the design of the inland water transport vessels; ensure night navigation on the most hazardous and trafficked routes and crossing points, and encourage the private sector to invest in Ro-Ro vessels that will allow easier movement of trucks across the Hooghly river.

- In addition, the project will facilitate disabled-friendly amenities, ensure women’s safety and encourage women’s employment in the IWT Department as well as with the ferry operators.

**IDBI Bank launches video KYC facility for opening savings bank accounts**

- IDBI Bank announced the launch of video KYC account opening (VAO) facility for savings bank accounts. Through the facility, a customer can open a savings account with the lender from the convenience of his/her home or office as there are no physical forms to be filled or visits to be made to the branch.

- Video KYC is a quick and easy way to open a savings account from the comforts of your home. It ensures that the online journey for opening savings account remains safe, simple, and fast eliminating the need to visit the branch for KYC.

**ADB approves $100 million loan to upgrade power distribution system in Bengaluru**

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide a USD 100 million (around Rs 730 crore) loan to modernise and upgrade the power distribution system in Bengaluru city. Besides the USD 100 million sovereign loans, ADB will provide a USD 90 million loan without sovereign guarantee for the project to Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Ltd (BESCOM), one of the five state-owned distribution utilities in Karnataka.

- In parallel to underground distribution cables, over 2,800 km of fibre optical cables will be installed to strengthen communication network. Moving about 7,200 km of distribution lines underground will help reduce technical and commercial losses by about 30 per cent.

- The fibre optical cables will be used for smart metering systems, distribution automation system (DAS) in the distribution grid, and other communication networks.

- The project will install 1,700 automated ring main units adapted with a DAS to monitor and control the distribution line switch gears from the control centre.
The loan will strengthen the capacity of BESCOM in operation and maintenance of underground cabling, environment and social safeguards, financial management and commercial financing. Improved financial management can.

RBI introduces the RBI-Digital Payments Index

- Reserve Bank of India has launched a Digital Payments Index (DPI) to capture the extent of digitization of digital/electronic payments across the country. This RBI-Digital Payments Index (DPI) has 5 broad parameters that will be used for the measurement of deepening and penetration of digital payments.
  
  These parameters and their weightage are as under:
  
  1. Payment Enablers (weight 25%),
  2. Payment Infrastructure – Demand-side factors (10%),
  3. Payment Infrastructure – Supply-side factors (15%),
  4. Payment Performance (45%) and
  5. Consumer Centricity (5%).

- The base period for RBI-DPI is March 2018. This means that the DPI score for March 2018 is set at 100. RBI has calculated the DPI for March 2019 and March 2020 at 153.47 and 207.84 respectively, indicating appreciable growth. RBI-DPI shall be published on a semi-annual basis from March 2021 onwards with a lag of 4 months.

ADB to provide $231 mn loan to enhance power generation capacity in Assam

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has signed a $231 million loan with the Government of India to augment electricity generation capacity in the state of Assam. This is the third tranche loan for the ‘Assam Power Sector Investment Programme’ that was approved by the ADB Board in July 2014.
  
  Under the project, 120 megawatts (MW) hydroelectric power plant would be constructed. The programme focuses on enhancing the capacity and efficiency of the energy generation and distribution systems in Assam to improve the availability of electricity service to end-users. The programme, including its two previous tranches, focuses on enhancing capacity and efficiency of the energy generation and distribution systems in Assam to improve electricity service to end-users.

ADB and India sign $10 million loan to support horticulture in HP

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India have signed a $10 million project readiness financing (PRF). This agreement aims to help finance piloting activities, and design and capacity building for an ensuing project that aims to expand horticulture production and farm household income in the hill state of Himachal Pradesh.
  
  The PRF project will support advance actions to achieve a high level of project readiness through detailed design activities, capacity building of state-level agencies, and creating an enabling environment for subtropical horticulture development in the state.
  
  The PRF project aims to ensure implementation readiness with prior testing of new production technologies and marketing systems so that the ensuing project is cost-effective.
and gets completed in a timely manner to enhance farm profitability.

- The ensuing project, to be designed by the PRF, will support the development of subtropical horticulture, including cultivation of fruits and vegetables, in the state’s southern region which is currently lagging due to limited access to perennial water sources, crops losses due to wild animal encroachment and limited access to high-value markets.

**Canara Bank Raises Rs 1,635 Crore Via Bonds**
- State-owned Canara Bank on Thursday said it has raised Rs 1,635 crore through bonds, to fund business growth.
- The capital was raised by issuing additional tier-1 bonds at 8.50 per cent coupon on December 31, the bank said in a statement.
- The fund raise will help the bank boost its capital adequacy ratio.

**Jubilant FoodWorks to buy 10% stake in Barbeque Nation**
- Jubilant FoodWorks Ltd will invest ₹92 crore to buy a 10.76% stake in Barbeque Nation Hospitality Ltd (BNHL), which runs the popular Barbeque Nation (BBQ) chain of restaurants.
- “The company will acquire 36,50,794 fully paid-up equity shares of face value of ₹5 each aggregating to 10.76% stake in BNHL,” Jubilant FoodWorks, which operates the Domino’s Pizza chain and the Dunkin’ Donuts coffee and doughnut chain in India, said in a regulatory filing on Thursday. The all-cash deal is expected to conclude by 25 January.

**RBI to conduct simultaneous sale-purchase of govt securities on Jan 7**
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will conduct simultaneous purchase and sale of government securities under open market operations (OMOs) for Rs 10,000 crore each on January 7.
- The decision was taken after a review of current liquidity and financial conditions, the RBI said in a statement.
- Eligible participants should submit their bids in electronic format on RBI’s core banking solution (E-Kuber) system between 10 and 11 am on January 7.