

Weekly Current Affairs PDF January 24 to January 30, 2021

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INTERNATIONAL

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.

NATIONAL

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).

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

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.

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.

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.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

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.

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INTERNATIONAL

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.

NATIONAL

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, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh.

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-electoral photo identity card is a non-editable digital version of the electoral 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.

OBITUARY

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.

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.

RANKING

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.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

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.

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NATIONAL

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.

IMPORTANT DAYS

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”.

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.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

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).

BANKING AND ECONOMY

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 Gujarat 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.

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INTERNATIONAL

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.

NATIONAL

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.

OBITUARY

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.

IMPORTANT DAYS

International Customs 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 Customs 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).

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

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.

RANKING

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.

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INTERNATIONAL

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.

NATIONAL

Haridwar teen Shristi 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 Bhilai 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.

IMPORTANT DAYS

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 tableaux, 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.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

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
6. Ram Vilas Paswan (Posthumous), Bihar
7. Keshubhai Patel (Posthumous), Gujarat

8. Kalbe Sadiq (Posthumous), Uttar Pradesh
9. Rajnikant Devidas Shroff, Maharashtra
10. Tarlochan Singh, Haryana

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

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INTERNATIONAL

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.

NATIONAL

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.

OBITUARY

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.

IMPORTANT DAYS

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.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

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.

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NATIONAL

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 MASGRADE 2021

- The 7th edition of 'MASGRADE 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.

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

OBITUARY

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 Tiharo, Ram Se Bada Ram Ka Naam among others. Besides several bhajans, Chanchal had also given voice in several Hindi films as well.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

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.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

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.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

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.