

Important Monthly Current Affairs Capsule – February 2020

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IMPORTANT DAYS

Date	Day	Theme
February 1	Indian Coast Guard's Foundation Day	Na
February 2	World Wetlands Day	Wetlands and Biodiversity
February 4	World Cancer Day	I Am and I Will
February 6	International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation	Unleashing Youth Power: One decade of accelerating actions for zero female genital mutilation
February 10	UN World Pulses Day	NA
February 10	National Deworming Day	NA
February 11	World Unani Day	NA
February 11	International Day of Women and Girls in Science	Investment in Women and Girls in Science for Inclusive Green Growth
February 12	National Productivity Day	NA
February 12	Darwin Day	NA
February 13	World Radio Day	Radio and Diversity
February 13	National Women's Day	(Sarojini Naidu's Birthday)
February 19	Soil Health Card Day	NA
February 20	World Day of Social Justice	Closing the Inequalities Gap to Achieve Social Justice
February 21	International Mother Language Day	Languages without Borders
February 22	World Thinking Day	NA
February 24	Central Excise Day	NA
February 28	National Science Day	Women in Science
Last Day of February (Feb 29)	World Rare Disease Day	Reframe Rare for Rare Disease Day

Note: Nagaland observed **Soil Health Card Day** in all the 11 districts of the state in coordination with Krishi Vigyan Kendras. The day is being celebrated to create awareness, importance, values and benefits of the scheme.

Important Banking News

RBI

RBI's 6th Bi-monthly Monetary Policy 2019-20 released: RBI keeps repo rate unchanged at 5.15%

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor **Shaktikanta Das**-led Monetary Policy Committee announced its decision to keep the key lending rates at existing levels.
- All six members of the MPC voted in favour of maintaining the status quo on monetary policy, which was in line with economists' expectations.
- All six members of the Monetary Policy Committee voted in favour of maintaining the status quo on policy.

Current rates:

Policy Rates under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF)

Repo Rate	5.15%
Reverse Repo Rate	4.90%
Marginal standing facility Rate	5.40%
Bank Rate	5.40%

Reserve Ratios

Cash reserve Ratio (CRR)	4%
Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)	18.25%

GDP Prediction

GDP for 2020-21	6 % (from 5 % in FY20)
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- It has revised upwards the the CPI inflation projection to 6.5 per cent for fourth quarter of the fiscal and 5.4-5.0 per cent for first half of 2020-21; and 3.2 per cent for third quarter next fiscal, with risks broadly balanced.

RBI announces external benchmarking of loans for medium enterprises from April 1

- The RBI announced that it has decided to link pricing of loans by scheduled commercial banks for the medium enterprises also to an external benchmark effective **April 1, 2020**.
- It had mandated the external benchmarking of retail loans and those to micro and small enterprises from **October 1, 2019**.
- The RBI also announced the extension of the restructuring scheme for MSMEs to December 31, 2020.
- The restructuring of the borrower account was to be implemented by March 31, 2020.

Reserve Bank proposes new umbrella entity for retail payments system

- The RBI has proposed setting up a new pan-Indian umbrella entity for retail payments system and has published a draft framework.
- The new entity will be involved in the development and monitoring of new payment methods, standards and technologies.
- The proposed entity or entities will set up, manage and operate a new payment system in the retail space, which includes ATMs, white label PoS, Aadhaar-based payments and remittance services.
- It will have to be a company incorporated in India under the Companies Act 2013 and maybe a for-profit or a Section 8 company, as may be decided by it.

- The NUE shall have a minimum paid-up capital of **Rs 500 crore** (to support, address the capital needs for managing risks, invest in technological infrastructure, for business operations, etc).

RBI to conduct first repo operation on February 17 for Rs 25,000 crore

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) began the first tranche of its **long-term repo operations** on February 17 with three-year repo of **Rs 25,000 crore**, followed by another on February 24 for an equal amount.
- The operations date is announced a day after the RBI's monetary policy wherein it said long-term repos aggregating up to **Rs 1 lakh crore** will be conducted in tranches from mid-February to ease liquidity in the system.
- These LTROs will be in addition to the existing liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) and marginal standing facility (MSF) operations, the total amount of liquidity injected through these operations would be up to **Rs 1 lakh crore**.
- LTROs will be conducted on the **CBS (E-KUBER) platform**. The operations would be conducted at a fixed rate, the RBI said.

RBI lifts ban on Bandhan Bank network expansion

- The **Reserve Bank** allowed **Bandhan Bank** to expand its branch network after considering the efforts made by the private lender to comply with the licensing conditions.
- The central bank in September 2018 had barred Bandhan Bank from expanding its network as the lender failed to reduce the promoters' stake to 40 per cent from close to 82 per cent within the stipulated three-year time frame of commencing operations.
- Currently, the promoters' holding in the bank is **62 per cent**. The bank ensures that at least 25 per cent of the total number of banking outlets opened during a financial year are opened in unbanked rural centres.

RBI announces 2 LTROs for three-year tenors worth Rs 250 bn in March

- The Reserve Bank announced two **long-term repo operations (LTROs)** for three-year tenors worth **Rs 25,000 crore (Rs 250 billion)** each to be conducted on March 2 and March 9.
- The reversal date of LTRO on March 2, 2020 is March 1, 2023 while for LTRO to be conducted on March 9, 2020, it will be March 7, 2023.
- In the sixth bi-monthly policy, the RBI had announced term repurchase agreements (repos) of one-year and three-year tenors for a total amount of Rs 1 trillion at the policy repo rate, from the fortnight beginning on February 15.
- LTROs are aimed at helping banks to reduce their lending rates, thereby quickening the monetary policy transmission.
- The RBI has already conducted two LTROs for three-year and one-year tenor for Rs 25,000 crore each on February 17 and February 24, respectively.
- In the February 17 LTRO for three years, it received bids of more than **Rs 1.94 trillion**. In the second LTRO for one-year tenor conducted on February 24, RBI got 52 bids amounting to **Rs 1.23 trillion**.

RBI moots customer protection agency for digital payments sector

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced that it will prepare the way for an agency that will look after the interests of digital payment system customers and their security.
- The rapid adoption of digital modes of payment for according to the central bank, the agency will be a self-regulatory organisation that will promote best practices in various aspects of the ecosystem, including customer protection, pricing and security.
- According to government data, digital payment frauds account for nearly half of all bank frauds in India. Finance ministry data shows that frauds related to ATM, debit cards, credit cards and internet banking transactions of over

Rs 1 lakh have surged sharply over the past few years, going from 1,367 frauds in FY17 to 2,127 in FY18 and 1,477 frauds in FY19.

- It is desirable to have a Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO) for orderly operations of the entities. The RBI will put in place a framework for establishing an SRO by April 2020 with a view to fostering best practices on security, customer protection and pricing.

RBI asks banks to extend farm loans eligible for subvention only via KCCs

- The Reserve Bank of India has advised banks to ensure that all short term crop loans eligible for interest subvention and prompt repayment incentive benefit are extended only through the **Kisan Credit Card (KCC)** with effect from **April 1, 2020**.
- Further, the existing short term crop loans which are not extended through KCC will need to be converted to KCC loans by March 31, 2020.
- Accordingly, reimbursement of interest subvention for short term crop loans through non-KCC accounts will not be considered beyond **March 31, 2020**.
- To provide short term crop loans up to Rs 3 lakhs to farmers at an interest rate of 7 per cent, the government offers interest subvention of 2% to the lending institutions. It also provides an additional interest subvention of 3% to such of those farmers paying in time. This also implies that the farmers paying promptly get short term crop loans at 4%.

RBI directs banks to link all the new floating rate loans to medium enterprises with external benchmark

- The Reserve Bank has directed banks to link all the new **floating rate loan** to medium enterprises with **external benchmark**.
- In a circular, RBI stated that the direction will be effective from **1st April 2020**. With respect to micro and small enterprises, floating rate loans are already linked with external benchmarks.
- The move is aimed at further strengthening monetary policy transmission so that benefits of reduction in key lending rate can be passed on to medium enterprises.

RBI to conduct Rs. 2.25-lakh cr reverse repo auction

- The RBI will seek to mop up a whopping **Rs. 2.25-lakh crore** via a 14-day variable rate reverse repo auction under its revised **Liquidity Management Framework**, which was unveiled on February 6. This move shows the banking system is awash with liquidity and comes amid rising inflationary pressures.
- Average daily net absorption under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) amounted to ₹2.61-lakh crore in December 2019. In January 2020, the average daily net absorption of surplus liquidity soared to ₹3.18-lakh crore.
- The framework also prescribes a 14-day term repo/reverse repo operation at a variable rate and conducted to coincide with the cash reserve ratio (CRR) maintenance cycle would be the main liquidity management tool for managing frictional liquidity requirements.

Lending from CRR buffer to get 5-year exemption: RBI

- The Reserve Bank of India has stated that the special lending window with **Cash Reserve Ratio** exemption opened from 14th of February and incremental loans disbursed under this facility will have **CRR exemption** for the next five years.
- The central bank circular issued in Mumbai stated that the window will open for six months ending 31st of July this year, but the **Net Demand and Time Liabilities (NDTL)** will be calculated as of **31st of January**.
- It asked banks to report the CRR exemption availed at the end of a fortnight under exemptions/others in the Section 42 return, under the provisions of the master circular on CRR and SLR issued on 1st of July, 2015.

SBI

SBI cuts MCLR by 5 basis points across tenors

- State Bank of India (SBI) announced a 5 basis points reduction in its marginal cost of fund-based rate (MCLR) across tenors, effective February 10.
- This is the ninth consecutive cut in MCLR by the bank in the current fiscal.
- With this reduction, the one-year MCLR has come down to **7.85 per cent** per annum from **7.90 per cent**.
- SBI further stated in view of surplus liquidity in the system, it has realigned its interest rate on retail term deposits (less than Rs 2 crore) and bulk term deposits (Rs 2 crore and above), effective February 10.
- It slashed term deposits rates **by 10-50 bps** in the retail segment and **25-50 bps** in the bulk segment.

Gujarat govt partners with SBI to facilitate MSME loans

- The Gujarat government signed an **MoU** with **State Bank of India (SBI)** to facilitate **approval of loans** to entrepreneurs in the MSME sector with ease and within a short time-frame.
- As per the MoU, the top public sector lender will provide working capital to entrepreneurs seeking to start new **micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME)** within a short time -frame after providing theoretical approval within 15 days of making an application.
- The bank will provide theoretical approval to the project. Start-ups can submit an application on either the **MSME portal** or to the local nodal agencies.
- The SBI decided to help MSME entrepreneurs in Gujarat looking at their high recovery rate.

World Bank

India needs to invest USD 109 billion to halve its road accident fatalities in next decade: World Bank

- India needs to invest an estimated extra **USD 109 billion** in road safety over the next decade to halve its crash fatalities, the World Bank stated in a report released on a day when at least 35 people were killed in four separate accidents in the country.
- The bank stated such an investment will bring economic benefits equivalent annually to **3.7 per cent of the GDP**.
- The report titled "**Delivering Road Safety in India**" was released at the '**Third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety**' in **Stockholm**.
- It points to the high death rate on India's roads caused by chronic lack of investment in systemic, targeted, and sustained road safety programmes and identifies relevant investment priorities to reverse the trend.
- India has one of the highest rates of road crashes in the world.

ADB

ADB raises \$118 million from rupee-linked bonds

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has raised **Rs 850 crore (USD 118 million)** from a new issue of offshore Indian rupee-linked 10-year bonds.
- This represents ADB's first new maturity raised in Indian rupees since 2017 and contributes to an established yield curve which stretches from 2021 through 2030 with Rs 7,240 crore (USD 1 billion) of outstanding bonds.
- ADB's India rupee bonds have been a "**game-changer**" for local currency operations.

- The bonds bear a semi-annual coupon of 6.15 per cent and priced to yield 6.19 per cent. The bonds, which are denominated in Indian rupees, but settled in US dollars.

AIIB

AIIB likely to lend \$3 bn to Andhra Pradesh for development projects

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) offered to extend a **\$3 billion** loan to **Andhra Pradesh** for development projects.
- Reddy told AIIB officials that his government intended to utilise these funds to construct ports at Bhavanapadu and Machilipatnam in Srikakulam and Krishna districts, respectively, apart from other infrastructure projects in the state.

Other Banking News

15th Finance Commission forms panel on defence, internal security funding

- The Fifteenth Finance Commission has constituted a **five member group** on **Defence** and **Internal Security**.
- The chairman of the commission **N.K. Singh** will head the group. Home Secretary and Defence Secretary will be the members of the group among others.
- The panel will examine whether a separate mechanism for funding of defence and internal security ought to be set up, and if so, how such a mechanism could be operationalised.

KVGB launches programme to boost entrepreneurship at polytechnics

- **Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank (KVGB)**, a regional rural bank headquartered in **Dharwad district**, has come out with plans to boost entrepreneurship among the students of polytechnics and ITIs.
- **P Gopi Krishana**, Chairman, KVGB, who launched the '**Vikas Yuva Prerana**' campaign, stated this programme will help the students from these institutes take up self-employment opportunities and establish their own ventures.
- After that the bank will extend credit support to such students to start their ventures. The bank could finance collateral-free loans of up to **Rs. 10 lakh** to such candidates.

Airtel Payments Bank rolls out Aadhaar enabled payment system

- Airtel Payments Bank stated that it has launched the **Aadhaar enabled payment system (AePS)** which will help people to do transactions at over **2,50,000** of its banking points across India.
- It allows customers to carry out transactions by using their **Aadhaar number** or **virtual ID** to access their bank accounts.
- The **AePS** is a bank-led model which allows online interoperable financial transactions at a point of sale (PoS) through business correspondent of any bank using the **Aadhaar authentication**. The AePS allows six types of transactions, including deposit and withdrawal.

SEBI constitutes municipal bonds development committee

- SEBI has constituted a committee which will suggest on policy matters pertaining to **development of municipal debt securities** and facilitate municipalities for issuance of such bonds.
- The regulator has constituted a municipal bonds development committee headed by its Executive Director **Sujit Prasad** and comprises representatives from municipal corporations, lawyers, professionals and market practitioners.
- The panel will advise SEBI on issues related to regulation and development of primary and secondary market of municipal debt securities, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) stated in a statement.

Allahabad Bank cuts MCLR by 0.05 per cent across tenors

- **Allahabad Bank** has cut the **marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR)** by **0.05 percentage** points across tenors, effective February 14.
- The Asset Liability Management Committee of the bank has reviewed the existing MCLR and decided for a downward revision by 5 basis points (bps) across different MCLR tenors, the bank stated in a regulatory filing.
- The benchmark one-year tenor MCLR will now be 8.25 per cent as compared to the existing 8.30 per cent.
- Likewise, the overnight, three and six-month tenor MCLRs have been cut by 5 bps each in the range of 7.75-8.10 per cent. There has been no change in one-month MCLR of 7.85 per cent.

IRDAI to set up common electronic platform to settle health insurance claims

- The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** is looking at setting up a **common electronic platform** for settling **health insurance claims**.
- The platform, which is expected to come up soon, will help standardise settlements and ensure that they are done within a specific period of time.
- IRDAI has already formed a committee on this, and the platform will be developed by the Insurance Information Bureau. The idea of forming this platform is (to ensure) that all are there on a single platform, that is the insurer, insured, and hospitals – and the claims will be processed on this platform.

Kotak Mahindra Bank gets RBI nod on promoters' stake dilution plan

- **Kotak Mahindra Bank** stated that the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has granted its final approval regarding the dilution of promoters' shareholding in the bank.
- Kotak Mahindra Bank stated that the bank decided to cap the promoters' voting rights to 15% from **April 1** onwards. The RBI gave its in-principle acceptance for reducing promoters' shareholding to **26%** of the paid-up voting equity share capital of the bank within six months from the date of final approval of the regulator.
- The regulator earlier insisted the **Kotak Mahindra Bank** promoters to cap their voting rights at **20%** by March 2020. The RBI had fined the Kotak Mahindra Bank **Rs. 2 crore** for violation of its norms.

NABARD sanctions over Rs 400 cr to boost infrastructure in J&K

- **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** has sanctioned an amount of over **400 crore rupees** to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir during the current financial year for giving boost to the **infrastructure** in the rural areas.
- An amount of **143.66 crore rupees** has been sanctioned for implementation of **38 water supply schemes**. The sanction includes augmentation of 27 existing water supply schemes and construction of 11 new water supply schemes.
- It includes construction of **Cattle Breeding Farm** at **Chatha Jammu**. NABARD has also sanctioned **209.87 crore rupees** for construction of 82 rural roads and 3 bridges earlier this year.
- The construction of roads and bridges would provide all weather improved connectivity to 461 remote villages. The funding is a part of the **NABARD's Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF)** which is aimed at augmenting rural infrastructure.

SBI Card, Landmark Group tie-up to launch retail co-branded credit cards

- **SBI Card** has partnered with **Landmark Group** to launch retail **co-branded credit cards**. Lifestyle Home Centre SBI Card, Max SBI Card, and Spar SBI Card were introduced in partnership with four Landmark brands – Lifestyle, Home Centre, Max, and Spar.
- The new co-brand cards are available in three variants – Base, SELECT and PRIME and cater to consumers across segments from value-for-money to premium to super-premium. PRIME variant cardholders can avail total savings of up to Rs 30,000 annually on this card. The joining and renewal fee for the Base variant is Rs 499 plus GST, SELECT variant is Rs 1,499 plus GST and PRIME variant is Rs 2,999 plus GST.

Axis Bank to explore long-term partnership with Max Life

- **Axis Bank**, along with **Max Financial Services Limited** and its subsidiary **Max Life Insurance**, have signed a confidentiality and exclusivity arrangement that will allow the private sector lender to explore the possibility of entering into a long-term strategic partnership with the life insurer.
- The arrangement has a three-month timeline. This is expected to give the private sector lender a greater foothold in the insurance sector, while **Max Financial Services** has been scouting for another shareholder for Max Life.
- Max Life is currently the largest non-bank-owned private life insurer in India. Max Financial Services holds a 72.5 per cent stake in Max Life, while Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance holds 25.5 per cent equity. Axis Bank owns 2 per cent stake in Max Life. Bancassurance deal
- Axis Bank and Max Life have had a bancassurance (banca) arrangement for nearly a decade, with the new premium generated estimated at more than Rs. 12,000 crore.

Central Bank of India plans to exit housing finance subsidiary

- **Central Bank of India** is looking to sell its entire **64.40 per cent** stake in its housing finance subsidiary — **Cent Bank Home Finance (CBHFL)**.
- The lender has floated a request for proposal (RFP) for appointing merchant bankers. The shortlisted bankers will help the lender scout for a potential investor to buy its stake in the mortgage financier.
- The bank holds 64.40 per cent in the unlisted housing finance company, while the remaining stake is held by **Housing & Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO)**, **Unit Trust of India (UTI)** and **National Housing Bank (NHB)**.
- The bank is facing operational curbs under the Reserve Bank's (RBI) prompt corrective action (PCA) framework.

NPCI launches 'UPI Chalega' campaign for payment mode to gain currency

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is keen to further popularise its flagship **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)**, which has clocked over **100 crore transactions** per month.
- NPCI, along with payment service providers, has co-created an industry campaign '**UPI Chalega**', to promote it as an easy, safe and instant mode of payment.
- The campaign is aimed to guide users towards the right use of UPI and help create a habitual change, to use UPI in their daily lives. The campaign also focusses on the safety aspects while transacting on UPI-enabled apps.
- The number of UPI transactions touched 130.5 crore last month, and the total amount transacted was at an all-time high of **Rs. 2.16-lakh crore**. As many as 144 banks are on the platform.

Bank of America expects RBI to build \$550-billion forex reserves

- Bank of America (BoFA) sees **\$550 billion** as a comfortable **foreign exchange (forex) reserve level** for the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and believes that the central bank will continue to accumulate dollars at every opportunity, even at the cost of a weaker rupee.

- RBI's forex reserves stood at \$476 billion. The central bank has bought \$49 billion in this fiscal year so far, more than offsetting the \$15.4 billion sale in 2018-19.
- According to BofA, the 'conservative' level of forex reserves for the RBI works out to be **\$550 billion**.
- According to BofA's economists **Indranil Sen Gupta** and **Aastha Gudwani**, there are three reasons to maintain more import cover, fully covering foreign portfolio investors' investments, and to maintain a healthy cover on short-term external debt of India.

Canara Bank 'Insta-Demat' facility

- **Canara Bank Securities Limited**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Canara Bank, has launched a facility to open 'Insta-Demat' accounts online, in association with the **National Securities Depositories Limited (NSDL)**.
- The NSDL Insta-Demat account facility can also be used by clients for various purposes, such as applying for an IPO and NFO. Involving zero paperwork, customers of Canara Bank can login through net banking or mobile banking application and open hassle-free online Insta-Demat accounts without submitting documents.

IRDAI sets up panel to examine whether life insurers can offer indemnity-based health policies

- **IRDAI** has set up a committee to examine whether life insurers can offer indemnity based health policies.
- IRDAI has now set up a **nine-member committee** led by **MR Kumar, Chairman, Life Insurance Corporation of India** to look into the issue.
- The committee will look into the feasibility and the business scope for Life insurance companies to offer indemnity based health insurance products and current statutory provisions that are applicable in this regard.
- It is expected to submit its recommendations within **two months**.
- IRDAI had allowed only general insurers and health insurers to offer individual health products with a minimum tenure of one year and a maximum tenure of **three years**, provided that the premium remains unchanged for the tenure.

Finance Secretary launches Baroda Startup Banking in 15 cities

- Finance Secretary **Rajiv Kumar** inaugurated **Baroda Startup Banking**, an initiative aimed at making the bank a preferred banking partner for the start-up community and establishing connect with at least 2,000 start-ups over the next two years.
- The initiative was launched simultaneously across 15 cities in the country.
- It will include **15 Baroda Startup** branches that will offer a bouquet of tailor-made banking products and services.

Government to stick to April 1 deadline for amalgamation of 10 PSBs

- The Modi Government intends to stick to the **April 1** deadline for amalgamation of 10 public sector banks (PSBs) into four units. Meanwhile, the Union Cabinet is likely to consider next week a formal proposal for the amalgamation.
- The government proposes amalgamation of **Oriental Bank of Commerce** and **United Bank of India** into **Punjab National Bank**, **Syndicate Bank** into **Canara Bank**, **Andhra Bank** and **Corporation Bank** into **Union Bank of India** and **Allahabad Bank** into **Indian Bank**. The boards of all the concerned banks have already given 'in-principal' approval to this process.

IndiGo, HDFC Bank tie-up to launch co-branded credit card with Mastercard

- **IndiGo airlines** has **partnered with HDFC Bank** to **launch its first travel credit card**.

- Called 'Ka-ching', it is powered by Mastercard and comes in two variants – 6E Rewards and 6E Rewards XL – and also offers complimentary air tickets.
- "Customers can avail complimentary air tickets worth between ₹1,500 and ₹3,000, depending on the variant," HDFC Bank said in a statement, adding that the credit cards will allow customers to accrue accelerated 6E Rewards on IndiGo transactions.

Bharti AXA General uses WhatsApp to deliver policy, renewal premium notices

- **Bharti AXA General Insurance**, stated it has started delivering policies and premium renewal notices to its customers through **WhatsApp**.
- It also plans to soon start selling private car, two-wheeler and travel insurance through the WhatsApp chatbot.
- The company claims to be the first among non-life insurers in India to introduce the entire bouquet of service initiatives — such as policy documents, renewal notices and claim intimation — through the WhatsApp chatbot, an intuitive and user-friendly chat structure where customers can raise requests through numeric inputs.

NABARD estimates Rs 34,421 crore credit potential for Chhattisgarh

- The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) projected a credit potential of **Rs 34421.38 crore** for **Chhattisgarh** in the financial year 2020-21.
- The State Focus Paper (SFP) that was released by Panchayat and Rural Development Minister T S Singhdeo at the state credit seminar noted that the theme for financial year 2020-21 had been "**Hi-tech agriculture practices.**"
- NABARD Chief General Manager M Soren informed that the total credit potential for Chhattisgarh for the financial year 2020-21 is Rs 3977.59 crore ahead of previous year's projection of **Rs 30443.79 crore**.
- Highlight of the credit potential for total agriculture sector for 2020-21 is projected at Rs 19579.13 crore, of which an amount of Rs 13227.37 crore has been assessed under crop production, maintenance and marketing.

ICICI Bank Launches iBox, a 24X7 Self-Service Delivery Facility for Customers

- ICICI Bank Ltd has launched '**iBox**', a 24x7 self-service delivery facility that allows its customers to collect their deliverables such as debit card, credit card, cheque book and returned-cheques.
- The Bank has introduced the facility, called 'iBox', at over 50 branches in 17 cities in the country. This facility is especially useful for customers who are not available at home to receive their package during working hours.
- The 'iBox' terminals have been stationed outside the premises of the Bank's branches, which are accessible beyond the official hours.
- It is equipped with a one-time passcode (OTP) based authentication system for enhanced security and can be accessed by customers using their registered mobile number 24X7, on all days including holidays.
- The branches, which presently house the iBox terminals are located in close proximity to important business centres in major Indian cities including Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Navi Mumbai, Surat, Jaipur, Indore, Bhopal, Lucknow, Nagpur, Amritsar, Ludhiana and Panchkula.

Indian Bank launches tailor made credit products for textile

- Indian Bank announced the launch of two tailor-made credit products for the benefit of the textile sector.
- The products -- **Corporate Loan** and **Ind Surya Shakthi/ Indian Bank Solar** -- would be available for all textile units across the country.
- The Corporate Loan, to be offered at 'affordable' interest rates, will help industries meet their working capital requirements while Surya shakthi is a Term Loan for setting up roof-top solar power plants for captive consumption which will give a thrust to the renewable energy utilisation culture in the textile sector.

- Indian Bank will become the seventh largest PSU banks in the country with a pan-India presence through 6,200 branches and a total business of over Rs.8.50 lakh crore

Bank of Baroda signed pact with CARE Ratings to assess the credit quality of SMEs

- Bank of Baroda stated it has signed a pact with **Care Ratings** to assess credit quality of its **small and medium enterprises (SME) customers**.
- The rating agency will evaluate the credit quality of existing and prospective SME customers of the bank.
- The biggest challenge for SMEs has been the availability of finance.
- If they don't receive financial support from banks, they typically tend to fall back on either the promoter's own savings or borrowings from family and friends.
- Care Ratings will assess the SMEs by processing and analyzing structured, unstructured and new data streams.
- It will also indicate the relative creditworthiness of SMEs based on an eight-point scale, where 1 indicates the highest creditworthiness and 8 – poor creditworthiness.

Insurance on bank deposits hiked to Rs 5 lakh

- FM Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech proposed to hike the bank deposit insurance in scheduled commercial banks to **Rs 5 lakh per depositor** from the current **Rs 1 lakh**.
- The long-overdue move comes only several incidents, the prominent being a fraud of **Rs 4,355 crore** unfolded at Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank, created a sort of panic among investors.
- The FM, however, stated that there is a robust mechanism in place to monitor the health of all scheduled commercial banks and all depositors money is absolutely safe in the country.

Banks, select financial institutions report frauds involving Rs.1.13 lakh crore in H1 of FY20: Sitharaman

- Frauds involving **Rs.1,13,374 crore** were reported by banks and select financial institutions in the first half of the current financial year. 'Framework for timely detection, reporting, investigation relating to large value bank frauds' for public sector banks (PSBs) to deal with suspected frauds involving sums of money in excess of **Rs.50 crore**.
- This is reflected in the increased amount involved in frauds of RS.1 lakh and above, reported by scheduled commercial banks and select financial institutions, from Rs.23,934 crore in the financial year 2016-17 to \square 41,167 crore in 2017-18, 71,543 crore in 2018-19, and Rs.1,13,374 crore in the first half of the current financial year.

LIC new biz premium crosses Rs 1.5L-cr-mark

- Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) stated its new business premium has crossed the **Rs1.5-lakh-crore-mark** for the first time, helping the national insurer improve market share to 77.61 per cent. Its's total income grew by 17.79 per cent to Rs2,97,017.28 crore as of September 2019 from Rs2,52,149.60 crore a year ago, chairman MR Kumar said.
- Total assets of the corporation increased by 7.92 per cent to Rs32,25,905.42 crore as of September 2019 from Rs29,89,276.53 crore, he added. The milestone was led by first year individual new premium, which as of January has expanded by 17.48 per cent, while the number of new policies sold jumped 29.42 per cent to Rs45,199 crore, taking the total policies sold to 1,95,85,635.
- This vertical has contributed Rs1,05,566 crore as new business premium income as against Rs 66,748 crore in the previous year. The vertical has covered 2.45 crore lives as of January under its social security schemes.

Rs. 2,500-crore capital boost for three state-owned general insurers approved

- The Union Cabinet gave its in-principle nod for immediate capital infusion of **Rs. 2,500 crore** in three state-owned general insurers — **Oriental Insurance Company Ltd (OICL)**, **National Insurance Company Ltd (NICL)** and **United India Insurance Company Ltd (UIICL)**.

- The capital infusion comes ahead of their proposed merger by the end of March. It may be recalled that the Budget had set aside **Rs. 6,950 crore** for recapitalisation of the three state-owned general insurers.
- The immediate release of Rs. 2,500 crore is in the light of the critical financial position and breach of regulatory solvency requirements of the three insurers.

Star Health launches outpatient care policy

- **Star Health and Allied Insurance Company Ltd** unveiled its **Outpatient Care policy**, covering consultation, tests and medical bills, among others.
- The policy is for customers in the age group of 18 to 50 years and also covers dependent children up to the age of 25 years. A maximum of **six members** of a family can avail the policy.
- The policy term is for one year, and it is available as individual and also family floater plan.
- Various plans are on offer with a sum insured options available up to **Rs one lakh**.
- The policy covers diagnostics, physiotherapy, pharmacy expenses as well as ophthalmic treatment arising out of any accidental injuries, the release added.

Revision Points

Name of the Organization	Headquarters	Head of the Organization
Reserve Bank of India	Mumbai	Shaktikanta Das
Paytm	Noida	Vijay Shekhar Sharma (Founder)
Kotak Mahindra Bank	Mumbai	Uday Kotak
Allahabad Bank	Kolkata	K Ramachandran (Executive Director)
NABARD	Mumbai	Harsh Kumar Bhanala
SBI Card	Gurugram	Hardayal Prasad
IRDAI	Hyderabad	Subhash Chandra Khuntia
Axis Bank	Mumbai	Rakesh Makhija
Securities and Exchange Board of India	Mumbai	Ajay Tyagi
Central Bank of India	Mumbai	Pallav Mohapatra
NPCI	Mumbai	Dilip Asbe
State Bank of India	Mumbai	Rajnish Kumar
Paytm Payments Bank	Noida	Satish Kumar Gupta
Bank of America	Charlotte, USA	Brian Moynihan
Bombay Stock Exchange	Mumbai	Ashish Chauhan
ICICI Bank	Mumbai	Sandeep Bakshi
Andhra Bank	Hyderabad	J Packirisamy
Bharti Axa General Insurance	Mumbai	Vikas Seth
Canara Bank	Bengaluru	Lingam Venkat Prabhakar
Oriental Bank of Commerce	Gurugram	Mukesh Kumar Jain
United Bank of India	Kolkata	Ashok Kumar Pradha

Punjab National Bank	New Delhi	S.S. Mallikarjuna Rao
Syndicate Bank	Manipal	Mrutyunjay Mahapatra
Corporation Bank	Mangalore	PV Bharathi
Union Bank of India	Mumbai	Rajkiran Rai G
Indian Bank	Chennai	Padmaja Chunduru
Bank of Baroda	Vadodara	Hasmukh Adhia
Oriental Insurance Company	New Delhi	Girija Kumar A.V.
National Insurance Company	Kolkata	Tajinder Mukherjee
United India Insurance Company	Chennai	Girish Radhakrishnan
Life Insurance Corporation of India	Mumbai	M R Kumar
Master card	Harrison, USA	Ajaypal Singh Banga

Important Financial & Economy Affairs

ORGANISATION	GDP RATE	
	2019 – 20 (FY20)	2020 – 21(FY21)
Fitch Ratings		5.6%
National Council of Applied Economic Research	4.9%	
Moody's	5.4% (2020)	5.8%
EIU	6.1% (2020)	

Nasscom's IT revenue grows at 7.7 per cent in FY20

- The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) projected the Indian IT sector to grow **7.7 per cent** to reach **\$191 billion** in FY20, with exports reaching \$147 billion.
- This is a marginal improvement over its prediction of 2018, when it said that the IT sector will only grow by 6.1 per cent but the sector is still 'cautiously optimistic' about FY21, the industry body pointed out.
- While the global economy has been moving at a sluggish pace, Indian economy only grew at **4.8 per cent** and exports stood at **\$644 billion**.

GST collection for last 3-months amounted to over Rs 1 lakh cr each month

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has stated that GST collection all through the country for the **last three months** amounted to **more than a lakh crore rupees** each month.
- The Government has allocated **two lakh 83 thousand crore** rupees for the development of rural areas and agriculture by way of 16 salient points.
- She stated that the architectural museum of **Adicha nallur** mentioned in budget was done with the suggestion from Tamilnadu Government. Keezhadi, another architectural site has been developed further by the State Government.

India GDP grew 4.7 per cent in Q3

- The Indian economy grew **4.7 per cent** in the third quarter ended December 31, 2019, the **National Statistics Office**.
- Core sector grows by **2.2%** in January as power generation picks up.
- The first quarter GDP growth for this fiscal has been revised upwards to **5.6 per cent**, from the 5.1 per cent estimated earlier. The second quarter GDP growth for the current fiscal has also been revised upwards to **5.1 per cent** from **4.5 per cent** announced earlier.

EIU lowers global growth forecast for 2020

- The **Economist Intelligence Unit** has revised downwards its global growth forecast for 2020 to **2.2%** from **2.3%**. This impact because of Novel coronavirus outbreak in China and also the virus starts spreading globally.
- EIU also revised China's growth downwards by lowering the real GDP (Gross Domestic Product) forecast for China in 2020 to **5.4 per cent** from **5.9 per cent** earlier.
- EIU also estimated the GDP growth for India to **6.1 per cent** for 2020 from 4.9 per cent estimated for the year 2019, Low-interest rate in India will increase the demand and Investment in 2020.

Simplified tax compliance regime to be rolled out by April 1: Nirmala Sitharaman

- FM Nirmala Sitharaman stated that **simplified tax compliance regime** will be rolled out by **April 1st**, 2020. Addressing economists and experts as part of Jan Jan Ka Budget held in **Hyderabad** the minister directed senior officials to conduct district level interactions in person to clear all GST related issues of traders and industry people.
- The Finance Minister also stated, the state governments are also on board with the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) and the state governments also have the responsibility to create awareness about GST. The Finance Minister stated that many aspects have been taken into consideration before imposing cess and taxes in the Budget 2020-21.

Govt to facilitate doubling of milk processing capacity by 2025

- Union Government will facilitate doubling of milk processing capacity from over **53 million tonne** to **108 million tonne** by **2025**. The government is continuously working towards increasing milk productivity through genetic improvement and reduction of input cost.
- In India, milk production is growing by **6.4 per cent** during the last five years and has increased from over **146 million tonne** in 2014-15 to over **187 million Tonne** in 2018-19.
- Out of the marketable surplus available with farmers, only 36 per cent is handled by cooperative and private sector.
- A special programme has also been launched recently for improvement of milk quality by providing required testing facilities at village and dairy plant level for safe human consumption.

SEBI decides to permit the use of regulatory sandbox

- **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has decided to permit the use of regulatory sandbox, a system that will allow live testing of new products, services and business models by market players on select customers. The decision was taken at SEBI's board meeting held in **Mumbai**.
- The proposed '**regulatory sandbox**' is intended to serve as a testing ground for new business models and technologies that benefit investors, Indian markets and the economy at large.

Special Economic Zones continue to take lead in expanding exports

- The Special Economic Zones, SEZ continue to take the lead in expanding the exports for the country.
- SEZs in India have shown resilience and have achieved **100 billion dollar** worth of exports so far.
- Sectors that saw healthy growth in this financial year include gems and jewelry, trading and Logistics, leather and footwear, non-conventional energy, textiles and garments.

- Petrochemicals constitute a major segment of SEZ exports, however, growth was muted in this segment this year which may be attributed to the softening of global crude prices. There are 241 SEZs operational in the country

US surpasses China to become India's top trading partner

- The **United States** has surpassed **China** to become **India's top trading partner**. According to the Commerce Ministry data, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at nearly **88 billion dollars** in 2018-19 fiscal. During the period, India's trade with **China** was at **87.1 billion dollars**.
- Similarly, during April-December 2019-20, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at **68 billion dollars** against a nearly 65 billion dollars trade with China in the same period.
- In 2018-19, India has a trade surplus of 16.9 billion dollars with America, while it has a deficit of 53.6 billion dollars with the neighbouring country. The data showed that China was India's top trading partner since 2013-14 till 2017-18.

GSTN launches new toll-free number for helpdesk

- The **Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)** stated it has launched a new toll-free number for GST helpdesk, which will be operational 365 days for answering queries related to the indirect tax.
- The GSTN stated it has revamped GST helpdesk by introducing new features to improve taxpayers' experience by making the system more robust and transparent.
- The GSTN has come up with a new GST help desk toll-free calling number '**1800 103 4786**'. The caller may call on this number on 365 days in a year from 9 am to 9 pm.
- With the introduction of the toll-free number, the existing contact number for the GST helpdesk (0120-24888999) has been discontinued, the GSTN added.
- Further, 10 new languages were introduced on helpdesk. Till now, taxpayers had a facility to interact with the GST helpdesk agents in Hindi and English.
- Now they can interact in 10 other Indian languages -- Bengali, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati, Kannada, Odia, Malayalam, Punjabi and Assamese.
- Further, an improved version of Grievance Redressal Portal too has been launched. The GST helpdesk receives average 8,000 to 10,000 calls every day.

Gross GST collection for January cross Rs 1 lakh cr

- In January, **GST collection** has been reported by Finance Ministry. GST revenues during the month of January from domestic transactions showed a growth of **12%** over the revenue during the month last year.
- Taking into account the IGST collected from imports of goods, total revenue during January this year has increased. It has gone up by **8%** in comparison to revenue during same time last year.
- This is the **sixth time** during the current financial year that GST revenue has crossed **1 lakh crore** rupees.

E-commerce companies to collect 1 per cent TDS from sellers under new levy

- The government proposed a new levy of **one per cent TDS** (tax deducted at source) on **e-commerce** transactions, a move that could increase burden on sellers on such platforms.
- In order to widen and deepen the tax net by bringing participants of e-commerce (sellers) within tax net, it is proposed to insert a **new section 194-O** in the Act so as to provide for a new levy of TDS at the rate of one per cent, as per 2020-21 Budget documents.

- Also, consequential amendments are being proposed in section 197 (for lower TDS), in section 204 (to define person responsible for paying any sum) and in section 206AA (to provide for tax deduction at 5 per cent in non-PAN/Aadhaar cases). The amendment will take effect from **April 1, 2020**.
- This provision will not apply in cases where the seller's gross amount of sales during the previous year through the e-commerce operator is less than **Rs 5 lakh** and has furnished his **PAN** or **Aadhaar number**.

Analysts foresee 4.5 to 4.7 per cent GDP growth in 3rd quarter

- India's GDP growth in the October-December quarter of the financial year 2018-19 will likely print at **4.5-4.7 per cent**, according to researchers.
- As per SBI Research's composite leading indicator, which analyses inputs from 33 various indicators, growth will remain flat in Q3, at 4.5 per cent clocked in Q2; ICRA believes third-quarter GDP may settle at around 4.7 per cent led by a modest uptick in services, industry and agricultural growth.
- However, SBI revised its FY20 estimate upwards to 4.7 from 4.6 per cent projected earlier, because of the base effect triggered by a downward revision in the FY19 growth number.

Government allocates Rs 100 crore to host G-20 Presidency in 2022

- FM Nirmala Sitharaman stated India will host the **G-20 Presidency in 2022** and **Rs 100 crore** has been allocated for this purpose.
- India would be able to drive the global economic and development agenda, the Finance Minister stated while presenting the Budget for 2020-21 in Parliament.
- India will host **G-20 Presidency in the year 2022** - the year of **75th anniversary** of independence of Indian Nation.
- India would be able to drive considerably the global economic and development agenda during this presidency.
- **The G20 (or Group of Twenty)** is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from **19 countries** and the **European Union (EU)**.

PSUs owe telecom ministry Rs. 2.65 lakh crore: MoS Sanjay Dhotre

- Public sector companies owe the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** around **Rs. 2.65 lakh crore**, with **GAIL India** alone owing around 65 per cent of the total amount, Minister of State for Telecom and IT Sanjay Dhotre told Parliament.
- The department has raised a demand notice to recover the due from **10 public sector undertakings (PSUs)**.
- According to details shared by the minister, five public sector units owe DoT over **99 per cent** of the total demand raised.
- This includes a demand of Rs. 1,72,655.73 crore from GAIL India, Rs. 48,489.26 crore from Oil India, Rs. 22,062.65 crore from Powergrid Corporation of India, Rs.15,019.97 crore from Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilizers and Chemicals and Rs. 5,481.52 crore from Delhi Metro Rail Corporation of India.
- The DoT has also raised a demand of Rs. 842.02 crore from NICS, Rs. 307.26 crore from RailTel Corporation of India, Rs. 90.22 crore from Software Technology Parks Of India, Rs. 47.09 crore from Etnet India Ltd and Rs. 65.44 crore from Tamil Nadu Arasu Cable TV.
- The government has directed the licence holders to make the payments in accordance with the Supreme Court's order dated October 24, 2019, and submit requisite documents within the stipulated time frame.
- Leading telcos Bharti Airtel and Vodafone had last month told the DoT that they would not pay their total AGR dues of Rs.88,624 crore by January 23, the deadline, and will comply with the outcome of modification petition filed before the Supreme Court.

- **Reliance Jio**, the largest telco in terms of subscriber base, however, paid Rs. 195 crore to the DoT to clear all adjusted gross revenue dues accounted till January 31, 2020.

Income tax dept launches e-calculator to compare due tax under new, old regime

- The Income-Tax Department has launched an **e-calculator** for individuals to estimate their tax liability if they opt for the new tax slabs, without claiming deductions and exemptions, for ITR filing as announced in the recent Budget, officials .
- The calculator, with a comparative table to compare taxes in the old and the new tax regime, for resident individuals (financial year 2020-21) has been hosted on the official **e-filing website** of the department.
- The web portal is used for filing of electronic income tax returns (ITRs) by individuals and various other categories of taxpayers.
- Taxpayers in three age categories of normal citizen (below 60 years), senior citizen (60-79 years) and super senior citizen (above 79 years) can punch in their estimated annual income from all sources, total eligible deductions and exemptions to see what will be their total taxable income if they continue in the old regime or opt for the new one.
- The calculator takes into account eligible exemptions and deductions, as proposed under the new regime, after being extracted from the Budget memorandum 2020.
- In the new personal income tax regime, as proposed by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech on February 1, 5 per cent tax is levied on an annual income between Rs.2.5 lakh to Rs. 5 lakh. The tax rate rises to 10 per cent, 15 per cent, 20 per cent and 25 per cent for every Rs. 2.5 lakh addition. A 30 per cent tax is charged for income over Rs. 15 lakh.
- The old or the existing income tax rate regime allows a standard deduction of Rs. 50,000 and investment of Rs.1.5 lakh in saving schemes with a rate of 5 per cent, 10 per cent or 30 per cent tax depending on various income levels.

Important Business News

Facebook to provide digital literacy training to one lakh women in seven Indian states

- Facebook launched its '**We Think Digital**' programme, under which the social media giant will provide digital literacy training to **1 lakh women** across seven states, including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar.
- In partnership with National Commission for Women (NCW) and Cyber Peace Foundation, the program aims to provide digital literacy training to **one lakh women** across seven states through the year. The programme will start with the state of Uttar Pradesh and expand to other states including Assam, West Bengal Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Bihar, it added.
- We Think Digital, Facebook's global digital literacy programme, was announced in 2019 during the second edition of its South Asia Safety Summit

Accenture opens innovation hub in Pune

- Accenture opened its third '**innovation hub**' in the country at Pune, which will house 1,200 people working on various technologies.
- Bengaluru and Hyderabad are the other Indian cities having the hubs, which are also present in two cities of Brazil, and one each in Canada, China, Finland, Japan, Switzerland, Australia and Singapore.
- The hub at Pune, located at SP Infocity, will also feature Accenture's **second Nano Lab** in the Asia-Pacific region.

- The hub will enable clients to scale their technology investments and boost their business outcomes across the enterprise, and also create new opportunities for local talent, Bhaskar Ghosh, the group chief executive for Accenture Technology Services.
- The Nano Lab will showcase breakthroughs in applied research from Accenture Labs worldwide, featuring uses for advanced technologies such as **artificial intelligence**, extended reality and quantum computing .

MeitY grants Rs. 44 lakh to 8 Warangal start-ups under TIDE scheme

- Warangal-based **SRiX** has disbursed grant-in-aid worth **₹44 lakh** to eight start-ups under the **Technology Incubation and Development of Entrepreneurs (TIDE) 2.0 scheme**. The scheme runs under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- SR Innovation Exchange (SRiX) is a designated TIDE 2.0 centre at SR Engineering College in Warangal. The TIDE scheme promotes start-ups in engineering colleges in the areas of internet of things (IoT), artificial intelligence, blockchain and robotics.
- The list of start-ups that received the grant includes **Varaha Innovation Studios and Technologies**, Youcode intelligence Solutions, Oakmont RSM Info Solutions and Viben QR Innovations, Sreedevi Devireddy, Chief Executive Officer of SR Innovation Exchange.

Realme PaySa partners NPCI, HDFC Bank

- **Realme PaySa** has joined hand with **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**, an innovative solutions provider for retail payment systems, and the country's largest private lender **HDFC Bank** to conduct **UPI hackathon**.
- These leading organisations will judge the most promising UPI solution in a finale held in Mumbai. The winner and the runner-up of the hackathon will have their innovative solutions implemented for Realme PaySa and win Rs 10 lakh and Rs 5 lakh respectively.

IRCTC to launch Kashi Mahakal Express train

- The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (**IRCTC**) is all set to introduce **third corporate train**, which will ply between **Varanasi and Indore**.
- The train -- **Kashi Mahakal Express** was inaugurated on February 16. Its commercial run will begin from March 19, 2020.
- This superfast air-conditioned train will connect three **Jyotirlinga - Omkareshwar, Mahakaleshwar and Kashi Vishwanath** besides also connecting the industrial and educational hub of Indore and Bhopal.
- The train will operate thrice a week between Varanasi and Indore via Ujjain, Sant Hiradnagar, Bina, Jhansi, Kanpur, Lucknow/Prayagraj and Sultanpur.
- Besides, every passenger travelling on the train will be covered with complimentary travel insurance of **Rs 10 lakh** during the journey.

Microsoft to set up engineering, innovation hub in Noida

- **Microsoft** has set up a new development centre in **Noida**, its third such facility in India that will serve as an engineering and innovation hub for the company.
- The **India Development Centre (IDC)** represents Microsoft's strategy of globally shared development to build products and services for driving digital innovation.
- The IDC-NCR will play a critical role in Microsoft India's expansion and growth story. The facility will open opportunities for thousands of engineers, with plans to expand to a full-fledged development centre, similar to IDC facilities in Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

Rs 1,931 crore Nabard loan for Chintalapudi LIS

- **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard)** has sanctioned `1,931 crore as a term loan to the **Andhra Pradesh Water Resources Development Corporation (APWRDC)** for the completion of **Chintalapudi Lift Irrigation Scheme** in **West Godavari** and **Krishna districts**.
- The financial assistance has been made under the **Nabard Infrastructure Development Assistance (NIDA)**.
- The project was expected to be completed by March 2022. The **Chintalapudi Lift Irrigation Scheme** covers **410 villages** in **15 mandals** of **West Godavari** and **18 mandals** in **Krishna district**.

Fintech startup Lendingkart partners with Northern Arc Capital

- **LendingKart Technologies** Private Limited has announced a full-stack co-lending partnership with **Non-Banking Finance Company, Northern Arc Capital** to disburse over **Rs 100 crore** as **working capital** to **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**.
- The loans disbursed under the new partnership will enable MSMEs to borrow digitally without any manual intervention in data and information flow, bureau check and document verification and validation to credit decisioning and customer funding.

Free platform ticket for 30 squats at Delhi's Anand Vihar railway station

- Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal notified the installation of a **novel ticket vending machine** at **Delhi 's Anand Vihar station**. Named as the '**squat machine**,' this machine allows passengers to get a platform ticket for free in exchange for performing 30 squats in **180 seconds**.
- Indian Railways has installed a squat machine at the **Anand Vihar station** and **30 squats** in front of it will generate a free platform ticket.
- As part of the health initiative, the railways has also opened a "**Dawa Dost**" store at the station, a **generic medicine store for passengers**.
- The railways has also installed a **Robocura massage chair**, the most advanced body massage chair that has **3D massage rollers**, along with a longer massage track line giving maximum massage coverage.
- To promote healthy eating, the railways has also created a "**Eat Right Station Certification**", the main objective of which is to help passengers make healthy food choices. The station is the first '**Eat Right Station**' under the **Northern Railway**.

Microsoft, SBI Foundation to upskill youth with disabilities for BFSI jobs

- **Microsoft** has collaborated with **SBI Foundation** to create opportunities in the **banking and financial services and insurance (BFSI) sector**, for **youth with disabilities**.
- Under the initiative, the two organisations will upskill 500 youth for BFSI jobs across Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Delhi-NCR.
- The programme will be driven in collaboration with various government agencies, industry skilling bodies and non-profits. As a part of this effort, both the companies will develop an AI-powered marketplace that will enable the BFSI industry to better connect with people having disabilities (to upskill them).

PhonePe to create world's biggest ATM network of 2 mn in India by year end

- PhonePe says it will by the end of this year create an **Automated Teller Machine (ATM) network of 2 million users**, helping the Walmart-owned service to fight rivals Alibaba-backed Paytm, Google Pay and Amazon Pay as they compete in India's crowded digital payments market.

- The service—billed as India's first and world's largest—enables neighbourhood stores to act as ATMs for PhonePe users. It had a pilot run in Delhi-NCR and is now being rolled out across 500,000 shops in 300 cities.
- The **PhonePe app** to locate shops offering the ATM service and then click the "withdraw" button to transfer an amount to the merchant. Once the amount is transferred, the merchant gives the customer cash equal to the amount transferred.
- PhonePe will not charge for the service and it has set a withdrawal limit of **Rs 1,000** for now.

All-in-One Android PoS device unveiled by Paytm

- India's largest payments platform **Paytm** (owned by One97 Communications) has announced the launch of an **All-in-One Android PoS device** for merchant partners across the country.
- This device helps merchants to accept payments through Paytm Wallet, UPI-based apps, debit and credit cards and, most importantly, cash.

Instamojo buys digital commerce platform GetMeAShop for \$5 million

- **Instamojo** has acquired **GetMeAShop**, a digital commerce platform for **MSMEs**, for **\$5 million** in an equity deal. This acquisition, which is its first since inception in 2012, will allow Instamojo to branch into software offerings.
- Launched as a payment gateway for **micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)**, Instamojo later branched into an e-commerce platform for merchants to list and sell their products and services online. Over the past five quarters, Instamojo also introduced credit products and logistics services — **mojoCapital** and **MojoXPress**, respectively.
- As part of the deal, the company aims to expand its digital solution offerings to empower its **1.2 million**-strong merchant base.

India bans exports of all kinds of personal protection equipment

- India has banned exports of all kinds of **personal protection equipment**, including clothing and masks used to protect people from **air borne particles**.
- The move assumes significance as there could be a spurt in demand for such products due to outbreak of novel Coronavirus that has claimed more than 200 lives in China while the number of confirmed cases reached near 10 thousand.

Amazon partners Eastern Railway to have pick-up kiosks at Sealdah

- Amazon India has partnered with the **Eastern Railway** to set up a **pick-up kiosk** (for packages) at **Sealdah Railway Station** in **Kolkata**.
- Sealdah is one of the busiest railway stations in the country, with a daily footfall of nearly 2 million. In 2019, as a pilot, Amazon India partnered with the Indian Railways to launch pick-up kiosks in four railway stations across Mumbai.
- The pick-up kiosks enable the company to provide a secure and convenient delivery option for Amazon customers in the region who want to pick up their packages either at the time of commuting or even while going on or coming in from vacation.

HCL to set up global delivery center in Colombo

- **HCL Technologies** stated it has entered into a pact with **Sri Lanka's** Board of Investment for setting up a global delivery Centre in **Colombo**.

- HCL Technologies (HCL) aims at boosting employment, providing resources and skilling the local talent to serve its global clients .
- Collaborating with the **BOI of Sri Lanka**, HCL's local entity — HCL Technologies Lanka (Private) Ltd will implement its '**Work Integrated Education Program**' to foster growth by actively cooperating with local information and communications technology (ICT) and engineering institutions to develop and train the island's talent pool.

Tech Mahindra launches Blockchain accelerator

- **Tech Mahindra (TechM)** and the **Telangana government** have launched **T-Block Accelerator**, the maiden accelerator programme for the newly-created Telangana '**Blockchain District**'.
- About **25 start-ups** would be inducted for the **accelerator programme**. Of these, five will be selected for the next phase of mentorship. IBC Media, an innovation management company, will run the programme.
- Blockchain would generate an annual business value of over **\$3 trillion** by **2030**.

WhatsApp gets NCPI nod to launch digital payments platform WhatsApp Pay, say reports

- WhatsApp will soon be able to roll out its digital payments platform **WhatsApp Pay** in India.
- Facebook-owned messaging platform finally received the go-ahead from the **National Payments Corporation of India** to roll out its services in phases. The platform had received RBI's approval as well after ensuring authorities that it will comply with data localisation norms.
- The platform which is a unified payments service allows users to make payments across Facebook-owned platforms including WhatsApp and Instagram without having to exit the app.
- The company had also introduced a '**shopping catalogue**' feature on WhatsApp in November 2019 for users in Brazil, Germany, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Britain and the US.

US-based healthcare major Providence sets up Global Innovation Centre in Hyderabad

- Providence inaugurated its **global innovation centre** in **India** with plans to invest up to \$100 million and induct more than 2,000 technologists.
- This is the \$26 billion-company's first development centre outside the US. It plans to start with 350 techies within a year and gradually ramp it to over 2,000 centre within 3-4 years.
- **Murali Krishna**, Senior Vice-President and Country Manager, Providence India, who joins from Microsoft, will head the global innovation centre. The centre will focus on engineering, data intelligence, digital innovation, professional services, cyber security, application development and tech support.

Poonawalla Fin and Capital Float tie-up to provide loans to MSMEs

- **Poonawalla Finance**, part of the **\$9.8-billion** Cyrus Poonawalla Group, has partnered with **Capital Float** to deliver working capital financing to Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) across India.
- Both companies will co-lend on Capital Float's co-origination model to deliver last-mile credit to MSMEs.
- Poonawala Finance, which started operations in April 2019, has already crossed AUM of Rs.1,500 crore, and is one of the most well-capitalised NBFCs in the country.
- Poonawalla Finance and Capital Float have set a target to disburse more than **Rs.500 crore** over the next 12 months, with a monthly run rate of Rs.50 crore. Poonawalla Finance's systems will be fully integrated with Capital Float's co-origination platform through APIs to facilitate faster disbursals.

Amazon to set up two data centres in Telangana with USD 1.6 billion investment

- Amazon in **Telangana** has sought environmental clearance for the construction of two data centres at a cost of Rs 11,624 crore (\$1.6 billion).

- The data centres are expected to come up at two locations on the outskirts of Hyderabad in Ranga Reddy district. More than 90 per cent of the investment would go towards the high-end computer and storage equipment that would be housed at these two data centres.
- They would help in developing an Amazon Web Services region in Telangana. While one data centre is proposed at **Chandanvelly** village in **Shabad mandal**, the other is proposed at **Meerkhanpet** village in **Kandukur mandal**, which is already part of the land parcel under Hyderabad Pharma City project of the State government.

Important State Wise National News

List of Festivals

Festival	Venue	Organized by/Inaugurated By
21 st edition of Kala Ghoda	Mumbai	-
Antahpragnya 2020 (India's biggest rural technical festival)	Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies-Basar	-
Hornbill Festival	Tripura	Biplab Kumar Deb
Losar Festival	Himachal Pradesh	-
Goa Carnival	Panaji	-
Bharat – Bangla Paryatan Utsav Tourism Festival	Agartala	-
8 th edition of Ganga Kayak Festival	Uttarakand	--
Seed Sowing Festival 'Lui-Ngai-Ni'	Manipur	-

Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh CM Jagan to launch hospital Nadu-Nedu

- **'Nadu - Nedu'** (Now and then) in hospitals, a scheme initiated by the State government to upgrade facilities in government hospitals for ensuring quality medical treatment to patients, launched by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in Kurnool.
- The government plans to spend **`11,737 crore** for the implementation of Nadu-Nedu in hospitals in three phases in the next three years. Besides upgrading the infrastructure in the existing hospitals, the government has also decided to construct new hospitals wherever required.
- In the first phase, the government will spend **`1,129 crore** for setting up 7,548 Health and Wellness centres (sub-centres). In the second phase, It is estimated to spend **`1,907 crore** under the second phase.

- In the third and final phase, the government will spend `8,701 crore for taking a mammoth exercise of strengthening the District Hospitals and Teaching Hospitals and construction of superspeciality hospitals, medical and nursing colleges.
- Apart from construction of seven medical colleges in Vizianagaram, Eluru, Paderu, Gurazala, Markapuram,

Andhra govt launches doorstep pension distribution scheme

- Andhra Pradesh Government has initiated a doorstep pension delivery scheme across the state, under which, various welfare pensions is being delivered at the doorstep of the pensioners.
- **"YSR Pension Kanuka"** initiative to end the struggles of old people who find it difficult to go to the pension office.
- Also, the age for old age pensioners (OAP) has been reduced from **65 to 60 years**. With the increase in the pensioners, the list of beneficiaries has gone up to 54.64 lakh this year.
- The Disabled Pensions (DP) will be Rs 3,000 per month, while the CKDU/Dialysis Pensions will receive **Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 per month**.
- The volunteers equipped with smartphones and with biometric information of the beneficiaries will deliver the pension at the doorsteps for greater transparency.

Energy department sanctions Rs 740 crore

- The Energy Department has sanctioned **Rs 740 crore** towards letter of credit (LoC) to be given to central generating stations (CGSs) and other generators for the month of February. The department has also sanctioned another Rs **432.6 crore** to be paid as interest for various series of **Andhra Pradesh** Power Finance Corporation bonds.
- According to a series of orders issued by Energy secretary Srikanth Nagulapalli, the government has given administrative sanction for LoC to ensure uninterrupted power. The payment will be made to CGSs and other generators against the subsidy payable to APSPDCL and APEPDCL in the ratio of 61% APSPDCL: 39% APEPDCL, the order (RT 12) said.

CM Jagan Mohan Reddy opens Andhra's first Disha police station at Rajamahendravaram

- Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy inaugurated the **first Disha police station** in the state at Rajamahendravaram in East Godavari district.
- Jagan also launched an app for women in distress to get immediate response from the police.
- The AP state government, after the alleged gang-rape and brutal killing of a veterinarian in neighbouring Telangana last year, came up with the Disha Act which envisages completion of investigation into heinous sexual assaults on women and children in seven days and trial in 14 working days, where there is adequate conclusive evidence, thereby reducing the total judgement time to 21 days.
- Fast track courts will also be set up in the 13 districts for speedy delivery of justice.

Andhra CM launches 'Jagananna Vasthi Deevena' scheme to provide financial assistance to students

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister **Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy** launched scheme named **'Jagananna Vasthi Deevena'**, under which a financial assistance of **Rs 2,300 crore** would be provided to **students** pursuing various **post-intermediate courses to meet hostel and mess expenses**. The Chief Minister launched the programme in Vizianagaram district in north coastal Andhra.
- While ITI students would get **Rs 10,000 each**, **polytechnic students** would get **Rs 15,000** and **under-graduates and post-graduates** **Rs 20,000 each**
- A unique bar-coded smart card would be issued to each beneficiary to draw the benefits of the JVD scheme. The card contains complete details of the student.

- The Chief Minister inaugurated the '**Disha**' police station in **Vizianagaram**, meant exclusively for the protection of women and children and deal with cases of atrocities against them.

Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh celebrates 34th Statehood Day

- **Arunachal Pradesh** celebrated its **34th Statehood Day**. Arunachal Pradesh attained statehood on **February 20, 1987**. Home Minister Amit Shah attended the celebrations at **Itanagar**.
- He launched the Arunachal Pradesh **Industrial and Investment Policy, 2020**, inaugurate the Joram-Koloriang Road constructed by BRO, lay the foundation stone of the new headquarters of the state police and along with other projects.

Arunachal Pradesh govt to form panel for Stilwell Road Development

- Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister **Chowna Mein** stated that the state government will form a committee on **Stilwell Road Development** and would appeal Govt. of India for prioritizing on restoration of the road. He stated both India and Myanmar would be mutually beneficial by the road, further deepening the age old cultural linkage and help promoting spiritual tourism.
- Mr. Mein reiterated that North East region is the gateway to the ASEAN countries. He stated the re-opening of the Stilwell Road would also act as catalyst for cross border trade. The **Historic Ledo Road** or **Stilwell Road** was constructed by the Allied Soldiers lead by America during the Second World War.

Bihar

Bihar first NDA-ruled state to pass resolution against NRC

- **Bihar** is the first NDA-ruled state that has passed a resolution to not implement the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)**.
- The Assembly also passed a resolution to implement the **National Population Register (NPR)** but in its 2010 form, with an amendment.
- The Bihar State government has written a letter to the Central government of India to drop the "Additional clauses" inserted in the NPR forms.

'Pyaar ka Paudha' campaign launched by Bihar govt to encourage practice of planting trees

- '**Pyaar ka Paudha**' (a plant of love) campaign has been launched by the **Bihar government's** Department of Environment and Forest in **Patna**, to encourage the practice of planting trees in the state.
- The environment department has appealed to the people to gift the plant of love to their close ones as it will be alive for years & also stalls of Patna plants have been planted for this purpose.

Chhattisgarh

Jashpur is Chhattisgarh's first tobacco-free town

- **Jashpur city**, situated in north-east of **Chhattisgarh capital Raipur**, has been declared as the **first tobacco (smoke) free town**, achieved through widespread awareness campaign, strict compliance and enforcement of tobacco control regulations.

- A two-day extensive research and inspection were carried out by a survey team of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (Master of Public Health Course Co-ordination) on 22-23 January 2020. The team cross-examined the ground situation keeping in perspective the guidelines of Section 4 of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 (COTPA) that prohibits smoking in public places.

Chhattisgarh to impose permanent ban on hookah bars

- The Chhattisgarh government has decided to impose a **permanent ban** on **hookah bars** across the state and will soon declare the license issued for running hookah centres "**illegal**".
- In recent years the Chhattisgarh state has witnessed a substantial increase in the hookah bars coming up in different towns. According to the officials, over a thousand hookah centres are run merely on the basis of Gumasta license in the state.
- The state cabinet has also decided to close 49 liquor shops- a move the state government hints on gradual prohibition.

Bhupesh Baghel inaugurates Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi as Chhattisgarh's 28th district

- Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel inaugurated **Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi** as the 28th district of the state.
- The new district, carved out of Bilaspur, has three tehsils and three development blocks namely Gaurela, Pendra and Marwahi.
- It comprises 166 gram panchayats, 222 villages and two nagar panchayats, with an area of 1,68,225 hectares.
- The CM also inaugurated offices of the collector and superintendent of police in the new district, and approved Rs 18 crore for development works

Chhattisgarh organises 'Krishi Maha-Kumbh' to cater to future farming practices

- A three-day mega agricultural festival organised in **Raipur** called '**Krishi Maha-Kumbh**' was inaugurated by Chief Minister **Bhupesh Baghel**. Also known as the **National Agriculture Festival**, this mela boasted of going beyond the traditional dominant practices of farmers by encouraging the agrarian community to experiment with non-conventional farm activities, adopt modern technologies and secure quality organic produce.
- It also provided carry several notable attractions for the farmers and other visitors to understand how the integrated farming system can go along with the changed perception towards modern efficient agricultural practices.
- Thousands of farmers attending the occasion were updated with **modern agriculture information** and technological tools that raise new hopes on how to manage their farms and sustainable farm produce.

Delhi

Mughal Gardens to open for public

- The iconic **Mughal Garden** at the heart of the President's Estate opened to the public.
- The garden will remain open for the general public from February 5 to March 8 (except on Mondays which are maintenance days) between 10 am to 4 pm.
- However, the garden will open exclusively for farmers, differently-abled persons, defence, paramilitary forces, and Delhi police personnel on March 11 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- The main attraction of this year's "Udyanotsav", beside Tulips and Exotic flowers, are bulbous flowerings.

Police, Uber launch Himmat Plus app at IGI airport

- To ensure safety and security of people travelling in cabs, **the Delhi Police** along with **Uber** launched the **Himmat Plus app** at the **Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport**.
- In case of an emergency, the police headquarters will receive the real-time location of a driver or a rider through this app so that a PCR van can be assigned to provide assistance.
- Over 1,000 Himmat QR verification cards were distributed among drivers. Once a rider scans the QR card, they can access a driver's details and vehicle information on the Himmat App and can report their journey directly to police.

Karnataka

Lithium reserve found in Mandya near Bengaluru

- The Researchers of India's Atomic Energy Commission have found **lithium reserves** of 14,100 tonnes in **Mandya, Bengaluru, Karnataka**. Lithium is a rare metal used for manufacturing batteries for electric vehicles.
- India currently imports all its lithium needs and lithium batteries worth \$1.2 billion for the year 2019 from \$384 million in 2017.
- These reserves will be useful to promote **clean-energy vehicles** in India and the Government has a plan to implement **\$1.4 billion** to make India a **manufacturing hub** for electric vehicles.
- India has set up Khanij Bidesh India Limited to source and acquire mines in Argentina (Buenos Aires), Bolivia (Sucre) and Chile (Santiago).

Karnataka to get another airport with flights between Bidar and Bengaluru

- **GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd. (GHIAL)** has signed a concession agreement to commission, operationalize and maintain the Civilian Enclave at **Bidar Airport** in North Karnataka.
- The agreement was signed under the centre's Regional Connectivity **UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme**.
- GHIAL is expected to start the airport operations in the first week of February 2020 with the operations of one daily flight connecting Bidar with Bangalore.
- Bidar is also renowned for Bidriware metal handicraft products which have been recognized with the coveted Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Karnataka launches Janasevaka scheme for home delivery of govt services

- The **Karnataka government** launched the **Janasevaka scheme** to ensure home delivery of various services like ration cards, senior citizen identity and health cards.
- Janasevaka under the **Sakala scheme** is a programme to avail the benefits of government schemes at the doorstep.
- Sakala aims to ensure in-time delivery of government services to citizens by practising innovative and efficient management systems through capacity building in government and empowering citizens to exercise their right to service.
- A toll-free helpline has been set up for this scheme which will work from 8 am to 8 pm. A sum of Rs 115 will be charged to provide the home delivery services. In addition to it, the Karnataka government has also decided to seek information under the RTI Act easy by making it online.

Gujarat

Gandhinagar railway station to have 5-star hotel

- Indian Railways is going to build a **five-star hotel** above the railway tracks in the station.
- **Gandhinagar** will be **the first railway station** to have a **5-star facility** above the tracks.
- Railways has allowed for pillars to come on the tracks to form the ceiling which will allow for the hotel to be constructed on top.
- The five-star hotel, which will be run by the Leela Group, is expected to be completed by December this year.
- The 5-star hotel will have over 300 rooms with the ground floor 22 metres above the ground. The entire Gandhinagar station will have 3 towers that will give the impression of petals from an aerial view.
- The three towers will have 6, 8 and 10 levels with the hotel making the station one of the tallest buildings in the city.

Mega industrial exhibition in Vadodara from February 15

- In a bid to promote **'Made in India' products**, the Federation of Small Scale Industries (FSSI) will organise a mega industrial exhibition in Gujarat from February 15.
- Over 10,000 industrial products showcased in more than 300 stalls at the sixth 'Engiexpo 2020'.
- The exhibition showcased various products, including weighing, welding and cutting tools, products related to construction work, electronic and solar items, and packaging material.
- Several companies from Uzbekistan have also shown their interest in participating in the exhibition

Haryana

'Reading Mission' launched by Haryana govt to promote reading habits among students

- **'Reading Mission- Haryana'** has been initiated by the state government to improve reading habit among students,
- As reading helps in developing social values of egalitarianism, tolerance, and justice.
- The mission has been launched on the lines of the central government's 'Reading Mission 2022', which aims to address the lost glory of reading books.
- Under the mission, book review sessions should be organised by students once a month in educational institutions.
- Besides, a 45-minute mass reading programme should be held on the fourth Saturday of the month.

Haryana govt to open Atal Kisan - Majdoor canteens to provide meals at concessional rate

- Haryana government will open **Atal Kisan - Majdoor** canteens in all mandis and sugar mills across the state to provide affordable and cheap meals to farmers and labourers at a concessional rate of **10 rupees per plate**.
- This was stated by Governor Satyadev Narayann Arya during his address to the **Budget Session** of State Assembly which commenced in **Chandigarh**.
- Under a new initiative, the women and girls belonging to **11 lakh BPL families** will be given sanitary napkins free of cost during the year 2020-2021.

Ambala city bus stand renamed after late Sushma Swaraj

- The Ambala city bus stand was renamed after late external affairs minister and BJP veteran Sushma Swaraj.
- Swaraj was born in Ambala Cantt and was elected MLA twice.
- Local BJP MLA Aseem Goyal had requested Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar that the newly-constructed bus stand be named after Swaraj.
- Rs 18 crore had been spent on the construction of the bus stand where all basic facilities would be provided to passengers.

- Haryana Roadways operates 3,200 buses in the state at present. In the next six months, 1,500 more buses would be added.

Haryana to give cash prizes, employment to sportspersons

- Haryana Chief Minister **Manohar Lal Khattar** stated that in order to promote sports in the state and encourage youths to excel in sports, the State government has made provision of cash prizes and employment in the Sports Policy.
- 46th Junior National Kabaddi Competition organised by the Amateur Kabaddi Association Haryana at Sports Complex of Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak.
- A provision has been made to give of **Rs 6 crore** to players who have won **gold medals** at the **Olympic Games**, **Rs 3 crore** to the players who have won **gold medals** at the Asian Games and **Rs 1.5 crore** to the players who have won gold medals at the **Commonwealth Games**.
- An amount of Rs 15 lakh will be given to each player participating in the Olympic Games so that the players can make the state, as well as the country, proud.

Haryana launches Rs 1500 crore Mukhyamantri Parivartan Yojna

- Haryana Chief Minister, Manohar Lal launched “**Mukhyamantri Parivar Samridhi Yojna**”.
- Under this scheme, annual financial assistance of Rs 6000 will be provided to those families in the State whose annual income is upto Rs 1.80 lakh and land holding is less than 5 acres so that premium of various welfare schemes of the Central Government, pension scheme and crop insurance could be paid automatically from the bank accounts of the needy families.
- The amount would be transferred into the bank accounts of these families in two equal installments of Rs 2000 each, (total of Rs 4000) while the third installment of Rs 2000 would be transferred in the month of March.
- The premium of various welfare schemes of the government which are being given to the beneficiaries family out of the financial assistance of Rs 6000 included Pradhanmantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojna, Pradhanmantri Jeevan Suraksha Bima Yojna, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Mandhan Yojna, Pradhanmantri Shram Yogi Mandhan Yojna and Pradhanmantri Laghu Vyapari Mandhan Yojna and Pradhanmantri Fasal Bima Yojna.

Haryana CM unveils Rs 1,42,343-crore budget for 2020-21

- Haryana Chief Minister **Manohar Lal Khattar**, who also holds the finance portfolio, announced a **Rs 1,42,343-crore** budget in the state assembly.
- The debt is set to increase to Rs 1.98 lakh crore in 2020-21 as against Rs 1.76 lakh crore in the previous fiscal.
- The expenditure will increase to Rs 1,42,343 crore, a rise by 7.7 per cent.
- Revenue receipts are expected to increase by 15.96 per cent in 2020-21 to Rs 89,964 crore.
- The government has allocated Rs 5,474.25 crore to agriculture, Rs 19,343 crore to education and sports and culture, Rs 6,533 crore to health and medical education, Rs 6,294 crore to rural development and panchayat, Rs 349 crore to industries and Rs 9,000 crore to pensions.

Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh: First to achieve 100% LPG coverage

- Himachal Pradesh became the 1st state in the country to have **100% LPG coverage** due to the implementation of **PMUY (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana)** scheme.

- Under the scheme except families having a pensioner, income taxpayer or any member employed with the government, board, corporation etc, all households of the state without an LPG connection were eligible.
- **Nearly 2.64 lakh** free gas connections were provided through the state funded **Himachal Grihini Suvidha Yojana** & **1.36 lakh** were benefited through PMUY scheme

Kerala

1000 Kudumbashree hotels to serve meals at Rs 25: Kerala budget

- Kerala government unveiled an initiative of setting up **1,000 'Kudumbashree' hotels** to provide subsidised **Kerala meals at Rs 25** while presenting its budget for 2020-21.
- Kudumabshree has also entered into an agreement for manufacturing products such as umbrella, coconut products and curry powders on cluster basis with common name and selling it through the outlets of the Civil Supplies Corporation.
- Apart from this Rs. 6,000 crore has been allocated towards infra projects; among others.
- As per Kerala government's Economic Survey for 2018-2019, state's Gross Domestic Product pegged at 7.5% as against 7.3% in 2017-18.

Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh

J&K LG Girish Chandra Murmu launches Financial Inclusion Outreach Campaign

- In Jammu and Kashmir, **Lieutenant Governor Girish Chandra Murmu** launched the **Financial Inclusion Outreach Campaign** with special focus on extending banking services to all un-banked areas.
- It also lays emphasis on opening of bank accounts for adults under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), promotion of RuPay Cards, enrollments under Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), outreach for Mudra Yojna, housing and other retails loans, credit Linkage with SHGs, Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes and other skilling centres in J&K and issuance of Kisan Credit Cards to all eligible beneficiaries.

Lt Governor of J&K to head reconstituted Science Technology and Innovation Council

- Lieutenant Governor **G C Murmu** will head 24 members reconstituted **Jammu and Kashmir Science Technology and Innovation Council (STIC)**. Members of the council include five representatives from Jammu and Kashmir government, 10 from universities and research and development institutions and eight from the Science and Technology Department of the Central Government. Chief Secretary **J&K B V R Subrahmanyam** has been nominated as the chairman of the six-member executive committee of STIC.
- J&K STIC endeavors to harness the potential of science and technology as an instrument of socio-economic change and strives to ensure that efforts in science and technology are not only restricted to scientific laboratories and academic institutions but percolate to the grassroots, so that science, technology and innovation become part of everyday life.

J&K, Ladakh to come under jurisdiction of CAT soon

- Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Jitendra Singh has stated that Union Territory of **Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh** will soon be covered by the **Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)**.

- Addressing the annual conference of the CAT in **New Delhi**, he stated the tribunal will have jurisdiction to handle disputes and other issues related to the UT services. The CAT so far had jurisdiction only over central services issues in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Dr Singh stated that in due course of time, an exclusive bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal will be set up in Jammu and Kashmir and till then the Chandigarh bench of the tribunal may attend to the service disputes and other cases from the Union territory.

Jammu and Kashmir government to announce horticulture policy

- Jammu and Kashmir government will announce a **horticulture policy** to tackle upcoming marketing challenges and increase the production manifold.
- The Policy will focus to increase production and tackle climate change, given the unique temperature of this place.
- Mr Lone informed that this Horticulture Policy will help increase horticulture revenue in Jammu and Kashmir from current 8,000 crore rupees to 50,000 crore rupees per annum.

J&K to set up Tribal Research Institute by next fiscal year

- Union Territory of **Jammu and Kashmir** will set up a **Tribal Research Institute (TRI)** by next fiscal year to promote tribal practices and their art, culture and languages.
- Tribal Research Institute will be a centre of excellence to focus on studying and promoting tribal practices and their art, culture and languages in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Central government has provided additional funds to streamline the pattern and establishment of TRI in **Jammu and Kashmir**.
- He stated 17 new hostels are coming up for tribal students, while as 19 others are already functional. The Government covers students and the tribal population of the regions including **Rajouri, Poonch, Kishtwar, Gurez** among other areas.

Madhya Pradesh

MP govt to use drones for mapping villages

- In **Madhya Pradesh**, the state government has decided to use drones for **mapping villages**. So far, land survey work is being done either manually or with the help of satellite images in Madhya Pradesh.
- The drone technology will be used for the first time to make maps in the state. 55 thousand villages of the state have been selected for mapping. Now, the map of the population area will be made on a scale of 1: 500, which will give a clearer picture of the population area.

Madhya Pradesh launches unified vehicle registration card

- **Madhya Pradesh** has become **the first state in the country** to launch the **unified vehicle registration card**.
- MP is only the **second state** to launch a **unified driving license**, after **Uttar Pradesh**.
- These unified smart cards for driving license and vehicle registration will each have a QR code that will help in verifying authenticity of the data printed on the cards.
- The unified driving license card will also have information about the ability of the driver to drive in hilly and dangerous areas, and an emergency contact number.

Maharashtra

Gadkari Inaugurates First Inter-City Electric Bus Service in Maharashtra

- Union Minister for Transport, Highways, and MSMEs, **Nitin Gadkari** inaugurated the first inter-city electric bus service, between **Mumbai** and **Pune** in **Maharashtra**.
- The 43-seater capacity luxury electric bus, manufactured by **Mitra Mobility Solution**, has a range of 300 kilometres on a single charge and would be operated twice daily between the two cities.
- The company, which claims to already have around 1,300 electric buses in operation, is also looking to extend these services in other parts of Maharashtra and adjoining states.
- The government is ready to provide policy support to serious investors and also appealed them to come forward in the field of alternative fuel including bio-CNG and electric vehicles.

Singing national anthem mandatory in Maharashtra colleges from February 19

- Singing the **national anthem** made compulsory in all colleges of **Maharashtra** from February 19, cabinet minister Uday Samant stated. The state government issued a notification asking colleges to begin their work with the national anthem from February 19, the birth anniversary of **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**, stated the technical and higher education minister.
- Considering even 50 per cent attendance in colleges, at least 15 lakh students will sing the national anthem before start of their classes.

Uddhav Thackeray approves renaming of Latur Medical College after former CM Vilasrao Deshmukh

- **Maharashtra** Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has approved the **renaming** of the **Latur Medical College** as **Vilasrao Deshmukh Institute of Medical Sciences**.
- The late Vilasrao Deshmukh had served as the former CM of Maharashtra.
- Vilasrao was a member of the Indian National Congress, he served as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra for Two times from 1999 to 2003 and from 2004 to 2008 and he also served as Union cabinet Minister for the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Panchayat Raj and Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises of Government of India.

Maharashtra records highest number of missing women: NCRB

- NCRB stated that the **highest number of women and children** who go **missing** in the country are from **Maharashtra** and **Madhya Pradesh** respectively.
- Maximum number of cases of missing women and children was Maharashtra and MP respectively.
- In 2019, the Supreme Court had directed National Crime Records Bureau to identify and check those areas which are prone to persons being trafficked. The report covers 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Mumbai Airport Launches World's Largest Temp-Controlled Facility to Store Agro, Pharma Products

- **Mumbai airport**, run by a **joint venture** between **Airports Authority of India** and **GVK**, announced the launch of an exclusive terminal for processing and storage of agro and pharma products.
- The '**Export Cold Zone**' can hold over 700 tonnes of such cargo at one time with a combined annual capacity of 5.25 lakh tones.
- The facility will be operated by cargo handling service provider and **MIAL's business partner**.
- **Mumbai airport** is the first airport in the country and the third in Asia to obtain "**IATA CEIV Pharma**" accreditation.

Mumbai to get India's largest air quality monitoring network

- The **Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)** will develop an **air quality monitoring network** across 90 locations in Mumbai. This will make it the largest network in India.
- BMC is planning to invest **₹9.5 crores** to install 80 real-time air monitoring stations. These stations will give location-wise updates on the quality of air.
- While **10 mobile sensors** (in Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport buses) will collect samples from different parts of the city to analyze the air quality.
- Currently, Mumbai has 30 air quality monitoring stations. 15 stations come under the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB), 10 under the System of Air Quality Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR), and five under BMC.

Maharashtra government's "Smart gram yojana" to be named after ex-minister R R Patil

- The **Maharashtra government's "smart gram yojana"** will be named after **former Deputy Chief Minister the late R R Patil**.
- Since November 2016, the '**smart gram yojana**' (smart village) is being implemented in the state where awards are given to gram panchayats at taluka and district level for their performance on certain parameters.
- The scheme seeks to transform rural Maharashtra through development initiatives.

Maharashtra Assembly passes law making Marathi language compulsory for all schools

- **Maharashtra government** has made **Marathi compulsory in schools** affiliated with all boards with a fine of **Rs 1 lakh** for institutions that fail to comply with the directive.
- Maharashtra Assembly unanimously approved a bill making Marathi a compulsory subject in all schools of the state.
- This law will be applicable to all boards like CBSE, CISCE, IB, IGSCE, NIOS
- Marathi language shall be taught as a compulsory subject from classes 1-10 in all schools in the state in a phased manner starting the academic year 2020-21
- The language shall be introduced at class 1 and 6 from the academic year 2020-21 and shall be extended to further classes progressively
- Marathi teaching and assessment of students in Marathi will be a mandatory condition for granting the government's no-objection certificate for schools
- The person responsible for the management of school affairs violating provisions of this act shall be liable to pay a penalty of up to Rs 1 Lakh

Manipur

Manipur CM launches 'Anganphou Hunba' programme at Arapti Mayai Leikai in Imphal East

- Manipur Chief Minister **N Biren Singh** stated that his government has prepared a **260-crore rupee** project to provide irrigation facilities by pumping ground water and is awaiting the Centre's approval.
- Launching '**Anganphou Hunba**' (**Early Paddy Crop**) programme at **Arapti Mayai Leikai** in **Imphal East**, the Chief Minister stated, the government has planned to provide irrigation water by the Minor Irrigation Department to places having adequate arable land and large number of farmers.

- The government has also taken up steps to produce sufficient quantity of fishes by providing loans to 800 selected fish farmers. It is being done with a view to save around **400 crore** rupees spent every year in importing fishes from outside.
- That **Van Dhan Yojana** is being implemented in the hill districts to save horticultural products. scheme will also be introduced in the valley districts.

Punjab

Punjab government bans sale of online lottery schemes to check illegal sales

- **Punjab** Cabinet led by Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh decided to ban the sale of all types of online lottery schemes in the state.
- The ban on '**Online Lottery Schemes**', under **section 5 of the Lotteries (Regulation) Act 1998**, would not only check the spread of illegal lottery business, which was proliferating under the guise of online lotteries but also give a boost to the state's tax and non-tax revenue
- The Cabinet also gave approval to prohibition of the sale of computerised and online lotteries marketed and operated through vending machines, terminals and electronic machines, as well as online scheme tickets sold, organised, conducted or promoted through the internet by any State within the Indian territory or by a foreign country.

Punjab to honour cops under 'Appreciate and Commend' scheme

- The Punjab Police have launched '**Appreciate and Commend**' scheme.
- The move is aimed at boosting the morale of police officers who work exceptionally and diligently.
- The initiative was launched during a high-level meeting of the top brass of the Police in Phillaur and 15 police personnel, including three women Sub Inspectors, were honoured.

Puducherry

Puducherry Passes Resolution against Citizenship Amendment Act

- The **Congress-ruled Puducherry** adopted an Assembly resolution against the **amended Citizenship Act**, becoming the first union territory in the country to say no to the new law.
- Earlier, the states of **Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, MP** and **West Bengal** had adopted Assembly resolutions against the Act.
- It also registered strong protest against the National Register of Citizens and National Population Register.

Rajasthan

Gehlot government to create separate identity card for transgender community in Rajasthan

- A major initiative by the Gehlot Government to connect the transgender community with the mainstream society has been undertaken. Now, **separate identity cards** will be issued for transgenders in the state, so that the people of the community can get the benefit of government jobs as well as all government schemes.
- Rules will be made in collaboration with the State Personnel Department, so that the participation of this community in government jobs can also be ensured. The only transgender in the state got a government job in police under

woman's quota. He further stated that there should be a **separate identity card** for this community so that government schemes along with government recruitment can also benefit them.

Tamil Nadu

TN Chief Minister inaugurates SCF cricket ground near Salem

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **Edappadi K. Palaniswamy** along with **National Cricket Academy** Head and Former Indian cricketer **Rahul Dravid** inaugurated the **Salem Cricket Foundation (SCF)** Ground with international standards at **Kattuveppalaipatti** in **Vazhappadi** near Salem.
- The ground has five well maintained Turf Wickets and 12 practice turf wickets, a player pavilion, press box etc. It has sight screens of International Match Dimensions.

Tamil Nadu govt schools to soon have health & wellness programme

- Students of all government & government-aided schools in state will have a **structured health & wellness programme**.
- This has been drawn up by the **NCERT** in collaboration with **UNESCO** & other experts from across the country.
- It will focus on the **physical & mental health** and well being of students & also focus on gender sensitivity, safe internet use & prevention of substance abuse among other aspects.
- The School Education Department plans to introduce one hour every week for students from classes 6 to 11 from the coming academic year for the health and wellness program.

Unique census of migratory birds underway in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu

- A unique census of migratory birds is being undertaken in the **Kanyakumari district** of **Tamil Nadu**. The census is unique because it uses both physical sighting as well as indirect clues for deciding the count of migratory birds that visit India during adverse climatic conditions in other countries.
- The two-day census is an attempt to prepare a detailed inventory of various migratory birds that visit Kanyakumari from countries as far distant as Siberia.
- According to Forest Department sources, the bird count is expected to include exotic species like Flamingos from Spain, canaries and pintails from Central Asian countries and pelicans from as far away as Antarctica.

TN CM unveils Direct CTO scheme for green category industries

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami announced a new initiative, "Direct CTO", to enable companies operating under "green category industries" receive faster clearances from government to commence operations.
- The move would largely benefit micro, small and medium enterprises planning to set up operations in the state.
- The companies falling under the "white" category do not require consent from the pollution control board, industries under the "green" category would benefit from the new initiative.
- Under the new initiative, the companies falling under the "green" category need to pay the application fees for receiving the Direct CTO to set up office in industrial parks.
- According to Ministry of Environment, companies are classified in red, orange, green and white categories based on the pollution index generated from them.
- The pollution index of any industrial sector is a number from 0 to 100 and the increasing value of PI refers to the degree of pollution load from the industries.

- "Red" category industries are those which have a pollution index score of 60 and above, "orange" category are with 41 to 59, "green" category industrial sectors are of 21 to 40 and "white" category industries are from 0 to 20.

Kumbhabhishekam of Brihadeeswarar temple in Tamil Nadu

- The 'kumbhabhishekam' of the 1,000-year old **Brihadeeswara temple** in **Thanjavur** was held with traditional rites and rituals.
- Lakhs of pilgrims have flocked to the temple town of Thanjavur, on the banks of the river **Cauvery**, to witness the rare spectacle. The Tamil Nadu Government has made all necessary arrangements for the pilgrims.
- A mobile app **Namma Thanjavoor** has been developed for the use of devotees coming to view the rare spectacle.

Tamil Nadu, Karnataka to observe Jayalalithaa's birth anniversary as 'Girl Children Protection Day'

- **TN and Karnataka government** will celebrate **former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa's birthday** as '**State Women Children Protection Day**' on **February 24**.
- TN government will implement five new schemes, including a **Rs 2 lakh assistance** by way of bank deposit, for the welfare of destitute girl children.
- It will include assistance for higher education, skill development, job opportunities and self-employment. The assistance will continue to be provided till they complete **50 years** of age.
- The state Government also increased the monthly amount paid to the foster parents of the girls **to Rs. 4,000 from Rs. 2,000**.

Tamil Nadu govt decides to declare Cauvery Delta Region as protected special agricultural zone

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **Edappadi Palaniswamy** has stated, the Cauvery Delta Region in the state will be declared a **protected special agricultural zone**.
- He laid the foundation stone for what is touted as Asia's largest livestock farm at **Thalaivasal village** near his hometown Salem.
- Chief Minister stated he will talk to his legal team to bring a special law to make the Delta region a protected zone.

TN CM Palaniswami announces 50% subsidy for Ulemas to buy two-wheelers, increases pension

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **K Palaniswami** announced a **50 per cent subsidy** for '**Ulemas**' to buy new two-wheelers and doubled their pension by increasing the payout to **Rs 3,000** from the present **Rs 1,500**.
- The Ulema are the guardians and interpreters of religious knowledge in Islam.
- There are 2,814 Waqf institutions in Tamil Nadu and Ulemas working in such registered entities will be provided a subsidy of Rs 25,000 or 50 per cent of the vehicle cost, whichever is lower to buy new two-wheelers.
- Also, the government will allocate Rs 15 crore for building a new 'Haj House' in a land that will be assigned by Tamil Nadu Waqf Board.

Telangana

Telangana govt opens new virology lab at Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad

- In Telangana, the State Government has opened the **new virology lab** at **Gandhi Hospital** in **Hyderabad** to enable taking up diagnostic tests for Novel Coronavirus in the state itself.
- Stating that the samples are being sent to the National Virology Institute in Pune all these days and now onwards, the tests will be conducted in Hyderabad to save time.
- Laser machines in the Dermatology Department in Gandhi Hospital and new machines in the name of Ear to Hear to identify deafness by birth besides new examination hall and library building have been also inaugurated.

Telangana CM inaugurates JBS-MGBS corridor-II of Hyderabad Metro Rail

- Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao has inaugurated the **Jubilee Bus Station (JBS) - Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station (MGBS)** corridor -II of Hyderabad Metro Rail (HMR) in Hyderabad.
- The JBS - MGBS stretch is part of **14.78 km** JBS - Falaknuama metro corridor. With the inaugural of this stretch, a total of 69.2 km metro corridor comes into operational, improving the connectivity between the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. This stretch has nine metro stations and takes 16 minutes to cover against 40 minutes by road.
- With the inaugural of corridor - II, Hyderabad Metro Rail is poised to be the second biggest metro network in the country after Delhi Metro.

Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand govt organises wellness summit

- To promote investment opportunities in Uttarakhand, the State government organised “**Uttarakhand Wellness Summit 2020**” in **New Delhi**.
- Uttarakhand has from time immemorial, been the top choice for ascetics and devotees who are in search of the divine.
- The primary objective of the summit is to shed light on the potential of developing the State as a ‘**global spiritual economic zone**’, capitalising on the global wellness economy worth \$4.2 trillion in 2017 that is growing at 6.4 per cent annually.
- Innovative initiatives such as **AYUSH health centres/retreats**, eco-tourism, aroma therapy/aroma tourism will play a crucial role in the coming years, stated Dilip Jawalkar, Tourism Secretary, Uttarakhand.

Ministry of Civil Aviation Flags Off 1st Helicopter Service under UDAN in Uttarakhand

- **Ministry of Civil Aviation(MoCA)** operationalised the first-ever helicopter services from Dehradun’s **Sahastradhara helipad to Gauchar, and Chinyalisaur** under the Regional Connectivity Scheme – Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (RCS-UDAN) of Government of India.
- MoCA awarded the **Sahastradhara-Gauchar-Chinyalisaur** route to Heritage Aviation under the UDAN 2 bidding process. Heritage Aviation will operate twice daily helicopter services from Sahastradhara to Gauchar and Chinyalisaur.
- The fare from route will be Rs 4,120 will be the fare per person from Sahastradhara to Gauchar route, and the fare from Sahastradhara to Chinyalisaur will be Rs 3,350.

Uttar Pradesh

UP becomes first state to enforce Performance Regulation Act for power department

- **Uttar Pradesh** has enforced **Performance Regulation Act 2019** for the power department. It is to provide timely and hassle-free service to the consumers.
- The consumer would get **Rs 50 per day** if there is a delay in repairing the defective meter and also non-response by call centre. In case of delay in repairing underground cable breakdown, the consumer would get **Rs 100 per day**.
- The UP budget is likely to focus on the allocation of funds for various infrastructure projects like **Poorvanchal Expressway, Bundelkhand Expressway and Ganga Expressway**.

UP govt to launch internship scheme for school college students

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath government will introduce an **internship scheme for students of class 10 and 12** as well as those pursuing graduation to brighten their employment prospects.
- A job fair organised by the **Department of Labour and Employment Exchange at Gorakhpur University**.
- Under the scheme, Each youth who will do internship for 6 months and one year will be given Rs 2,500 as honorarium every month.
- Rs. 1,500 will be given by the central government and Rs 1,000 by the state government.

Uttar Pradesh government announces two new youth-centric schemes

- The Uttar Pradesh government announced two new schemes to promote and help the youth of the state.
- The two new schemes are Chief Minister Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (CMAPS) and the Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan (YUVA) will make the youth self-dependent.
- A provision of Rs 100 crore has been made under the CMAPS to impart on-job training to the youth of the state in MSME units and link them with an employment of definite period.
- A novel initiative is being taken through the Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan to provide employment to lakhs of trained youths in the state; a 'YUVA Hub' will be set up in every district of the state.
- "An amount of Rs 50 crore is proposed for setting up 'YUVA Hub' in every district and a target has been fixed to train two lakh youths under various training programmes of the UP Skill Development Mission.

UP Govt launches toll free helpline numbers for students

- **Uttar Pradesh Government** has launched **toll-free helpline numbers** to solve the queries of students ahead of the Board Examinations.
- **Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad** is also designated as **Nodal Officer** so that students get maximum benefit.
- The helpline numbers will remain active from 8 am to 8 pm. In case students have any queries regarding the board exams they can connect at the helpline numbers, **1800-180-5310** and **18001805312**.

4,000-yr-old crafts village unearthed near Varanasi

- A nearly **4,000-year-old urban settlement** has been unearthed by a team of surveyors from the **Banaras Hindu University (BHU)**, which experts say could be one of the craft villages mentioned in ancient texts.
- The university's Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, which did the preliminary survey of the site at **Babhaniyav village**, 13 km from Varanasi.
- The survey found a temple dating back to the 5th century through the 8th century, potteries which are 4,000-year-old and walls that are 2,000-year-old.

UP govt allots Rs 2,000 cr for Jewar airport in budget

- The Uttar Pradesh government allotted a fund of **Rs 2,000 crore** for the **Jewar Airport** in **Gautam Buddh Nagar**.
- A budget of Rs 2,000 crore has been proposed for the **Noida International Greenfield Airport** in Gautam Buddh Nagar's Jewar. The airport is expected to go operational by **2023**.
- The UP government presented a Rs 5,12,860.72 crore budget for FY 2020-21 in the state assembly.
- The entire project will be spread over 5,000 hectares and is estimated to cost Rs 29,560 crore. The first phase of the airport will be spread over 1,334 hectares and cost Rs 4,588 crore. The project is being managed and operated by Noida International Airport (NIAL).

UP draws up rules to regulate groundwater usage, fixes fines for violations

- The **Uttar Pradesh** cabinet has approved the **UP Groundwater (Management and Regulation) Rules – 2020**, to protect and regulate the usage of groundwater after the water table dipped to alarming levels in the state, which currently has 82 overexploited, 47 critical and 151 semi-critical blocks.
- According to officials of the UP groundwater department, the rules have been formed after the government notified the **UP Groundwater (Management & Regulation) Act, 2019, which came into force on October 2, 2019.**
- The water level in Ghaziabad and Gautam Budh Nagar is declining at the annual rate of estimated one to 1.5 metres. The depletion of water level, however, depends on different conditions in different areas.
- The rules approved by the UP cabinet also provide for the levy of penalty and punishment for overuse of groundwater resources.

West Bengal

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal to inaugurate 1st phase of East - West Metro in Kolkata

- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal will inaugurate **the first phase of East - West Metro** in **Kolkata** .
- In this phase, trains will play from Salt Lake's sector five to Salt Lake Stadium. Passenger services will start in this 5.8 Kilometres stretches.
- The services will remain open from 8 in the morning to till 8 at night with 20 minutes frequencies of trains within six stations. Mr Goyal will also launch several other Railway projects for West Bengal from the same venue.

Revision Points

State	Capital	Chief Minister	Governor
Andhra Pradesh	Amaravati	Y. S. Jaganmohan Reddy	BiswaBhusanHarichandan
Arunachal Pradesh	Itanagar	Pema Khandu	Brigadier BD Mishra
Assam	Dispur	SarabanandaSonowal	Jagdish Mukhi
Bihar	Patna	Nitish Kumar	Phagu Chauhan
Chhattisgarh	Raipur	Bhupesh Baghel	AnusuiyaUikey
Goa	Panaji	Pramod Sawant	S.P Malik
Gujarat	Gandhi Nagar	Vijaybhai R. Rupani	Acharya Devvrat
Haryana	Chandigarh	Manohar Lal Khattar	Satyadev Narayan Arya
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla	Jai Ram Thakur	BandaruDattatraya
Jharkhand	Ranchi	Hemant Soren	Draupadi Murmu
Karnataka	Bengaluru	B S Yediyurappa	VajubhaiRudabhaiVala
Kerala	Thiruvananthapuram	Pinarayi Vijayan	Arif Mohammed Khan
Madhya Pradesh	Bhopal	Kamal Nath	Lalji Tandon

Maharashtra	Mumbai	Uddhav Thackrey	Bhagat Singh Koshyari
Manipur	Imphal	N Biren Singh	Padmanabha Balkrishna Acharya (Add. Charge)
Meghalaya	Shillong	Conrad Sangma	RN Ravi (Additional Charge)
Mizoram	Aizawl	Pu Zoramthanga	P S Sreedharan Pillai
Nagaland	Kohima	Neiphiu Rio	RN Ravi
Odisha	Bhubaneswar	Naveen Patnaik	Ganeshi Lal
Punjab	Chandigarh	Amarinder Singh	V P Singh Badnore
Rajasthan	Jaipur	Ashok Gehlot	Kalraj Mishra
Sikkim	Gangtok	Prem Singh Tamang(PS Golay)	Ganga Prasad
Tamil Nadu	Chennai	Edappadi K. Palaniswami	Banwarilal Purohit
Telangana	Hyderabad	K. Chandrasekhar Rao	TamilisaiSoundararajan
Tripura	Agartala	Biplab Kumar Deb	Ramesh Bais
Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow	Yogi Adityanath	Anandiben Patel
Uttarakhand	Dehradun	Trivendra Singh Rawat	Baby Rani Maurya
West Bengal	Kolkata	Mamata Banerjee	Jagdeep Dhankhar

Important National News

Cabinet Approvals

CCEA approves National Mission for Technical Textiles with allocation of Rs.1,480 crore

- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** has approved the launch of the **National Mission for Technical Textiles** with a total allocation of **Rs. 1,480 crore** for a four-year period in line with the announcement made in Budget 2020-21 earlier February.
- That the goal was to be self-dependent in technical textiles and to nullify the trade deficit in the area which was already declining.
- The first component of the mission will focus on research, innovation and development and have an outlay of Rs.1,000 crore.

Union Cabinet approves Pesticide Management Bill 2020

- Union Cabinet has approved the **Pesticide Management Bill 2020**. Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar stated, the legislation will promote **organic pesticides** in the country. Major Ports Authority Bill to enhance overall efficiencies of the ports was cleared by the Cabinet.

- Cabinet has also approved changes in the Direct Tax **Vivad se Vishwas Bill, 2020**. The bill seeks to increase its scope to cover litigations pending in various debt recovery tribunals (DRTs).

Cabinet approves to confer the status of Institution of National Importance to five IIITs

- The Union Cabinet gave its approval to confer the status of **Institution of National Importance** to five Indian Institutes of Information Technology, IIITs.
- Five IIITs in PPP mode at Surat, Bhopal, Bhagalpur, Agartala and Raichur will now be able to use the nomenclature of Bachelor of Technology, BTech or Master of Technology or PhD degree.
- The cabinet has approved introduction of the Indian Institutes of Information Technology Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020.
- The bill will declare the remaining five IIITs along with the existing 15 IIITs in PPP mode as Institutions of National Importance with powers to award degrees.

Cabinet gives in principle approval to set up a new major port in Maharashtra

- Union Cabinet has given in principle approval to set up a **new major port** at **Vadhavan** near **Dahanu** in Maharashtra. The total cost of the project is likely to be over **65 thousand crore rupees**. Vadhavan port will be developed on land lord model.
- A **Special Purpose Vehicle**, SPV will be formed with **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust** as the lead partner with equity participation equal to or more than 50 per cent to implement the project.
- The SPV will develop the port infrastructure including reclamation, construction of breakwater, besides establishing connectivity to the hinterland.

Cabinet approves amendment to bring cooperative banks under regulatory control of RBI

- Union Cabinet has decided to bring **Cooperative banks** under the regulatory mechanism of **Reserve Bank of India**.
- Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar stated the move will ensure greater accountability and transparency in the functioning of Cooperative Banks.
- Mr Javedkar stated **Cooperative Banks** need to fulfill regulatory requirements set for **scheduled commercial banks**.

Union Cabinet approves constitution of 22nd Law Commission of India

- Union Cabinet approved the constitution of the **Twenty-second Law Commission of India**. Union Minister Prakash Javadekar stated that the commission will function for a period of three years from its date of official constitution.
- The Commission will give recommendations on different aspects of law which are entrusted to it.
- It shall also undertake studies and research for bringing reforms in the justice delivery systems for elimination of delay in procedures and speedy disposal of cases among others.

Cabinet approves phase two of Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen

- Union Cabinet has approved the **Phase- 2** of the **Swachh Bharat Mission, Grameen** till **2024-25**, which will focus on **Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF Plus)**. The program will work towards ensuring that no one is left behind and everyone uses a toilet.
- The phase-2 of the mission will be implemented in a mission mode with a total estimated budgeted financial implication of 52 thousand 497 crore rupees. The ODF Plus programme will also converge with MGNREGA, especially for grey water management and will also complement the newly launched Jal Jeevan Mission.

Cabinet approves constitution of empowered Technology Group

- Cabinet has approved the constitution of an **empowered Technology Group** which will advise the Government on priorities and strategies for research on emerging technologies across sectors.

- The group intends to ensure that India has appropriate policies and strategies for effective, secure and context-sensitive exploitation of the latest technologies for economic growth and sustainable development of the Indian Industry.

Cabinet approves India-Sri Lanka Alliance Air flights

- The Union Cabinet has granted ex-post facto dispensation to **Alliance Air**, a 100 per cent subsidiary of Air India, to fly on international sectors between **India** and **Sri Lanka**.
- A special dispensation is allowed for the interim period till Alliance Air deploys minimum of 20 aircraft or 20 per cent of total capacity, whichever is higher for domestic operations.
- India has close bilateral ties with Sri Lanka and our interest is to increase connectivity and to expand people to people contacts between the two countries.
- There was no commercial operation scheduled from Palaly and Batticaloa airports.

Economic Survey – 2020 Highlights:

- Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister, tabled the Economic Survey of India 2020 in the Parliament.
 - It pegged FY21 GDP growth at 6 to 6.5 per cent. Industrial growth was estimated at 2.5% and Agriculture at 2.8%.
 - The survey highlighted the fact that 2.62 crore new jobs were created in rural and urban areas between 2011-12 and 2017-18. It said that FY20 tax collections are expected to be lower than the estimates.
 - **Theme:** Wealth Creation, Promotion of pro-business policies, strengthening of trust in the economy
- Infrastructure
- The Survey says that in order to achieve 5 trillion USD by 2024-25, India has to spend 1.4 trillion USD.
 - This has to be done to avoid the constraint of lack of infrastructural growth in the path of India's target.

Prices and Inflation

- Inflation Trends: Inflation witnessing moderation since 2014- Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation increased from 3.7 per cent in 2018-19 (April to December, 2018) to 4.1 per cent in 2019-20 (April to December, 2019).
- WPI inflation fell from 4.7 per cent in 2018-19 (April to December, 2018) to 1.5 per cent during 2019-20 (April to December, 2019).
- Drivers of CPI - Combined (C) inflation: During 2018-19, the major driver was the miscellaneous group
- During 2019-20 (April-December), food and beverages was the main contributor.
- Among food and beverages, inflation in vegetables and pulses was particularly high due to low base effect and production side disruptions like untimely rain.

Export numbers

- Top export items: Petroleum products, precious stones, drug formulations & biologicals, gold and other precious metals.
- Largest export destinations in 2019-20 (April-November): United States of America (USA), followed by United Arab Emirates (UAE), China and Hong Kong.
- The merchandise exports to GDP ratio declined, entailing a negative impact on BoP position.
- Slowdown of world output had an impact on reducing the export to GDP ratio, particularly from 2018-19 to H1 of 2019-20.
- Growth in Non-POL exports dropped significantly from 2009-14 to 2014-19.

Fiscal Developments

- Revenue Receipts registered a higher growth during the first eight months of 2019-20, compared to the same period last year, led by considerable growth in Non-Tax revenue.
- Gross GST monthly collections have crossed the mark of Rs. 1 lakh crore for a total of five times during 2019-20 (up to December 2019).
- Structural reforms undertaken in taxation during the current financial year: Change in corporate tax rate.

Ease of Doing Business in India

- A jump of 79 positions to 63 in 2019 from 142 in 2014 in World Bank's Doing Business rankings.
- India still trails in parameters such as Ease of Starting Business, Registering Property, Paying Taxes and Enforcing Contracts.

China-model for jobs

Survey suggests a strategy similar to one used by China to grab this opportunity:

- Specialization at large scale in labour-intensive sectors, especially network products.
- Laser-like focus on enabling assembling operations at mammoth scale in network products.
- Export primarily to markets in rich countries.
- Trade policy must be an enabler.

Creating Jobs

- By integrating "Assemble in India for the world" into Make in India, India can: o Raise its export market share to about 3.5 % by 2025 and 6 % by 2030.
- To Create 4 crore well-paid jobs by 2025 and 8 crore by 2030.
- 12.2 % cumulative annual growth rate of new firms in the formal sector during 2014-18, compared to 3.8 % during 2006-2014.
- About 1.24 lakh new firms created in 2018, an increase of about 80 % from about 70,000 in 2014.

India's 'growth' in rankings

- India Ranks Third in Number of New Firms Created; 1,24,000 New Firms Created in 2018 Compared to 70,000 In 2014
- As Against 3.8 % Growth Rate in Number of New Firms Created During 2006-14, Growth Rate During 2014-18 Rises to 12.2%
- More Service Sector Firms Created Compared to Manufacturing, Agriculture or Infrastructure; Entrepreneurial Activity Highest in Delhi, UP, Mizoram, Kerala, A&N Islands & Haryana
- Entrepreneurial Activity in Manufacturing Sector Highest in Gujarat, Meghalaya, Puducherry, Punjab and Rajasthan
- Birth of New Firms Heterogeneous Across Indian Districts & Sectors: Economic Survey

Housing sector boost

- 47.33 Lakh Houses Completed Per Year in 2018-19 Under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana- Gramin over 11.95 Lakh Houses in 2014-15: Economic Survey
- Over 10 Crore Toilets Built in Rural Areas Under Swachh Bharat Mission- Gramin (SBM-G) Since 2014
- 10 Year Rural Sanitation Strategy (2019-2029) Launched to Focus on Sustaining Sanitation Behaviour Change

India becomes 2nd Largest Emerging Green Bond Market

- Economic Survey observed that India has the Second largest Emerging Green Bond Market after China. The SBI entered the market with an US\$650 million Certified Climate Bond. India also joined International Platform on Sustainable Finance (IPSF) in 2019 to scale up the environmentally sustainable investments.

Forex reserve estimated at \$ 461.2 billion in 2019-20

- India Economic Survey Live: Forex reserve estimated at \$ 461.2 billion in 2019-20
- India's Balance of Payments Position Improves, as Current Account Deficit Declines Further
- Foreign Exchange Reserves Continue to Be Comfortable
- FDI Inflows and Overseas Remittances on an Upward Graph
- **Agriculture to grow at 2.8%**
- **Industrial growth estimated at 2.5%**

Impact of India's trade agreements on overall trade balance

- India Economic Survey Live: Survey analyses the impact of India's trade agreements on overall trade balance:- India's exports increased by 13.4 % for manufactured products and 10.9 % for total merchandise- Imports increased by 12.7 % for manufactured products and 8.6 per cent for total merchandise.- India gained 0.7 % increase in trade surplus per year for manufactured products and 2.3 % per year for total merchandise.

Thalinomics in focus

- The Survey states that across India and also the 4 regions- North, South, East and West- it is found that the absolute prices of a vegetarian Thali have decreased significantly since 2015-16 though the price has increased in 2019.
- The Economic Survey 2019-20 presented in Parliament by the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirjala Sitharaman states that affordability of vegetarian Thalies improved 29 per cent from 2006-07 to 2019-20 while that for non-vegetarian Thalies by 18 per cent.

Govt soon to launch 3rd phase of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

- The government will soon launch third phase of **the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)**. Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Mahendra Nath Pandey stated, the government has decided to link the scheme with the school education to bring a revolutionary change in the field of skill development.
- The government had launched the PMKVY scheme in 2015 to mobilize youth to take up skill training with the aim of increasing productivity and aligning the training and certification to the needs of the country.
- The scheme was revamped as PMKVY -2 in 2016 with an aim to train one crore youth by the year 2020.

Govt sets up teams to examine villages bordering Nepal for novel coronavirus infection

- Union Health Ministry has constituted central teams of experts for examination of villages bordering **Nepal** for novel **coronavirus infection**.
- According to the Ministry, villages bordering Nepal in the states of **Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Sikkim** and **West Bengal** will be inspected by central teams for community-level Information Education Communication activities for novel coronavirus.
- Five separate teams of doctors from the National Centre for Disease Control, Safdarjung Hospital, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital among others have been set up.

Central govt issues advisory to States/ UTs to implement vehicle registration system

- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued an advisory to all States to implement the system of vehicle registration as per Rules notified under **the Central Motor Vehicle Act 1988**.
- The advisory was issued after it came to the notice of the Ministry that in some States, vehicles are not being registered in spite of vehicles having Valid Type Approval certificates.

- The Advisory states, that the **VAHAN system** provides a mechanism for the inventory of vehicles being uploaded by the vehicle manufacturers against valid type-approval certificates.
- The Ministry has asked the Transport Departments of States and UTs to implement the system of registration of vehicles based on the production of type approval certificate and **Form 22**.

NIFM, Faridabad renamed 'Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial Management'

- The Centre has decided to rename the **National Institute of Financial Management (NIFM), Faridabad**, as '**Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial Management**' (AJNIFM).
- NIFM, Faridabad was set up in 1993 as a registered society under the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, with the mandate to train officers of various finance and accounts services recruited by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) through the Civil Services Examination, as also officers of the Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICoAS). The Union Finance Minister is the **President** of the **NIFM society**.

15 crore loans extended to women under PMMY till Jan 2020, TN tops

- Over **15 crore loans**, amounting to **Rs 4.78 lakh crore**, have been disbursed to women borrowers under **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)**, stated Anurag Singh Thakur, Union Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs .
- "As on 31.01.2020, **over 15 crore loans** have been disbursed to women borrowers, since inception of the scheme, amounting to **Rs 4.78 lakh crore** under PMMY."
- The top three loan borrowers states are **Tamil Nadu** (Rs 58,227.47 crore), **West Bengal** (Rs 55,232.19 crore) and **Karnataka** (Rs 47,714.04 crore). However, the Union Territories received the lowest amount of loans with Daman and Diu Rs 10.28 crore, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Rs 94.80 crore, and Lakshadweep Rs 5.07 crore.

Indian Railways zone becomes 1st in India to have energy-neutral station

- Indian Railways takes a huge leap towards environmental sustainability. The Indian Railways **South Central Railways (SCR) zone** has become the first zonal railway in the country to have functional "**energy neutral**" railway stations on the network.
- The anticipated energy generation from these energy neutral stations is coming to be around **1.3 lakh units** annually. The SCR zone expects that solar power generated at these stations will lead to savings of Rs 13 lakh per year.
- The total capacity of all the solar panels installed at the 13 energy neutral stations is 99 kWp.
- The South Central Railways has converted a total of 13 railway stations into "**energy neutral**" stations, which is the highest amongst all the zones across the Indian Railways network.

Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra in New Delhi renamed as Sushma Swaraj Bhawan

- Government has decided to rename **Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra** in New Delhi as **Sushma Swaraj Bhawan** and **Foreign Service Institute** in the national capital as **Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service**.
- The announcement was made by the Ministry of External Affairs in the honour of the legacy and decades of public service of the former External Affairs Minister.
- The MEA stated, it is solemn tribute to the invaluable contribution of Mrs. Swaraj to Indian diplomacy, the cause of the Indian diaspora and the ethos of public service.

PM Modi to hold talks with Portuguese President in New Delhi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi holds delegation-level talks with **President of Portugal Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa** in New Delhi. The visiting dignitary will meet President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan who will host a banquet in his honour.
- **Mr de Sousa** arrived in **New Delhi** on a four-day visit to India. This is President Marcelo's first visit to India. The last visit by a President of Portugal to India was in 2007
- During his visit, Portuguese President travelled to Maharashtra and Goa. India's relations with Portugal are marked by warmth and friendship and have assumed dynamism in recent years.

E-Cigarettes Banned Across All Indian Airports and Aircrafts - Aviation Security Regulator

- Aviation security regulator **BCAS** has banned **e-cigarettes** and similar products on all airports and aircraft in India, according to an official document. "
- In September last year, the Central government banned production, sale and import of e-cigarettes and similar products citing health risk to people, especially the youth.
- The government imposed the ban under the **Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes** (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement) Act, which was passed in December 2019.
- The Act defines e-cigarettes as devices that heat a substance, with or without nicotine and flavours, to create an aerosol for inhalation.

Centre releases Rs 19,950 cr as GST compensation to states, UTs

- The Central Government has released **19,950 crore rupees** as **GST compensation to states**. The amount was released to states. With this release of GST compensation, the Central Government has released a total of **over 1.20 lakh crore rupees** towards GST compensation to the states during current fiscal.
- In the financial year 2018-19, an amount of over **95 thousand crore rupees** was collected as GST compensation of which over **69 thousand crore rupees** was released to the States and Union Territories as GST compensation.

Fourth Anniversary of Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission to be observed on 21st Feb

- The fourth Anniversary of the launch of **Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission** (SPMRM) will be observed On 21st February 2016, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the Mission with the vision to deliver catalytic interventions to rural areas on the threshold of growth.
- The Mission aims at transforming these Rurban clusters by stimulating local economic development, enhancing basic services and creating well planned Rurban clusters.
- Under the mission, **300 Rurban clusters** are envisaged to be developed in a time-bound manner. Spurred by the success of Rurban clusters, NITI Aayog has recently proposed a new and extended programme for over a 1,000 clusters in next three years.

V Prez inaugurates four-day Indian Students' Parliament in New Delhi

- Vice President **M Venkaiah Naidu** has urged the younger generation to join politics in a big way. Inaugurating the **four-day Indian Students' Parliament** in **New Delhi**, Mr Naidu stated, politics is a vehicle for serving the people and bringing about the desired socio-economic change.
- Politics is a vehicle to take the country to new levels of development and strengthening the foundations of democracy.

PM to launch 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations; also to lay foundation stone for Bundelkhand Expressway

- PM Narendra Modi will launch 10000 Farmer Producer Organizations, FPOs all over the country from **Chitrakoot** in **Uttar Pradesh**.
- These FPOs will help in collectivization of small, marginal and landless farmers to give them strength to deal with issues like lack of access to technology, quality seed, fertilizers and pesticides including requisite finances.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also lay the foundation stone for the **Bundelkhand Expressway at Chitrakoot**. The Uttar Pradesh Government is constructing the Expressway which will pass through the districts of Chitrakoot, Banda, Hamirpur and Jalaun.
- It will link the Bundelkhand area to the national capital Delhi through **Agra-Lucknow expressway** and **Yamuna expressway** and play a vital role in the development of Bundelkhand region.
- India has huge defence equipment requirements spanning from land systems, ships and submarines to fighter aircraft, helicopters, weapons and sensors.
- The requirements are worth over **250 billion dollars** by **2025**. In order to fulfill the requirements, the government had announced setting up of **Defence Industrial Corridor** in **Uttar Pradesh** during the Investors Summit on **21st February 2018** at **Lucknow**.
- Atal Bhujal Yojna will be implemented in six districts of Bundelkhand along with Har Ghar Jal Scheme for better water management in this drought hit region.
- The 296-kilometre long Bundelkhand Expressway will pass through the districts of Chitrakoot, Banda, Hamirpur and Jalaun.

NITI Aayog selects J&K for first pilot project among all States and UTs on Sustainable Developmental Goals

- NITI Aayog has selected Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir for first pilot project among all States and UTs on **Sustainable Developmental Goals**. It would get a chance to work with **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.
- This was informed by Principal Secretary **Rohit Kansal** in a meeting at Jammu .
- He also reviewed the progress made under different Outreach Programmes conducted across **J&K**.

Minister Arjun Munda launched Programme for Capacity Building of ST Representatives in LSG in Odisha

- The "**Programme for Capacity Building of Scheduled Tribe Representatives in Local Self Governments**" was launched by the Union Tribal Affairs Minister **Shri Arjun Munda** at **Bhubaneswar, Odisha**.
- Capacity Building initiative: The program included Technical sessions on topics such as **Tribal Development Paradigms, Alienation of Tribal Land, Van DhanVikas Kendra** and Innovation of Tribal Development.
- The initiative is aimed to empower tribal PRI representatives by enhancing their decision-making capabilities at local government level.

Government Approves Rs 162 crore under 'Operation Greens' Scheme

- Centre has approved **Rs 162 crore** under '**Operation Greens**' scheme that has an outlay of **Rs 500 crore** to stabilize the supply of 'TOP' crops i.e. tomato, onion and potato. This will ensure their availability throughout the year without price volatility.
- The scheme that was announced in the budget 2018-19 aims at improving value realization for cultivators by targeted interventions to strengthen production clusters & Farmer Producer Organizations and linking them with the market.

- Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Food Processing Minister stated that 5 projects have been sanctioned in the country and more were lined up for approvals. She stated, The total outlay of the projects is **Rs 426 crore** and the grant we would give is **Rs 162 crore**.

Indian pharma & biotech industry expected to grow to 100 billion dollars by 2025: Piyush Goyal

- Union Minister for Commerce and Industries Piyush Goyal has stated that the Indian pharma and biotech industry is expected to grow to **100 billion dollars** by **2025** from the current size of about **40 billion dollars**.
- The Minister assured the industry that the government will be supporting the life sciences industry to thrive further by granting patent approvals in a record period of time.
- Earlier, Genome Valley Excellence Award has been presented to Novartis CEO Dr **Vas Narasimhan**.

IDSA to be renamed as Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

- Union Government has decided to rename the **Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses**, IDSA as **Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses**.
- The decision has been taken to **honour** the commitment and legacy of late **Manohar Parrikar**.
- It will align the vision and aspiration of the premier defence institute with the contribution of the **former Defence Minister** and **Padma Bhushan awardee**.

HM Amit Shah to inaugurate Conference on Combating Drug Trafficking for BIMSTEC partner nations

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah will inaugurate a two-day Conference on **Combating Drug Trafficking for BIMSTEC Partner Nations** in **New Delhi**. The conference is being organized by **Narcotics Control Bureau**.
- This platform will provide an opportunity to all the member nations to deliberate on the increased threats posed by drug trafficking.
- Asian countries are increasingly being affected by drug trafficking and BIMSTEC is one of the most effective platforms to tackle this global threat.
- The BIMSTEC is a regional organization comprising seven Member States lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal - Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand besides India.

Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996 amended to make arbitration process user friendly

- The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 was amended by the **Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act, 2015** in order to make arbitration process user-friendly, cost-effective and ensure speedy disposal and neutrality of arbitrators
- The Amendment Act seeks to add a new Part to the Act of 1996 for the establishment and incorporation of an independent body namely, **the Arbitration Council of India (ACI)** for the purpose of grading of arbitral institutions and accreditation of arbitrators, etc.
- As per the Act, ACI will be headed by a Chairperson, who has been a Judge of the Supreme Court or a Chief Justice or Judge of a High Court or an eminent person, having special knowledge and experience in the conduct or administration of arbitration, to be appointed by the Centre in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- Section 43M of the Act provides for the Secretariat to the Council consisting of such number of officers and employees as may be prescribed by the Central Government.

NHAI to waive off FASTag cost between 15-29 Feb

- National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has decided to waive off the **FASTag** cost of **100 rupees** for NHAI FASTag between **15th to 29th** of February.

- Road users can visit any authorized physical point-of-sale locations with a valid Registration Certificate (RC) of the vehicle and get an NHA FASTag free of cost.
- NHA FASTag may be purchased from all NH fee plazas, RTOs, Common Service Centres, transport hubs and petrol pumps. To search for the nearest NHA FASTag point-of-sale locations, one may download MyFASTag App, or visit www.ihmcl.com or Call 1033 NH Helpline number.
- The applicable security deposit and minimum balance amount for FASTag wallet will remain unchanged. The decision is aimed at further increasing digital collection of user fee through FASTag at NH fee plazas.

Dr Jitendra Singh launches CPGRAMS Reforms at National Workshop on e-office in New Delhi

- Minister for Personnel and Public Grievances Dr Jitendra Singh inaugurated a **National Workshop on e-office in New Delhi**. Dr Singh also launched the **Centralized Public Grievance Redress And Monitoring System, CPGRAMS Reforms** at the event.
- There has been a significant jump in the number of public grievances received against government departments as it touched the 19 lakh mark in 2019 as compared to 2 lakh such complaints in 2014.
- over 95 per cent grievances have been disposed of by the government. The Minister stated, this happened due to the better and prompt response from the government.

External Affairs Ministry issues travel advisory for Indians travelling to five provinces of Iraq

- External Affairs Ministry has stated that **Indian nationals** may now consider travelling to **Iraq** except to the **five provinces of Nineveh, Salahuddin, Diyala, Anbar, and Kirkuk**.
- These five provinces remain unsafe due to the prevailing security situation in the country.
- Those Indian nationals wishing to travel for employment and already having work permits and appropriate visas may return to their jobs in the safe areas in Iraq.

EAM to inaugurate Indian Pavilion at 70th Berlin International Film Festival in Germany

- External Affairs Minister **Dr S Jaishankar** was inaugurated **Indian Pavilion at 70th Berlin International Film Festival** on February 20 in **Germany**.
- India Pavilion provides a platform to popularize Indian cinema in the overseas market and facilitate new business opportunities.

Govt to achieve 50% Gross Enrollment Ratio in higher education by 2030, says HRD Minister

- Union Government has set an ambitious target to achieve **50 per cent Gross Enrollment Ratio** in higher education by **2030** to equip its working population with employable skills.
- Minister for Human Resource Development **Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank** stated this at the **33rd Convocation Ceremony of Indira Gandhi National Open University, IGNOU** in **New Delhi**.
- Currently, the Gross Enrollment Ratio is around 26 per cent. Mr Nishank stated, IGNOU and similar institutes have to play an important role to achieve the target of enrollment ratio.

CPCB identifies 60 pollution river stretches in northeastern states

- The **Central Pollution Board (CPCB)** has identified 60 pollution river stretches based on Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) in different northeastern states.
- According to the report, CPCB has identified over **350 polluted river** stretches across India and the number continues to grow. The report stated the polluted river stretches in the northeastern states are **Bharalu, Basistha, Kolong, Boko and Kopili in Assam; Wahumkhrach, Umshyrpi, Waikhyrwi, Rawaka, Kmai-um, Um-Myinkseh, Umpai,**

Mynkseh and Sarbang in Meghalaya; Nambul and Kongba in Manipur; Chite in Mizoram; Dhansiri in Nagaland and Gumti in Tripura.

- It also stated India stands a poor **120th** among 122 countries on the Water Quality Index based on the availability of clean and sufficient water.

Govt to set up Central Consumer Protection Authority by first week of April

- Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan has stated the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** will be set up by the **first week of April, 2020**. The CCPA to be set up under **Consumer Protection Act 2019**, will address issues related to consumer rights, unfair trade practices, misleading advertisements and impose penalties for selling spurious and adulterated products.
- An investigative wing will be formed under the aegis of the authority and it will carry out inquiries in matters related to unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements. He also stated the rules related to Consumer Protection Act will be finalized within one and half months.

Govt to launch Tilhan Mission to boost oilseed production

- The government will launch **Tilhan Mission** to make the country **self-reliant** in **oilseed production**.
- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar stated that the government is seriously working on enhancing the **oilseed production** in the country.
- The government has also decided to create 10 thousand Farmers Producer Organisation (FPO) across the country for which an assistance of over **6,000 crore rupees** will be provided. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana will not be mandatory for farmers and it will be voluntary for them.

India to switch to world's cleanest petrol, diesel from April 1

- India will switch to the **world's cleanest petrol and diesel** from **April 1** as it leapfrogs straight to Euro-VI emission compliant fuels from Euro-IV grades now. This has been achieved in just three years and not seen in any of the large economies around the globe.
- India will join the select league of nations using petrol and diesel containing just **10 parts per million** of **sulphur** as it looks to cut vehicular emissions that are said to be one of the reasons for the choking pollution in major cities.
- State-owned oil refineries spent about 35,000 crore rupees to upgrade plants that could produce **ultra-low sulphur** fuel. BS-VI has a sulphur content of just 10 ppm and emission standards are as good as CNG.

CBSE releases an app to locate the Exam Centre

- The **Central Board of Secondary Education** has released an app giving information about the examination center for the convenience of the students.
- Board Secretary Anurag Tripathi informed in a release that Exam center locator app-**CBSE ECL** is an android based mobile app which can be used by students to locate their examination center and see the distance between current location and examination center. The app is available on play store.
- CBSE has also launched an **Online Exam Center Management System-OECMS** for the Principals of the school.

Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurates New Institutional Campus at NIPHTR in Navi Mumbai

- Union Minister of Science & Technology, Health and Family Welfare and Earth Science Dr. **Harsh Vardhan** stated that public health should be a subject that needs thorough rejuvenation in India.
- He informed that in the first cabinet meeting, the centre had decided to start at least 75 medical colleges in those areas where malnutrition cases are mostly reported. He stated that in **sustainable development** and reduction of

maternal mortality rates, India under Modi's regime has achieved more than expectations. He also added that India has a very robust Ayushman Bharat Programs under which 86 lakhs patients have been enrolled.

Over Rs 50,000 Cr released by centre to farmers under PM-KISAN scheme

- The **PM-KISAN** scheme launched on **24th February** 2019, is to provide income support to all landholding farmers' families across the country and enable them to meet expenses related to agriculture as well as domestic needs.
- Under the Scheme, **six thousand rupees per year** is transferred in installments directly into the bank accounts of the farmers.
- Centre has released **50,850** crore rupees to farmers the scheme so far. As on the 20th of this month, 8.46 crores farmer families have been given the benefits.
- The scheme initially provided income support to all small and marginal farmers' families across the country, holding cultivable land up to two hectares.

PM Modi, US Prez Trump to jointly address Namaste Trump event at Motera stadium@

- US President Donald Trump will arrive in **Ahmedabad** on a two-day visit to India. He will be accompanied by his wife Melania, daughter Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner and top brass of his administration. In Ahmedabad, he will visit Sabarmati Ashram and take part in a roadshow with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The two leaders will jointly address over one lakh people at the **Namaste Trump** event at **Motera cricket stadium**.
- A cultural extravaganza will be organised at the stadium during the Namaste Trump event. Huge billboards of the two leaders and replicas of historic places in Gujarat have placed along the roads where people will greet the two leaders.

Ministry of MSME launches national level awareness programme

- Union Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has launched a **National Level Awareness Programme (NLAP)** 2020.
- The objective of the NLP is to spread awareness about schemes and activities undertaken by the Ministry and its attached organisations -- Office of Development Commissioner (MSME), **Khadi & Village Industries Commission**, Coir Board, National Small Industries Corporation Limited, National Institute of MSME, MSME Technology Centres, and Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Rural Industrialisation, as per an official statement issued.
- Under the NLAP, interactive sessions are being held with the students, taking up their queries, doubts about the schemes, and programmes as well as providing solutions to their enquiries.
- Along with the interactive sessions, the students are also shown audio-video films and presentation on the activities of the Ministry and its organisations, as well as provided details of schemes implemented by the Ministry.

FM Nirmala Sitharaman launches Ease 3.0 for tech-enabled banking

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the **Ease (Enhanced Access and Service Excellence) 3.0** reform agenda.
- EASE 3.0 agenda aims at providing smart, tech-enabled public sector banking for aspiring India. This launch of EASE 3.0 would change the customer's experience at the Public Sector Banks (PSBs).
- New features that customers of public sector banks may experience under EASE 3.0 reforms agenda include facilities like Palm Banking for "End-to-end digital delivery of financial service", "Banking on Go" via EASE banking outlets at frequently visited spots like malls, stations, complexes, and campuses.

The idea behind EASE 3.0 agenda

- The idea of establishing paperless and digitally-enabled banking at places where people visit the most.

- The government aims to focus on digitalization in the Public Sector Banks (PSBs) among themes that include responsible banking, PSBs as Udyami Mitra, customer responsiveness, credit take-off, and deep financial inclusions.
- Government is trying to overhaul the customer experience with the introduction of features like Dial-a-loan, credit at a click, alternate-data-based lending or other analytics-based credit offers.
- FM launches #EASE3.0 for smart & tech-enabled banking. Digital & data-driven #PSBs to enhance EASE of banking through the use of FinTech, AI & analytics. Overhauled customer experience with Dial-a-loan, Credit@click, & analytics-based credit offers.

MoS HRDS **Shri Sanjay Dhotre inaugurates the exhibition on clean air technologies at IIT Delhi**

- The exhibition showcases **clean air technologies** developed by IIT Bombay, IIT Ropar, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad and IIT Delhi. The Government of India is making serious efforts to drastically reduce pollution levels in the country.
- Union Minister of State for Human Resource Development **Shri Sanjay Dhotre** inaugurated the exhibition organised by **Centre of Excellence for Research on Clean Air technologies** at the **Indian Institute of Technology Delhi**.

Shri Nityanand Rai presides over the Valedictory Session of 1st 'National Conference on Coastal Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience (CDRR&R) – 2020'

- Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, **Shri Nityanand Rai** presided over the **valedictory session** of the **1st 'National Conference on Coastal Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience (CDRR&R) – 2020'**, organised by the **National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)**, in **New Delhi**.
- The one-day conference focussed on enhancing human capacity in terms of better understanding about coastal disaster risks and effective collaborative actions, by implementing Prime Minister's 10-point agenda and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, for reducing the risk and enhancing the resilience amongst the affected stakeholders.

Indian Railways implementing Automatic Identification and Data Collection (AIDC) of Rolling Stock (RFID Project)

- Indian Railways(IR) undertook the Radio-frequency identification (**RFID**) **project** which aims for automatic identification & data collection of rolling stock with focus on improving the safety and reliability.
- Two works for **RFID project** have been sanctioned by Railway Board for a total of **Rs. 112.96 Crores**.
- For implementing this project over Indian Railways, the **Centre for Railway Information Systems** (CRIS, the IT arm of the Indian Railways), **GS1 India** and **the Indian Industry** have come together in alignment with 'Make in India' initiative.
- Thereby creating a new segment in the **AIDC** (Automatic Identification and Data Collection) industry in India uniquely suited for the Indian Railways requirements. This project is being spearheaded by the Rolling Stock Department of the Indian Railways.
- Nearly 3,50,000 rolling stocks are expected to be tagged by 2021.

First Banana Container Train sent to JNPT for Exports

- Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority(APEDA), along with State Government of Andhra Pradesh and one of the largest member exporter of banana, dispatched the first shipment of 890 MTs of high quality bananas,loaded in 43 refrigerated containers,from Tadipatri, Anantpur in Andhra Pradesh to Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT) in Mumbai for export to international markets.
- The new parcel van was designed and manufactured in Kapurthala Rail Coach Factory. It is the first of its kind in Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches. The parcel van is to run at high speed of 130 km per hour.

- Indian Railways launched the first “Fruit Train”. It has recently launched a high capacity parcel van at Delhi Safdarjung Railway Station. Also, the Indian Railways has launched an exclusive Banana Container train to boost the exports of the fruit.

Union HRD Minister chairs the meeting of the Indian National Commission For Cooperation (INCCU) with UNESCO in New Delhi

- Union Human Resource Development Minister **Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'** chaired the meeting of the **Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO (INCCU)** in **New Delhi**.
- The membership of National Commission consists of members of **five Sub Commissions** namely, Sub Commission for (i) **Education** (ii) **Natural Sciences** (iii) **Social Sciences** (iv) **Communication** (v) **Culture**. The members of the Sub Commissions briefed the chair about the activities carried out by their respective Sub Commissions.

Prez Kovind to inaugurate 34th Surajkund Mela

- President Ram Nath Kovind will visit **Haryana** to inaugurate the **34th Surajkund International Crafts Mela** at **Faridabad**.
- The year, partner country in the fair is **Uzbekistan** and **Himachal Pradesh** is the **theme-state**.
- The Surajkund International Crafts Mela is being organized since 1987 to showcase the richness and diversity of handicrafts, handlooms and cultural heritage of India.

Union Budget proposes 16-point action plan to boost agriculture & farmers' welfare

- Union Budget has proposed a **16-point action plan** to boost agriculture and farmers welfare and doubling farmers' income by **2022**. It also seeks to double farmers' income by 2022.
- Comprehensive measures for **100 water-stressed districts** have also been proposed in the Budget. Meanwhile, **agricultural credit** target has been set at **15 lakh crore rupees**.
- **Twenty lakh farmers** will be provided funds for setting up standalone solar pumps. Farmers will also be allowed to set up solar units on barren and fallow lands and supply power to grids. Youth and fishery extension work will be enabled by rural youth as **Sagar Mitras**, forming 500 fish farmer producing organizations.
- Ms. Sitharaman stated, Indian Railways will set up **Kisan Rail** through PPP arrangement for transportation of perishable goods. She added that **Krishi UDAN** will be launched by **Civil Aviation Ministry** on international and national routes.
- It will improve value realization in North East and tribal districts. The Finance Minister further added, financing on **Negotiable Warehousing Receipts** will be integrated with **e- National Agricultural Market**.
- NABARD Refinancing Scheme will be further expanded, and agri credit target for the year **2020-21** has been set at **15 lakh crore rupees**.

Country's first special security team for RBI currency chests in Biha

- **Bihar's Home Guard wing** of armed police force, in association with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), jointly constituted a **Special Security Team (SST)** with 440 specially trained Home Guard jawans in **Bihar**.
- The trained cops of this Special Security Team would be deputed for the safety of **RBI's currency chests** within **Bihar's** 16 more or less extremist activity-affected districts.
- Director General (DG) of Bihar's Home Guard Rakesh Kumar Mishra accompanied by deputy general manager (security) of RBI Prashant Kumar Dayal, flagged off the first batch of 440 specially trained HG jawans in different districts. An integrated security duty is being developed with RBI for the currency chest security by trained jawans of HM.

Union govt sets target of 30km of highways a day in current fiscal

- Union Government has set the target for construction of highways about **30 kilometres** per day in the current fiscal.
- Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari stated, the average construction of Highways is 25.23 kilometres per day till December in 2019-20 whereas it was 24.37 kilometres per day during the corresponding period in 2018-19.
- A total of **two thousand one hundred 55 kilometres** length of roads have been built in the first three months of the current financial year as compared to two thousand three hundred 51 kilometres in the corresponding period last year.

273 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras established till Jan 2020: Govt

- Government stated that as on January 2020, **723 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK)** have been established in the country.
- Skill development and entrepreneurship Minister Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey stated his ministry is implementing demand driven scheme, **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** 2016-20 for short duration skill development training.
- The minister informed the House that DGFT under **skill development** ministry is also implementing long duration vocational courses through industrial training institutes.
- **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) scheme** for skill development is being implemented through its institutional framework in the country with the objective to improve the occupational skills and technical knowledge of the neo literate.

38 Cr bank accounts opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana till January: MoS Anurag Thakur

- Around 38 crore bank accounts have been opened under the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana** till last month. Minister of State for Finance, Anurag Thakur stated, out of **38 crore accounts**, around **31 crore accounts** are operative and the number of these accounts has increased every year since the launch of the scheme.
- No penalty was imposed on Jan Dhan accounts for non-maintenance of minimum balance. He added that as per the guidelines of the RBI, there is no requirement for maintaining minimum balance in such accounts.
- Average consumer price index-combined inflation was recorded at **5.9 per cent** in the year **2014-15** whereas it was around **3.4 per cent** in 2018-19. Inflation rate during the period of April to December 2020 was recorded at **4.1 per cent**.

DST launches SATHI Initiative for building shared, professionally managed strong S&T infrastructure

- To address the need for building shared, professionally managed and strong Science and Technology infrastructure in the country which is readily accessible to academia, start-ups, manufacturing, industry and R&D labs, the Department of Science & Technology has launched a unique scheme called "**Sophisticated Analytical & Technical Help Institutes (SATHI)**".
- These Centres are expected to house major analytical instruments to provide common services of high-end analytical testing, thus avoiding duplication and reduced dependency on foreign sources.
- These would be operated with a transparent, open access policy. DST has already set up three such centres in the country, one each at **IIT Kharagpur**, **IIT Delhi** and **BHU** at a total cost of Rs 375 Cores.
- It is planned to set up five SATHI Centres every year for the next four years.
- Besides SATHI initiative, support to 100 top-performing departments in universities and IITs etc will be provided this year with an investment of Rs. 500 crores for augmentation of their research facilities to global benchmarks.

PM Modi sets target of 5 billion dollars for defence exports in next five years

- PM Narendra Modi has stated that his government has set a defence export target of 5 billion dollars in the next five years.
- Inaugurating the DefExpo, Mr Modi stated, in 2014, the export of defence equipment from India was about 2,000 crore rupees. In the last 2 years, it has gone up to 17,000 crore rupees. In the next five years, our target is export of 5 billion US dollars, which is about 35,000 crore rupees.
- The eleventh edition of the mega defence event is being held in Lucknow with the theme "**India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub**".

MSME implemented new scheme SFURTI to set up traditional industries clusters

- Ministry of MSME is implementing a '**Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries**' (SFURTI) Scheme under which financial support is being provided for setting up of traditional industries clusters viz. Khadi, Coir & Village industries clusters.
- The objectives of the SFURTI Scheme are:
- To develop clusters of traditional industries in the country over a period of five years.
- To make traditional industries more competitive, market-driven, productive and profitable.
- To strengthen the local governance system of industry clusters, with active participation of the local stakeholders, so that they are enabled to development initiatives.
- To build up innovated and traditional skills, improved technologies, advanced processes, market intelligence and new models of public-private partnerships, so as to gradually replicate similar models of cluster-based regenerated traditional industries.

Govt has set target of installation of 100 GigaWatt solar power by Dec 2022

- The Government has set a target of installation of **100 GigaWatt** solar power and **60 GigaWatt** wind power capacity in the country by **December 2022** by implementing various schemes.
- He added that Grid connected solar power capacity of over 33 thousand seven hundred megawatt has been installed in the country till **31st December** last year.
- Over **37 thousand five hundred** megawatt of wind power was also installed till the end of last year.

Around 5,70,000 inhabited village including gram panchayats covered by mobile service: Govt

- Government informed that around **five lakh 70 thousands** inhabited village including gram panchayats have been covered by the mobile service.
- The Rajya Sabha, Electronics and Information Technology Minister, Ravi Shankar Prasad stated, mobile coverage in remaining villages is being provided by the government and telecom service providers in a phased manner.
- Around **four lakh nine** thousand kilometer optical fiber cable have been laid down till the last month and around one lakh 33 thousands gram panchayats have been made service ready.
- **Bharat Net** project is being implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all the gram panchayats.

39 Mega Food Parks and 298 Integrated Cold Chain Projects sanctioned under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)

- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has sanctioned **39 Mega Food Parks** and **298 Integrated Cold Chain Projects** throughout the country to fill in the gaps across the value chain and establishing the Cold Chain Grid.

- The MoFPI is focusing on building cold chain infrastructure across the country, for seamless transfer of perishables from production to consumption areas, through the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)**, which comprises of component schemes namely (i) Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure, (ii) Mega Food Park, (iii) Creation of Backward & Forward Linkages, (iv) Creation/ Expansion of Food Processing and Preservation Capacities (v) Agro Processing Clusters and (vi) Operation Greens.

India-Central Asia business council launched

- Initiative to boost business amid an economic slowdown, the Modi government and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) together launched **India-Central Asia Business Council**.
- The nominated chambers from India, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan came together to formally declare their association to collaborate and provide an industry view to the governments of the six countries.
- The Council will also share its recommendations on how to promote business in the region and with each other.
- The Council has prioritized discussions on energy, pharmaceuticals, automotive, agro-processing, education and urban infrastructure and transport, civil aviation, IT and tourism.

More than 1.27 cr pads of Suvidha Sanitary Napkins sold through Jan Aushadhi Kendras

- The government stated more than **one crore twenty-seven lakh** pads of **Suvidha Sanitary Napkins** priced at one rupee per pad have been sold through **Jan Aushadhi Kendras** across the country till the end of last month.
- Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister D V Sadananda Gowda stated, after re-launch of Suvidha pads a huge upsurge in demand is observed, which is more than five times of normal demand.
- Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana has entered into a rate contract with three vendors for procurement of nearly eight crore pads per annum.

Govt launched NCAP as a long-term national level strategy to tackle air pollution: Babul Supriyo

- Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Babul Supriyo informed that the Central Government launched **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)** as a long-term, time-bound, national level strategy to tackle the air pollution problem across the country.
- The Minister stated that the programme targets to achieve 20 to 30 per cent reduction in PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations by **2024** keeping 2017 as the base year for the comparison of concentration.
- Ministry also has earmarked **10 crore rupees** per city for various components that includes installation and commissioning of **Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS)**, creating green buffer zone along the roads, mechanical street sweeper, Mobile Enforcement Unit, public awareness and capacity building activities, water sprinkler.

SC appoints retired Kerala HC judge to prepare inventory of ornaments at Sabarimala templePTI

- The Supreme Court appointed retired Kerala High Court judge **C N Ramachandaran Nair** to prepare an inventory and valuation report of ornaments of **Lord Ayyappa of Sabarimala temple**. Different sects of the Pandalam Royal family have claimed those ornaments.
- The court granted four more weeks to the state government to prepare draft legislation regarding the administration of the historic Sabarimala temple.

Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat Campaign gets underway across country

- An **18 day long focused Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat Campaign** gets underway across the country. The campaign, being organised by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, will continue till 28th of February.

- The broad objectives of Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat include celebrating the Unity in Diversity of our nation and promoting the spirit of national integration through engagement between all states and union territories.
- During this period, they carry out a structured engagement with one another in the spheres of language, literature, cuisine, festivals, cultural events, and tourism.
- The paired states and union territories sign MoUs with each other, delineating a set of activities that they would carry out.
- After the creation of union territory of Ladakh, it has been paired along with Jammu and Kashmir with Tamil Nadu. Punjab has been paired with Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand with Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh with Kerala, Delhi with Sikkim, and Rajasthan with Assam.

Govt plans to construct 1,000 more urbanized clusters in rural areas

- Union Minister for Rural Development Narendra Singh Tomar has stated, after evaluating the success rate of **Rurban Clusters scheme**, government is intending to move ahead to construct **1,000 more urbanized clusters** in rural areas.
- Speaking at the 4th Anniversary Celebration function of **Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission**, SPMRM in New Delhi, Mr Tomar stated, sense of mutual cooperation between people, who want urbanization in their rural space and concerned ministry officials will be instrumental in ensuring the success of the scheme.
- The Minister launched **GeoRurban**, a mobile app to be used for Geo-tagging for the assets in the rurban clusters.

Government amends provisions of Arms Act, 1959 and Arms Rules, 2016

- Government has amended provisions of **Arms Act, 1959** and **Arms Rules, 2016** to increase the number of firearms that can be kept by shooters and enhanced quantity of ammunition fixed for practice for the year.
- As per the new rules, now international medalists and renowned shooters are allowed to keep additional weapons up to a total of **twelve** under the exempted category, which earlier was **seven**. Through the amendments it has also been clarified that no license is required for Indian citizens for acquisitions, possession of small arms falling under the category of curio.
- However, appropriate license as prescribed would be required for use or to carry or transport such small arms. Without the endorsement of such firearms in the prescribed license of the owner, no ammunition shall be sold for their use.

Govt aims to make Chhattisgarh a steel hub of the country: Dharmendra Pradhan

- Union Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan has stated that the government aims to make **Chhattisgarh a steel hub** of the country. Mr. Pradhan stated that the steel industry has an important role to play in making India a five trillion dollar economy.
- Union Steel Minister visited the **Bhilai Steel Plant** in **Durg district** and held meetings with the plant officials. He directed the officials of Steel Authority of India Ltd- SAIL to draw an Action Plan to enhance production and ensure safety at its plants.
- Mr. Pradhan visited iron ore mines of the Bhilai Steel Plant in Dallirajhra town in Balod district and laid the foundation of a beneficiation plant there.

Union Minister inaugurates National Cyber Research Centre

- Union Minister of State for Home Affairs **G Kishan Reddy** inaugurated **National Cyber Research, Innovation and Capacity Building Centre** at **Central Detective Training Institute (CDTI) campus** located at **Ramanthapur** in Hyderabad.

- The Government has anticipated cyber threat and has taken several landmark steps in the recent past. A dedicated division was created in October 2017 under the Ministry of Home Affairs, for addressing the cyber security threat in the country.
- The Minister stated that CDTI is one of the seven verticals under Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and highlights the growing relevance of continuous research and innovation in the fight against cyber crime.
- The Minister also stated that the MHA is also working on setting up **Regional Cyber Crime Coordination Centre** (R4C) in the States. It is in collaboration with I4C to further strengthen the cyber combat capabilities of the nation. CDTI Hyderabad will prove to be a central hub for entire South India.

Revision Points

Portfolio	Union Minister	Constituency
Ministry of personnel, public grievances and pensions	Narendra Modi	Varanasi
Ministry of Defence	Rajnath Singh	Lucknow
Ministry of Home Affairs	Amit Shah	Gandhinagar
Ministry of Road Transport and Highways & Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium enterprises	Nitin Gadkari	Nagpur
Ministry of Chemical and Fertilizers	DV Sadananda Gowda	Bangalore North
Ministry of Finance & Ministry of Corporate Affairs	Nirmala Sitharaman	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Consumer affairs, food and public distribution	Ram Vilas Paswan	NA
Ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare, Ministry of Rural Development & Ministry of Panchayati Raj	Narendra Singh Tomar	Morena
Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of communications & Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology	Ravi Shankar Prasad	Patna Sahib
Ministry of Food Processing Industries	Harsimrat Kaur Badal	Bathinda
Ministry of Social justice and empowerment	Thaawar Chand Gehlot	RS
Ministry of External Affairs	Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar	RS (Gujarat)

Ministry of Human Resource Development	Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'	Haridwar
Ministry of Tribal Affairs	Arjun Munda	Khunti
Ministry of Women and child Development & Ministry of Textiles	Smriti Zubin Irani	Amethi
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Science and Technology & Ministry of Earth Sciences	Dr Harsh Vardhan	Chandni Chowk
Ministry of environment, forest and climate change & Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprise	Prakash Javadekar	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Railways & Ministry of Commerce and Industry	Piyush Goyal	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Ministry of Steel	Dharmendra Pradhan	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Minority Affairs	Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi	Rajya Sabha
Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of coal & Ministry of Mines	Pralhad Joshi	Dharwad
Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship	Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey	Chandauli
Ministry of Animal Husbandry, dairying and fisheries	Giriraj Singh	Begusarai

Important International News

Covid-2019 is official name for disease caused by new coronavirus says WHO

- The **World Health Organization(WHO)** says the official name for the disease caused by the new coronavirus is **Covid-2019**.
- It comes after the death toll from the virus passed one thousand. Tens of thousands of people have been infected.
- The word coronavirus refers to the group of viruses it belongs to, rather than the latest strain.
- Researchers have been calling for an official name to avoid confusion and stigmatisation of any group or country

US President Donald Trump to visit India on February 24-25

- United States President **Donald Trump** will be coming to India later this month on a **two-day visit**. This would be Trump's maiden trip to India as the President of the United States.

- White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham stated in Washington that the President and First Lady Melania Trump will travel to **New Delhi** and **Ahmedabad** during the visit scheduled on 24th and 25th February.
- It stated that the department is expanding military-to-military cooperation and improving interoperability with India, including establishment of a new tri-service amphibious exercise **TIGER TRIUMPH**. Mr Trump's predecessor Barack Obama had travelled to India twice, in 2010 and 2015.

First 'Jerusalem-Mumbai Festival' held in Mumbai

- The first '**Jerusalem-Mumbai Festival**' was held in the capital of Maharashtra to showcase the special links between the two cities and to promote ties between India and Israel.
- The two-day festival seeks to promote artistic cooperation in the diverse fields of culture, such as **culinary art, music** and **dance**.
- **Jerusalem-Mumbai Festival** looks to showcase the special links between the two cities while demonstrating their unique cultural traditions.
- The festival took place on the lawns of the **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya Museum**.

US proposes USD 1.5 billion for Indo-Pacific to ensure region remains 'free and open'

- The Trump administration has proposed USD **1.5 billion** in budgetary allocation for 2021 fiscal for the crucial Indo-Pacific region.
- "The Budget provides **USD1.5 billion** for the Indo-Pacific, reflecting a strong Administration commitment to ensuring that the region remains free, open, and independent of malign Chinese influence.
- A total of **USD 30 million** is included in the budget for the global engagement centre dedicated to countering foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation from China.
- The budget also provides **USD 0.8 billion** for the **International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)** for private sector development internationally to support corporate growth in less-developed countries and to provide a transparent, high-quality alternative to "predatory Chinese international lending" in the Indo-Pacific and other strategic regions, it said.

New educational institution built with Indian assistance inaugurated in Nepal

- A new educational institution building constructed with Government of India financial assistance for students from the economically weaker sections was inaugurated in a remote area of **Gulmi district** in **Nepal**.
- The new three-storey building with Indian assistance of **2.5 crore rupees** is part of the **Chandrakot Campus** under the **Tribhuvan University**.
- The Chandrakot Campus was established in 2008 with an aim of imparting higher education to students.
- A new school built with Indian grant of **2.4 crore rupees** was inaugurated in **Nuwakot district** of Nepal as part of the Government of India's **post-earthquake rehabilitation programme**.

Thai Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn visits Indian Military Academy

- Princess **Maha Chakri Sirindhorn** of **Thailand** visited the Indian Military Academy to strengthen engagement and defence cooperation between the two countries.
- She was accompanied by a 20-member delegation of Thai diplomats and senior dignitaries.
- Princess Sirindhorn has also been an instructor and teaches history at **Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy (CRMA)**.
- CRMA is the military academy of Thailand Army that has graduated many of the southeast Asian nation's rulers, including its current **Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha**.

- India and Thailand conducted a joint military exercise at **Umroi in Meghalaya** as part of '**Maitree 2019**'.

India, Norway to strengthen bilateral cooperation to contain marine pollution

- Union Minister for Environment Forests and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar stated, the year **2020** will be a **Super Year for Environment**.
- India has initiated **Ocean dialogue** with Norway to address the **problem of Marine Plastic litter**. Both countries decided to strengthen the bilateral cooperation in **the field of environment and climate change particularly in the field of marine pollution**.
- Both countries discussed ways to ensure that the coming decade will be of rapid global action on the Environment. India and Norway have formed joint working groups on **Blue economy** with **sustainable development**.

South Africa keen to establish direct air connectivity between Mumbai & Johannesburg: Andrea Kuhn

- The newly appointed Consul General of South Africa in Mumbai **Andrea Kuhn** has asserted that her country is keen to establish direct air connectivity between **Mumbai** and **Johannesburg**.
- At a meeting with Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari at Mumbai's Raj Bhavan, direct air connectivity between the two financial capitals will prove mutually beneficial for the rising number of investors as well as tourists.

Bangladesh to sign Free Trade Agreement with Nepal

- Bangladesh and Nepal have agreed to sign a **Free Trade Agreement** to enhance trade between the two countries, a committee will be formed to work out the modalities of the agreement.
- Bangladesh has also agreed to allow Nepal to use its **Saidpur** airport located in its northernmost district of Nilphamari close to Nepal.
- Both the ministers discussed ways to enhance trade, investment and connectivity including use of seaports of Bangladesh. Bangladesh exports commodities worth **\$38 million** to Nepal and imports goods worth around **18 million dollars**.
- The Nepal Foreign Minister expressed the hope that Nepal will be able to provide **500 MW of hydroelectric power to Bangladesh** once the Indian Company GMR completes its project in Nepal.

UAE issues reactor license for first Arab nuclear power plant

- United Arab Emirates has issued a license for a reactor at its **Barakah nuclear power plant**, the first in the Arab world, hailing a "**historic moment**."
- The national nuclear regulator "**has approved the issuance**" of the operating license for the first of four reactors at the plant, stated **Hamad al-Kaabi**, the UAE representative to the **International Atomic Energy Agency**.
- The Barakah plant, located on the Gulf coast west of the UAE's capital, had been due to come online in late 2017 but faced a number of delays that officials attributed to safety and regulatory requirements.
- The plant is being built by a consortium led by the **Korea Electric Power Corporation** in a deal worth **over \$20 billion**.

Nepal celebrates 70th National Democracy Day

- **Nepal** celebrated its **70th National Democracy Day** A special ceremony was held at the Nepal Army Pavilion **Tudikhel in Kathmandu** to mark the occasion.
- In his address Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli stated after resolving conflict **Nepal** is now moving towards economic and social transformation. He further added Nepal has created its identity in the world and increased its prestige at various international fora.

Bangladesh to enhance Mongla Port Capacity

- The Executive Committee of the **National Economic Council (ECNEC)** of **Bangladesh** has approved the proposal to enhance the capacity of the **Mongla port**.
- The **Mongla port** capacity will be enhanced to ensure better facilities for the users.
- India has extended a line of credit for the expansion of the Mongla Port capacity. Out of the total estimated project cost of **Tk 6014 crore**, India will provide **Tk 4459 crore** equivalent to **\$ 530 million** as Line of Credit for the project.
- With the enhancement of the capacity of the Mongla port it would be able to handle **15 million tons** of cargo and 4 lakh shipping containers of a standard 20 feet size called TEUs.
- The project consists building of two container terminals and related infrastructure facilities at the port.
- On completion the project will significantly boost connectivity in the BBIN (Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal) region. It will also boost trade with **India, Bhutan and Nepal**.

UK announces new points-based visa system

- UK Home Secretary, Priti Patel has announced the launch of Britain's **new points-based visa system**. It aims at attracting the "**brightest and the best**" from the world, including from India.
- Ms Patel stated that the new system will cut down numbers of cheap, low-skilled migrating workers coming to the country.
- The new system will come into force from **January 1, 2021**, at the end of the transition period after UK's exit from the European Union (EU) last month.
- The new post-Brexit system, which will apply equally to the EU and non-EU countries like India, is based on assigning points for specific skills, qualifications, salaries and professions, with visas only awarded to those who gain enough points.

Seminar on Indian Defence Equipment held in Dhaka

- High Commission of India in Bangladesh organised a seminar on **Indian Defence Equipment** in **Dhaka**.
- India's High Commissioner to Bangladesh **Riva Ganguly Das** stated that India and Bangladesh have close cooperation in many diverse areas and it was natural for them to pursue further cooperation in the field of defence technologies.
- The Minister stated that Bangladesh's Security Forces have earned a name for themselves as disciplined and professional force.
- He stated the seminar provided an opportunity for **defence manufacturers** from India in developing fruitful partnerships with Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka: Government decides to withdraw from UNHRC consensus resolutions

- **Sri Lankan** Government formally announced its decision to withdraw from the **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)** resolution co-sponsored in 2015.
- The government has stated that the resolution had been co-sponsored without the consent of then President **Maithripala Sirisena**.
- The government under President **Gotabaya Rajapaksa** expressed its commitment to achieve sustainable peace through an inclusive, domestically designed reconciliation and accountability process, including through the appropriate adaptation of existing mechanisms.

India attends SCO defence and security experts meeting in Pakistan

- **Pakistan** hosted a two-day meeting of **defence and security experts** of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** in **Islamabad** which was attended by India and other member states.

- The **9th Defence and Security Expert Working Group** meeting of the SCO discussed different aspects of cooperation between the SCO member states' and regional security, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) - the media wing of the Pakistan army.
- For the first time, India will host the annual meeting of council of heads of government of the SCO.
- The SCO is a China-led **eight-member** economic and security bloc in which India and Pakistan were admitted as full members in 2017.
- Its founding members included **China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan** and **Uzbekistan**. The grouping has four observer states, namely **Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran** and **Mongolia**.

FATF decides to retain Pakistan in 'Grey List'

- **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** decided continuation of Pakistan in the '**Grey List**' and warned the country that stern action will be taken if it fails to check the flow of money to terror groups. The decision was taken at the Financial Action Task Force's plenary in **Paris**.
- The plenary has noted that Pakistan addressed only a few of the 27 tasks given to it in controlling funding to terror groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and the Hizbul Mujahideen, which are responsible for a series of attacks in India.
- Pakistan has to swiftly complete its full action plan by **June 2020**. If Pakistan fails to comply with the FATF directives, there is every possibility that the global body may put the country in the 'Black List' along with North Korea and Iran.

India, Sri Lanka sign MoU for up-gradation of infrastructure in plantation schools for estate workers of Indian origin Tweeted

- India and Sri Lanka have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for **up-gradation of infrastructure in plantation schools** for estate workers of Indian origin.
- The project envisages up gradation of infrastructure of 9 plantation schools as identified by Sri Lanka under an Indian grant assistance of **30 crore rupees**. The government of India has been implementing several projects in the field of education, deepening India-Sri Lanka cooperation in the education sector.
- These projects are in continuation of Government of India's people-oriented development cooperation with Government of Sri Lanka. India's overall commitment of development assistance to Sri Lanka stands at a total of around **3.5 billion US dollars** and among these, 560 million US dollars under grants.

Language Martyrs' Day 'Amar Ekushey' Observed in Bangladesh AIR

- Bangladesh observed the **Shaheed Dibash** known as '**Amar Ekushey**' across the country to pay tribute to the **martyrs of language movement**. The day is observed as Shaheed Dibash to commemorate the martyrs who were killed in firing by the Pakistani police on 21 February 1952 in Dhaka.
- The students were agitating to establish **Bangla** as the state language of Pakistan. Bangladesh was part of the then Pakistan which had declared Urdu as the only state language for both West Pakistan and East Pakistan which became Bangladesh after the liberation war of 1971.

Egypt to host 'India by the Nile' fest in March

- The annual '**India by the Nile**' festival in **Egypt** will be held from **March 2-10**, bringing with it a selection of classical and popular Indian art forms to the cities of **Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said** and **Fayoum**.

- The festival is organised by the Teamwork Arts (a company that specialises in showcasing Indian art at festivals all over the world) in cooperation with the Indian Embassy in Cairo and several other Egyptian partners, the Al Ahram newspaper said in a report on Friday.
- The festival will include "**En Route to Bollywood**". a colourful show featuring well-known songs from Bollywood films, accompanied by dancers.
- In addition, the Astha Dixit Dance Company will provide a modern perspective on one of the oldest Indian classical dance forms, kathak. The festival will also feature "**Yoga and Wellbeing**" sessions.

Bangladesh records sharp decline in Child malnutrition: UNICEF Survey

- The child malnutrition rate in Bangladesh has declined sharply over the last six years. The finding was reported in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2019, jointly conducted by the **Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)** and **UNICEF**.
- The rate of chronic malnutrition among children measured by the stunting level among them has come down from 42 percent in 2013 to 28 percent in 2019. The percentage of underweight children below 5 also declined from about 32 percent to 22.6 percent over the same period. The infant mortality rate has also declined from 46 to 34 per thousand live births between 2012-13 and 2019.
- The data for the **Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2019** was collected between January and June of 2019.
- The Global MICS Programme was developed by **UNICEF** in the 1990s. It collects internationally comparable data on a wide range of indicators on the situation of children and women for use in policies, programmes, and national development plans.

Sweden MP delegation visits the ECI

- A **ten-member delegation** of MPs, members of the Committee on the Constitution in **Riksdag**, the Parliament of **Sweden**, visited the Election Commission in New Delhi.
- The delegation met Chief Election Commissioner **Sunil Arora** and Election Commissioners **Ashok Lavasa** and **Sushil Chandra**.
- Ms Enstrom gave an overview of the Swedish electoral system in which simultaneous elections are held for municipal, county and national elections.

President of Myanmar arrives on a 4-day state visit to India

- President of Myanmar **U Win Myint** arrived in **New Delhi** on a four day state visit to India. Mr. U Win Myint is accompanied by the First Lady Daw Cho Cho. He will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Several agreements are expected to be signed after the talks. He is also scheduled to meet President Ram Nath Kovind. The President of Myanmar is scheduled to visit Bodh Gaya and Agra during his tour.

Facebook cancels its annual F8 developers conference

- **Facebook has cancelled its annual F8 developers conference**, the biggest annual event for the US tech giant, **over fears about the possible spread of the novel coronavirus**.
- US public health officials confirmed a coronavirus case in Northern California, the first of unknown origin out of about 60 cases, and have told Americans to be ready to cancel mass gatherings and work from home.
- Both Facebook and Microsoft said that they were withdrawing from the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco set for March.

Iran launches satellite, fails to put it into orbit

- Iran launched a satellite but failed to put it into orbit in a blow to its space programme. The attempted launch of the Zafar comes days before the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and crucial parliamentary elections in Iran on February 21.
- Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi admitted soon after that the launch has failed. Iran also unveiled a new a short-range ballistic missile and its new generation of engines designed to put satellites into space.

Bangladesh: 5th Dhaka Art Summit inaugurated

- The fifth edition of the biennial art extravaganza of Bangladesh, **Dhaka Art Summit** was inaugurated by State Minister for Cultural Affairs of Bangladesh K M Khalid.
- More than 500 artists, sculptors, architects and art professionals from various countries are participating in the Summit.
- The Summit featured live events, panel discussions and puppet shows among other things.

Somalia declares national emergency following locust infestation sweeping Horn of Africa

- **Somalia** has declared a **national emergency** following **locust infestation** sweeping the **Horn of Africa**, as insects devastate food supplies in one of the poorest and most vulnerable regions in the world.
- Food sources for people and their livestock are at risk.
- Experts say the locust swarms are the result of extreme weather swings. Somalia's declaration -- the first country in the region to do so -- is aimed at boosting national efforts in tackling the hungry insects.
- According to the regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group, East Africa is already experiencing a high degree of food insecurity, with over 19 million people facing acute hunger.
- There have been six major desert locust plagues in the 1900s, the last of which was in 1987-89. The last major upsurge was in 2003-05.

India, Maldives sign five MoUs for establishing Addu Tourism zone

- India and Maldives signed **five MoUs** for establishing the **Addu Tourism zone** in five islands of Addu atoll at a cost of 2.49 million dollars.
- The MOUs were signed between the High Commissioner of India Sunjay Sudhir, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulla Shahid and Addu City Council.
- A 6th MoU to set up a bottled water plant in Hoarafushi was also signed. All six projects are grant projects falling under India's High Impact Community Development Scheme (HICDP).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh inaugurated the month long Ekushey Book fair at the Bangla Academy premises in Dhaka.

- **Ekushey Book Fair** is the biggest and **longest book fair** of **Bangladesh**. It is organised every year in February commemorating the martyrs of the language movement during which eight people laid down their lives on February 21, 1952 for establishing **Bangla** as the official language of the then East Pakistan.
- The Prime Minister presented the **Bangla Academy literary award 2019** to ten eminent poets and writers on this occasion.
- She also unveiled the cover of a book 'Amar Dekha Naya Chin'- **The New China as I saw**, written by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

India send relief supplies to cyclone-hit Madagascar using its naval ship INS Airavat

- India has sent relief supplies to cyclone-hit Madagascar using its naval ship **INS Airavat**.

- Madagascar has been hit by a cyclone and there has been heavy flooding and landslides since last month, causing loss of lives and displacement of a number of people.
- Indian Navy launched **operation Vanilla** to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief at Madagascar.

Maldives rejoins Commonwealth

- The **Maldives** has once again become a member of the **Commonwealth of nations**. **President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih** made the announcement fulfilling one of his key presidential pledges.
- The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland, confirmed Maldives' reinstatement into the organization as its **54th member state**. The Maldives first became a member of the Commonwealth in 1982 but former President Abdulla Yameen decided to leave it in October 2016, amid mounting pressure from the group over corruption and deteriorating human rights.

Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

- Two lawmakers in Sweden have nominated Swedish teenage climate activist **Greta Thunberg** for the 2020 **Nobel Peace Prize**.
- Thunberg, 17, has encouraged students to skip school to join protests demanding faster action on climate change, a movement that has spread beyond Sweden to other European nations and around the world.
- She founded the **Fridays for Future** movement that has inspired similar actions by other young people.
- In 2019, she was among four people named as the winners of a **Right Livelihood Award**, also known as the "Alternative Nobel" and she was named **Time magazine's 'Person of the Year'**.

Pakistan declares national emergency to battle locusts

- Pakistan, which is facing its **worst locust attack** in decades, has declared **national emergency** to tackle the **insects destroying crops** on a large scale in Punjab province, country's main region for agricultural production.
- The country approved a National Action Plan (NAP) that requires a sum of Rs.7.3 billion to overcome the crisis.

UK to ban new petrol car sales from 2035

- Britain will bring forward a ban on sales of new petrol and diesel vehicles to **2035**, including hybrids. Prime Minister Boris Johnson will make the announcement at an event launching the 2019 United Nations Climate Change conference, COP26, to be held in **Glasgow** in November.
- The changes bring forward the ban by five years -- and now include **hybrid vehicles**.
- Britain has pledged to reduce **greenhouse gas emissions** to **net zero** by **2050**, with a mixture of cuts and off-setting pollution measures such as planting trees.

Bhutan to charge Rs 1200 entry fee for Indian tourists

- The Bhutan government passed legislation imposing an entry fee on tourists from **India, Bangladesh** and **Maldives**, according to media reports. The fee will be charged from July 2020.
- Tourists from India, Bangladesh and Maldives will have to pay a Rs.1,200 fee for entering the country. The fee is called a '**Sustainable Development Fee**' (SDF).
- The decision comes in light of the increasing number of '**regional tourists**' to the region and its effect on Bhutan's ecology.
- India's share in visitors to Bhutan is more than **69 per cent** with more than 19 lakh tourists visiting the country.
- SDF contributed more than \$20 million to Bhutanese government's direct revenue from tourism.

World Cancer Day 2020: 1 in 10 Indians Likely to Develop Cancer in Their Lifetime, Says Study

- World Cancer Day is observed on **February 4** and the **World Health Organization (WHO)** has released two global reports on this day. Organised by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), the day is an opportunity to create awareness to end the injustice of preventable suffering from cancer.
- The report reveals that **one in 10 Indians** will develop cancer during their lifetime and one in 15 will die from the disease. There is an estimated **1.16 million** new cancer cases registered each year in India and around 7,84,800 people die from it each year.
- The WHO report also revealed that the six major types of cancer recorded in India were **breast cancer, oral cancer, cervical cancer, lung cancer, stomach cancer, and colorectal cancer**.
- The theme for this year's World Cancer Day is '**I can, I will.**' The theme highlights the idea that everyone has the capacity to address the cancer burden and that together one can work together to reduce cancer risk factors.

WHO calls for USD 675m in donations to fight novel coronavirus

- The World Health Organization has called for **675 million US dollar** in donations for a plan to fight the **novel coronavirus**, mainly through investment in countries considered particularly "**at risk**".
- WHO chief Tedros Adhanom stated at a news conference in Geneva that they are launching a strategic preparedness and response plan and requesting 675 million dollar to fund the plan for the next three months. The WHO's message to the international community is invest.
- Mr Tedros stated 60 million US dollar of the funds would be for WHO operations while the remainder would go to countries requiring assistance to guard against the deadly virus.
- WHO was sending 500,000 masks and 40,000 respirators to 24 countries from its warehouses in Dubai and Accra. Tedros also hailed a **100 million dollar** donation from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

India's Ambassador to UAE assumes responsibility of India's Co-Chair of Expo-2020 Dubai Committee

- **Navdeep Singh Suri**, who was until very recently India's Ambassador to the UAE, has assumed the responsibility of **India's Co-Chair of the Expo-2020 Dubai Committee**. Mr Suri was also a recipient of the **UAE's Order of Zayed II** honour.
- **FICCI** is the **industry partner** of the Indian Government for its participation in **Expo-2020 Dubai**.
- Expo-2020 is a World Expo to be hosted by **Dubai**. It is scheduled to open on 20th October this year.
- Through its theme, "**Connecting Minds, Creating the Future**" and its three sub-themes - **Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability** - **Expo-2020** aims to unlock the potential of each visitor while encouraging collaboration and presenting opportunities for all to make a difference towards the future development of humanity.

Prince Charles unveils children's protection fund for India

- **Britain's Prince Charles** has unveiled a new **children's protection fund** for India as part of British Asian Trust, the charity founded by him in 2007 to fight poverty in South Asia.
- The heir to the British throne announced popular American singer **Katy Perry** as the ambassador of the new fund, which will be focussed on reducing the exploitation of children by 50 per cent in India over 10 years.
- Indian philanthropist **Natasha Poonawalla** has made a multimillion-pound pledge in support of the fund, which she will chair, and the **Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIIF)** is set to match fund everything raised upto **GBP 25 million** to develop the largest anti-trafficking fund in South Asia.

Gates Foundation announces USD 100 million for coronavirus response

- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledged to commit up to **USD 100 million** for the global response to the novel **coronavirus epidemic** that has claimed nearly 500 lives.
- The funding will be used to strengthen detection, isolation and treatment efforts, including protecting at-risk populations and developing vaccines and diagnostics.
- The amount includes **USD 10 million** previously pledged in late January.
- The foundation stated it would direct **USD 20 million** to organizations like the World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control and Protection, the National Health Commission of China and the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
- The foundation also pledged up to **USD 60 million** to accelerate the discovery, development and testing of vaccines, treatments and diagnostics for the virus.

Sri Lanka PM Rajapaksa to visit India on February 7

- Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa undertook a four-day state visit to India and held talks on a number of key areas including trade, defence and maritime security cooperation
- Mahinda hopes to finalise the implementation of the **USD 450 million line of credit** pledged by Prime Minister Modi to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa during his visit to New Delhi in November, according to the statement.

US India's preferred trade partner in journey to be \$5 trn economy: Envoy

- **America** is India's preferred trade and business partner in its journey to become a **USD 5 trillion** economy by **2024**, the country's new envoy to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu has stated.
- He further added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set the goal for India to grow from a **USD 3 trillion** economy to a **USD 5 trillion economy by 2024** and a **USD 10 trillion economy by 2030**.
- Prime Minister Modi has made it clear that the US is a preferred partner for trade and business,

India and US sign defence deals worth 3 billion dollars

- **India** and the **United States** finalized defence deals worth **three billion dollars** and signed three agreements, including in **health** and **oil sectors**.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on mental health between the health departments of both the two countries. Another MoU on the safety of medical products was signed between the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization with the US Food and Drug Administration.
- A Letter of Cooperation was signed between **Indian Oil Corporation Limited** and **Exxon Mobil India LNG Limited** and Chart Industries Inc, US.

Pranab Mukherjee to address Bangladesh Parliament on Mujib Centenary

- Former **President Pranab Mukherjee** will be invited to address the special session of Bangladesh Parliament, **Jatiya Sangsad**, on the occasion of the centenary year of **Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**.
- A parliament secretariat spokesman stated this would be the third such instance when foreign dignitaries would address Bangladesh's parliament.
- The special session of the **Jatiya Sangsad** is scheduled to be held on March 22 and 23. The Mujib Centenary year will kick off on March 17 in Dhaka.

3,000 kilometre long power grid from Myanmar-Thailand to India: BIMSTEC

- Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (**BIMSTEC**) is working on connecting about **3,000-kilometre** long power grid from **Myanmar-Thailand** to **India**. This was announced at the inauguration of the energy conference of BIMSTEC in Dhaka .
- The Adviser stated that Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) are interested in investing in BIMSTEC regional power grid. BIMSTEC countries had signed a Memorandum of Understanding for establishing a regional power grid in 2018.
- He stated that Bangladesh is in discussions with **Nepal** and **Bhutan** for trilateral power trade. He further stated that regional energy integration will help build an integrated system in the region.

Revision Points

Country	Capital	Currency	Head
Madagascar	Antananarivo	Malagasy ariary	Andry Rajoelina
Maldives	Male	Rufiyaa	Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
Bangladesh	Dhaka	Taka	Abdul Hamid
Somalia	Mogadishu	Shilling	Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo
Iraq	Baghdad	Dinar	Barham Salih
United Kingdom	London	Pound Sterling	Boris Johnson
Bhutan	Thimphu	Ngultrum	Lotay Tshering
UAE	Abu Dhabi	Dirham	Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Sri Lanka	Colombo	Rupee	Gotabaya Rajapaksa
Norway	Oslo	Krone	Erna Solberg
Myanmar	Naypyitaw	Kyat	Win Myint
Thailand	Bangkok	Baht	Prayut Chan-o-cha
USA	Washington D.C	Dollar	Donald Trump
Sweden	Stockholm	Krona	Stefan Lofven
Iran	Tehran	Rial	Hassan Rouhani
Egypt	Cairo	Pound	Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
Nepal	Kathmandu	Rupee	Bidhya Devi Bhandari
South Africa	Cape Town	Rand	Cyril Ramaphosa
Israel	Jerusalem	Shekel	Benjamin Netanyahu
Afghanistan	Kabul	Afghani	Ashraf Ghani
Pakistan	Islamabad	Rupee	Arif Alvi
Kosovo	Prishtina	Euro	Hashim Thaci
South Sudan	Juba	Pound	Salva Kiir Mayardit

France	Paris	CFA Franc	Edouard Philippe
Togo	Lome	CFA Franc	Faure Gnassingbe
Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur	Ringgit	Abdullah of Pahang

Important Appointments

National Appointments

Name of the Person	Designation
M Ajit Kumar	Chairman, Central Board of Taxes and Customs
YK Joshi	Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Northern Command
Gopal Baglay	India's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka
Pramod Agrawal	Chairman, Coal India
Deepa Malik	President of Paralympic Committee of India
Gursharan Singh	Secretary General of Paralympic Committee of India
Atul Kumar Gupta	President of Institute of Chartered Accountants
Kavender Chaudhury and Shashi Ranjan Prasad Singh	Vice President of Paralympic Committee of India
LV Prabhakar	MD & CEO, Canara Bank
Pramod Kumar Singh	Wholetime member, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority
Rishabh Pant	Brand Ambassador of JSW Steel
Jeff Weiner	Executive Chairman of LinkedIn
Ryan Roslansky	CEO of LinkedIn
Puneet Sharma	CFO of Axis Bank
Sumant Kathpalia	MD & CEO of IndusInd
Rajesh Kumar	MD & CEO, TransUnion Cibil
Abhay Kumar Singh	Chairman & MD of NHPC
Sunil Gurbaxani	MD & CEO of Dhanalaxmi Bank
Rajalaxmi Singh Deo	President of the Rowing Federation of India
Amarjeet Sinha and Bhaskar Khulbe	Advisers to Prime Minister
Sanjay Kothari	Central Vigilance Commissioner
Bimal Julka	Chief Information Commissioner
Suresh Patel	Vigilance Commissioner

Anita Pandove	Information Commissioner
Supratim Bandyopadhyay	Chairman of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority
Mahant Nritya Gopal Das	President of the Ram Mandir Trust
Vinay Dube	CEO of GoAir
Rajiv Bansal	CMD of Air India
Debashis Panda	Secretary, Department of Financial Services
Rajkumar	Secretary, Defence Production.
Usha Sharma	Youth Affairs Secretary
Pawan Kumar Agarwal	Consumer Affairs Secretary.
Rajiv Ranjan	Secretary, Department of Fisheries
Saraswati Prasad	Secretary of National Commission for Scheduled Tribes
Laxman Savadi	Deputy CM of Karnataka
Anjani Rathor	Chief Digital Officer, HDFC Bank
Robin Singh	UAE's Director of Cricket.
Arvind Kejriwal	Chif Minister of Delhi
Sanjay Vatsayan	Eastern Fleet Commander
Bimal Kumar Jha	Deputy Chairman of VOC Port Trust, Tuticorin

International Appointments

Name of the Person	Designation
Mohammed Tawfik Allawi	Prime Minister of Iraq
Albin Kurt	Prime Minister of Kosovo
Sourav Ganguly	India's goodwill ambassador for Tokyo Olympics
Madan Lal, Rudra Pratap Singh and Sulakshana Naik	Cricket Advisory committee
Karen Pierce	Britain's Ambassador to US
Philip Barton	Britain's High Commissioner to India
Jawed Ashraf	India's next ambassador to France
Michael Miebach	CEO of Mastercard
Ajay Banga	Executive Chairman of Mastercard
Faure Gnassingbe	President of Togo
Riek Machar	Vice President of South Sudan
Suella Braverman	UK's Attorney General

Mahathir Mohamad	Prime Minister of Malaysia
Ashraf Ghani	President of Afghanistan
Barry O'Farrell	Australia's high commissioner to India
Rishi Sunak	UK's finance minister
Bipul Chandra	Head of Indian Operations, Ducati

Resignation/Retirement

Name of the Person	Designation
RA Sankara Narayanan	MD & CEO, Canara Bank
Abidali Z Neemuchwala	Managing Director of Wipro
Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg	Chief Economist of World Bank
Jeff Weiner	CEO, LinkedIn
Tidjane Thiam	CEO of Credit Suisse
Ajay Banga	CEO of Mastercard
A Surya Prakash	Chairman of Prasar Bharati

Indian-origin UK Minister Alok Sharma to lead UN climate summit

- Indian-origin **Alok Sharma** was named the **new UK Minister** in charge of the crunch **UN climate** talks to be hosted by Britain at This November.
- Agra-born Sharma has been promoted to the post of Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Cabinet reshuffle.
- He will take charge of the crucial summit '**COP26**' as its former president was removed amid controversy just weeks ago.

Ajay Patel new AICF president, Bharat Singh Chauhan Secretary

- Five people** were declared unopposed for various posts by the returning officer for the **All-India Chess Federation (AICF) elections**.
- Ajay Patel** has been elected as **president**, **Bharat Singh Chauhan** as **secretary**, **Naresh Sharma** as **treasurer**, **M Arun Singh** as **joint secretary** and **Vipnesh Bharadwaj** as **vice-president**, Returning Officer for AICF elections.
- The AICF is split into two camps, one headed by **P R Venketrama Raja**, the president and one led by Chauhan. Those elected belong to the Chauhan faction.

Important Awards and Honours

Winner	Prize	Awarded By/Theme
Yusuf Jameel	PEN Gauri Lankesh Award for Democratic Idealism	-
Waheeda Rehman	Kishore Kumar Samman	Madhya Pradesh
Vinod Kumar Shukla (Blue	First Mathrubhumi Book of the	-

Is Like Blue)	Year award	
Shaktikanta Das (RBI Governor)	Central Banker of the Year – Asia Pacific 2020	The Banker Magazine
Big Bang Boom Solutions	SKOCH Award	Defence Ministry
Dinkar Keshav Raikar	Best journalist award	Uddhav Thackeray
Manoj Das	Mystic Kalinga Literary Award	Theme: 'Divine Madness: Knowledge, Ecstasy, and Transformation'
Dr N Kumar	Lifetime Achievement Award	ICAR National Research Centre for Banana, Tiruchirappalli
Adline Castelino	LIVA Miss Diva Universe 2020	-
Neha Jaiswal of Pune	Miss Diva Runner-up	-
Dr Niti Kumar	SERB Women Excellence Award 2020	Ram Nath Kovind
Manoj Kumar	WBR Golden Era of Bollywood honour	World Book of Records, London
Dharampal Satyapal Limited	Best In-House Direct Tax Team of the Year	-
Rail Madad	DARPG e-Governance Award	-
Ahmer Khan	AFP's Kate Webb Prize	-
Ratan Tata	Honorary doctorate by the University of Manchester	-
Kiran Mazumdar Shaw	EY's Entrepreneur of the Year Award	-
Adi Godrej	Chairman of Godrej Group	-
Sachi Tendulkar	Laureus World Sports Award	-
Gita Sen	Dan David Prize	-
Dr Sohini Sastri	Best Astrologer of the Year	-
Dr Ritu Trivedi	Tata Innovation Fellowship for the year 2019-2020	-
Carl H June & Vasant Narasimham	Genome Valley Excellence Award of BioAsia	Telangana govt
Pullela Gopichand	Coaches Lifetime Achievement Awards	International Olympics Committee

South Indian Bank	Banking Technology Awards 2020	Indian Bank's Association
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OSCAR WINNERS 2020

- Joaquin Phoenix wins best actor for Joker, Renée Zellweger takes home best actress and Parasite wins best picture at 92nd Academy Awards Dolby Theatre, Los Angeles, California, United States.

Best picture	Parasite
Best actress	Renée Zellweger Judy
Best actor	Joaquin Phoenix Joker
Best director	Bong Joon-ho Parasite
Music (original song)	"(I'm Gonna) Love Me Again" from Rocketman
Music (original score)	Joker
International feature film	South Korea, Parasite
Makeup and hairstyling	Bombshell
Visual effects	1917
Best film editing	Ford v Ferrari
Best cinematography	Roger Deakins, 1917
Best sound mixing	1917
Best sound editing	Ford v Ferrari
Best supporting actress	Laura Dern, Marriage Story
Documentary short feature	Learning to Skateboard in a Warzone (If You're a Girl)
Documentary feature	American Factory
Best costume design	Jacqueline Durran Little Women
Best production design	Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood

Live-action short film	The Neighbors' Window
Best adapted screenplay	Taika Waititi, Jojo Rabbit
Best original screenplay	Bong Joon-ho Parasite
Animated short film	Hair Love
Animated feature film	Toy Story 4
Best supporting actor	Brad Pitt, Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood

David Warner beats Steve Smith by one vote to Australian cricketer of the year award

- **David Warner** won the Australian cricketer the year award beating teammate Steve Smith by one vote in their first season following the ball-tampering ban that brought their rollicking careers to a one-year halt.
- Dashing opener Warner won his third **Allan Border Medal** with 194 votes, with former Test captain Smith getting 193 votes and fast bowler Pat Cummins coming third with 185. **Ilyse Perry** claimed her second **Belinda Clark Award** at the Australian Cricket Awards .

Full list of the 2020 Australian Cricket Award winners:

- Male One Day International Player of the Year: Aaron Finch
- Female One Day International Player of the Year: Alyssa Healy
- Hall of Fame Induction: Sharon Tredrea Betty Wilson
- Young Cricketer of the Year: Tayla Vlaeminck Bradman
- Young Cricketer of the Year: Wes Agar Male Test Player of the Year: Marnus Labuschagne
- Female Domestic Player of the Year: Molly Strano
- Male Domestic Player of the Year: Shaun Marsh
- Hall of Fame Induction: Craig McDermott
- Female International Twenty20 Player of the Year: Alyssa Healy
- Male International Twenty20 Player of the Year: David Warner Belinda Clark Award: Ellyse Perry Allan Border Medal: David Warner.

Filmfare 2020: 'Gully Boy' Bags Top Awards

- The 65th Amazon Filmfare Awards 2020 was held at Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium in Guwahati, Assam. It was the first time that the prestigious award ceremony was held outside Mumbai.

Best Film	Gully Boy
Critics' Award for Best Film	Article 15 and Sonchiriya
Best Director	Zoya Akhtar, Gully Boy
Best Actor In A Leading Role (Male)	Ranveer Singh, Gully Boy
Critics' Award for Best Actor (Male)	Ayushmann Khurrana, Article 15
Best Actor In A Supporting Role (Female)	Amruta Subhash, Gully Boy

Best Actor In A Supporting Role (Male)	Siddhant Chaturvedi, Gully Boy
Best Music Album	Gully Boy and Kabir Singh
Best Lyrics	Divine and Ankur Tewari for Apna Time Aayega (Gully Boy)
Best Playback Singer (Male)	Arijit Singh for Kalank Nahi (Kalank)
Best Playback Singer (Female)	Shilpa Rao for Ghungroo (War)
Best Dialogue	Vijay Maurya, Gully Boy
Best Screenplay	Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar for Gully Boy
Best Original Story	Anubhav Sinha and Gaurav Solanki for Article 15
Best Debut Director	Aditya Dhar, Uri: The Surgical Strike
Best Debut (Male)	Abhimanyu Dassani, Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota
Best Debut (Female)	Ananya Panday, Student Of The Year 2
Best Action	War
Best Background Score	Gully Boy
Best Choreography	Remo D'Souza for Kalank track Ghar More Pardesiya
Best Cinematography	Gully Boy
Best Costume	Sonchiriya
Best Editing	Uri: The Surgical Strike
Best Production Design	Gully Boy
Best Sound Design	Uri: The Surgical Strike
Best VFX	War
People's Choice Award for Best Short Film	Deshi
Best Short Film in Fiction	Bebaak
Best Short Film in Non Fiction	Village Of A Lesser God
Best Actor Female Short Film	Sarah Hashmi, Bebaak
Best Actor Male Short Film	Rajesh Sharma, Tindey

Indian Railways customer grievance portal 'RailMadad' gets DARPG e-Governance Award

- **RailMadad** has been awarded **Silver under Category II** of the National e-Governance Awards – '**Excellence in providing Citizen-centric Delivery.**'
- This award was conferred during the 23rd National Conference on e-Governance which was held in Mumbai.
- The RailMadad portal can be accessed by Railways customers via the RailMadad helpline no. **139** (with IVRS, voice and SMS facilities), **RailMadad website**, and the **RailMadad App** (on android & iOS). The RailMadad helpline number '139' is available in 12 languages.

- For every registered grievance, the complainant gets a unique **CRN (complaint reference number)**, using which complainants can check the status of the grievance. After closure of a complaint, the customer receives an SMS with a link to provide feedback on the quality of redressal.

Curt Bergfors Foundation of Sweden announces 'Food Planet Prize'

- The **Curt Bergfors Foundation of Sweden** has created **two USD 1 million prizes** for solutions towards sustainable food system amid the threatening climate change.
- '**New Food Planet Prize**', the prize is to be awarded annually in two categories: existing scalable solution for sustainable foods and innovative initiative for transforming food sector. Experts in the field of climate research will be the prize jury.

BRICS CCI announces Direct Tax Summit & Awards 2020 in association with Achromic Point

- BRICS Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BRICS CCI)** organized the 2nd Annual Direct Tax Summit & Awards 2020 in association with Achromic Point - an international consulting firm.
- The day long summit saw an eminent list of delegates discussing recent trends and issues in the field of International Tax and identified the best methods for integrating into the new systems while deriving the most tax benefits.
- Dharampal Satyapal Limited** won the award for **Best In-House Direct Tax Team of the Year**.

HRD Minister Pokhriyal presents Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards to 23 teams

- Union Minister of Human Resources Development (HRD), Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'**, presented the **Vishwakarma Awards 2019** to the winners in **New Delhi**.
- The valedictory function of the Awards was organised in the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).
- A total of **23 teams** under various subcategories were recipients of the **Chatra Vishwakarma Awards (CVA)**. Six institutes were felicitated by the Union Minister under the **Utkrisht Santhan Vishwakarma Award (USVA)**.
- During the event, four MoUs were also exchanged between **AICTE & IIT Kanpur, IIT Ropar, IIT Bhubaneswar, and IISER Pune** in the presence of the HRD Minister.
- Pokhriyal also launched the **digital version** of the **AICTE Activity Book**, hosted on the AICTE web portal.

Hrithik Roshan bags 'Best Actor award' at Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival

- Hrithik Roshan** garnered the '**Best Actor award**' for his film **Super 30** at **Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival**, held in **Mumbai**.

Category	Winners
Best Film	Super 30
Best Actor	Hrithik Roshan
Most Promising Actor	Kiccha Sudeep

Best Actor in Television Series	Dheeraj Dhoopar
Best Actress in Television	Divyanka Tripathi
Most Favourite Television Actor	Harshad Chopda
Most Favourite Jodi in Television Series	Sriti Jha and Shabbir Ahluwalia (Kumkum Bhagya)
Best Reality Show	Bigg Boss 13
Best Television Series	Kumkum Bhagya
Best Playback Singer Male	Armaan Malik

Jiya Rai, Naval special child with autism swims 14 km in open water, sets world record

- **Jiya Rai**, the eleven-year-old daughter of Madan Rai, Master Chief at Arms II, posted in INS Shikra, created a world record by becoming the **fastest special girl to swim 14 km in open water**.
- The solo swimming event was conducted under the supervision of Swimming Association of Maharashtra, an authorized body of Swimming Federation of India.
- This extraordinary achievement of Jiya Rai is understood to have qualified for registration in **India Book of Records, Asia Book & Limca Book of Records** for the youngest and first special girl in the world to swim a distance of 14 km in 03 hrs 27 minutes and 30 sec in the open water category.

Akademi award for English translation of 'Kusumabale'

- **Sahitya Akademi's Translation Prize** for 2019 in the category of translation into English has been awarded to **Kannada novel Kusumabale** by **Devanur Mahadeva**, rendered into English by **Susan Daniel**.
- The akademi announced a total of 23 awards in various Indian languages.
- **Kusumabale**, published in 1988, is a classic in Kannada literature. Written in a dialect typically spoken in Chamarajnagar district in Southern Karnataka, it combines prose and poetry, mythology and realism to weave a tapestry of Dalit life.

Sridhar Vembu, Kiran Majumdar Shaw, Keshav Murugesh among 17 shortlisted for EY award

- EY has announced 17 finalists for the **Entrepreneur of the Year - India (EOY) 2019 Awards**.
- Sridhar Vembu, Kiran Majumdar Shaw, Keshav Murugesh were among the 17 people in the shortlist for the EY Entrepreneur of the Year Award. The finalists were selected from among 225 nominations, and will be felicitated on 19 February in **New Delhi**.
- An eight-member independent jury panel led by **Uday Kotak**, MD and CEO, Kotak Mahindra Bank.

President Kovind presents International Gandhi Awards for Leprosy

- India has achieved a lot over the years and successfully accomplished levels of **leprosy elimination** defined as less than one case per ten thousand population.

- The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, presented the International Gandhi Awards for Leprosy for the year 2019 to Dr N.S. Dharmashaktu under the Indian nomination (individual) category and the **Leprosy Mission Trust** under the institutional category on **February 6, 2020, New Delhi**.
- The annual award has been instituted by Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation to recognise the work of individuals and organisations who have worked tirelessly to fight this disease and the prejudices associated with it.

Film editor Sreekar Prasad enters the limca book of records

- Veteran editor **Sreekar Prasad** has entered the **Limca Book of Records** for 'films edited in most number of languages'.
- He has edited films in 17 languages, namely Tamil, English, Hindi, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Odia, Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi, Nepali, Marathi, Sinhalese, Karbi, Mishng, Bodo, and Pangchenpa.
- Sreekar Prasad holds eight National Awards including a Special Jury Award.

Travellers' Choice Destination Awards 2020 goes to Kochi

- Kochi has topped the 2020 **Travellers' Choice Destination awards** as a 'trending' location announced by Tripadvisor, the world's largest travel site.
- The awards include two new categories: recognising traveller-loved destinations that are on the rise; and Emerging – looking ahead to what's next – the destinations still ahead of the curve that smart travellers are already saving for their trips on Tripadvisor, a great indicator of up and coming hotspots.

7th MSME Excellence Award For Most Promising Brand 2019: Amulya Mica

- **7th MSME Excellence Awards & summit** was organized by ASSOCHAM at Le Meridien, New Delhi.
- With an objective of acknowledging the inestimable contributions made by MSMEs to various sectors of the economy, **The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM)**, India's Apex Chamber for Commerce & Industry has constituted the "ASSOCHAM MSMEs Excellence Awards".
- **Amulya Mica (Purbanchal Laminates Pvt. Ltd.)**, Spear headed by their Managing Director Mr. Rakesh Agarwal, was chosen to be the **Most Promising Brand** of the Year Award 2019, Gold Category.

Madhya Pradesh bags first position for implementation of PMMVY

- **Madhya Pradesh** has bagged the first position for the implementation of **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana**. Union Minister of Women and Child Development Smriti Irani presented the award to Madhya Pradesh at a function in New Delhi.
- Madhya Pradesh Minister for Women and Child Development Imarti Devi and Principal Secretary Anupam Rajan received the award.
- **Indore district** has also bagged the **first place** for **better performance of the scheme**.

60-year-old pharmacy worker becomes 1st deaf person to row across Atlantic Ocean

- A **60-year-old pharmacy worker** has become the first deaf person on record to row an ocean by finishing a 3,000-mile journey across the Atlantic.
- **Mo O'Brien** and her fellow crew members, including her daughter, landed on the Caribbean island of Antigua 49 days after setting out from the Canary Island of La Gomera in December.

- Their arrival makes them the **fastest female trio** to complete the challenge. The Ocean Rowing Society, which is responsible for monitoring ocean rowing records, confirmed the world first. Ms O'Brien, rowed almost 3,000 miles (4,800km) of **Atlantic Ocean** with her daughter **Bird Watts**, and their friend **Claire Allinson**.

Babenco: Tell Me When I Die by Barbara Paz bags Golden Conch Award for Best Documentary Film at MIFF 2020

- The awards for the best films of the **16th edition of Mumbai International Film Festival** have been presented at the closing ceremony, held in Nehru Centre Auditorium, Worli, **Mumbai**.
- The prestigious **Golden Conch Award** for Best Documentary Film at MIFF 2020 has been awarded to **Babenco: Tell Me When I Die**, directed by **Barbara Paz**.
- The **Silver Conch Award** for the Best Short Fiction Film has been conferred on the Marathi film **Paavsacha Nibandh (An Essay of Rain)**. Directed by **Nagaraj Manjule**.
- The **Silver Conch Award** for the **Best Animation Film** has been shared by two films – the **German film Portrait of Suzanne**, directed by **Izabela Plucinska** and the **Indian film Panangaatu Nari (The Fox of the Palmgrove)** by **Divakar S. K.**

Important MOU's

UP govt inks MoU with eGov Foundation for state-wide implementation of municipal financial accounting platform

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by the **Govt of UP** and **eGov Foundation** to implement the **municipal financial accounting system**. This initiative is a part of the municipal accounting reforms across the entire state and covers all 652 ULBs (Urban Local Bodies) of Uttar Pradesh.
- Under the MoU, eGov Foundation will provide the accrual-based double-entry financial accounting application of **DIGIT (Digital Infrastructure for Governance, Impact & Transformation)** - India's largest open-source platform for urban governance.
- The govt envisages digitizing the accounting records and operations, thereby strengthening the financial autonomy and financial sustainability of the ULBs.
- With this development, the Government of **Uttar Pradesh** has bolstered its commitment towards the national goal of capacity building and enhanced municipal service delivery.

Gujarat Tourism- ITDC sign MoU to develop light, sound show at major tourist places

- **Gujarat Tourism Department** and **ITDC** of Government of India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding, MoU for consultancy service to develop **innovative and decorative light and sound show** at major tourist places in the state.
- Both the leaders were present on the occasion of opening of three-day All India Council of Tourism Secretaries organized by the Union Ministry of Tourism and Culture in cooperation with the Gujarat Government at **Dhordo** in the Great Rann of Kutch.

BBIN member nations deliberate on proposed MoU for implementation of Motor Vehicles Agreement

- **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN)** deliberated upon a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the implementation of **Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)** for the regulation of passengers, personal and cargo vehicular traffic among the four countries.

- The discussion in this regard was held during a meeting of the BBIN member nations in the national capital. The meeting was held to discuss the passenger and cargo protocols that are to give effect to the MVA for the Regulation of Passenger, Personal and Cargo Vehicular Traffic among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal signed on June 15, 2015.

YSRC government signs MoUs with 11 institutions to help ryots

- AP government signed MoUs with **11 reputed institutes** in the country as **knowledge partners**.
- Objective of the MoUs is to impart technology and knowledge transfer to farmers in the State. As per the agreements, the organisations will provide holistic technical assistance for the farmers to create a sustainable environment and increase their income.
- Institutions like Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), National Institute of Plant Health Management, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, Central Fertiliser Quality and Training Institute, National Seed Research and Training Institute have been partnered with the State government.

Bird ringing station to come up in Bihar; MoU inked in Gujarat

- Principal Secretary, Environment and Forests, **Dipak Kumar Singh**, stated a Memorandum of Understanding was exchanged by representatives of the **Bihar government** and the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)** at **Gandhinagar**.
- The MoU was exchanged on the sidelines of CMS-COP 13 held at the Gujarat capital.
- There were three bird ringing stations - at **Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Orissa**. The Bihar government will spend Rs 5 crore for the new project. As per the MoU, which is for a period of five years, the new bird ringing station will be manned by trained scientists and other skilled manpower from BNHS.

IOC to invest Rs 500 crore for Karnataka unit

- **Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)** has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the **Karnataka government** under which the firm will invest **`500 crore** to set up petroleum products receiving, storage and distribution terminal at Chitradurga in Karnataka.
- It will be set up in an area of 120 acres in the district. The MoU was signed during '**Invest Karnataka**', conference at **Hubballi**. The new oil terminal is expected to cater to the growing demand of petroleum products from Karnataka where IOC has nearly 50 per cent market share.
- Currently, the Devanagonthi terminal of the IOC in Bengaluru outskirts supplies 30 per cent of the petroleum demands in Karnataka, supplying **500 million tonnes** of the fuel.

EESL inks pact with BSNL for 1,000 EV charging stations across country

- **Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL)** has signed an initial pact with **BSNL** for installing charging stations for electric vehicles.
- As per the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), EESL will set up public EV charging stations at 1,000 BSNL sites in a phased manner across the country.
- Telecom PSU BSNL would be responsible for providing the requisite space and power connections for installing the charging infrastructure.
- EESL has commissioned **300 AC and 170 DC chargers** across India.
- Till date, 66 public charging points are operational in Delhi-NCR.

Atal Innovation Mission Labs, NITI & NASSCOM partner to bring AI modules to Indian schools

- **NITI Aayog, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** in collaboration with the **National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM)** has launched an **artificial intelligence (AI) based module** rolled out for students in Indian schools.
- The AI-Base Module has been introduced for students to leverage the full potential of AIM's Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) and further empowers them to innovate and create valuable solutions benefiting societies at large. The module contains activities, videos, and experiments that enable students to work through and learn the various concepts of AI.

UP government signs 23 MoUs worth Rs 50,000 crore during DefExpo

- Uttar Pradesh government signed **23 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)** of worth **Rs 50,000 crore** with different firms during the ongoing **DefExpo-2020**. Confirming the signing of MoUs by **UP Industrial and Expressway Development Authority (UPIEDA)**.
- The Chief Minister stated that those deals were signed during '**Bandhan**' programme of Defence Expo-2020. Ministry of Defence has made an emotional connect through those deals and naming the MoU signing programme as 'Bandhan'. All the MoUs signed under Bandhan programme deal with defence production, research and its development.

NMCG signs agreement to develop ghats in Badrinath and Gangotri

- A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was inked among the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**, State Programme Management Group-Uttarakhand (**SPMG-UK**) and Indorama Charitable Trust (ICT) to work together for giving a facelift to the bathing ghat at **Badrinath** and ghat and crematoria at Gangotri in Uttarakhand.
- The cost outlay of the project is **Rs 26 crore**. It will be financed by Indrona Group as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The project is under the Clean Ganga Mission. The project's implementation will commence by this March and is expected to be completed in 15 months.
- Gangotri and Badrinath are part of the "**Char Dham Yatra**". Shekhawat stated this project was being taken up under the government initiative of "**Har Kaam Desh Ke Naam**". The detailed Project Report (DPR) has been developed by WAPCOS, a Government of India Enterprise.
- Project includes the Development of Badrinath and Gangotri ghats include the changing room, toilet with bio-digester and reed bed, water spout, chhatra, platform, signage, horticulture work and railing Public amenities on ghats, Bank erosion protection works, Operation & Maintenance for five years.

IOC signs first term contract for importing Russian crude oil

- **Indian Oil Corp (IOC)** signed first term contract for importing Russian crude oil as the world's third largest energy consumer looks to diversify its sources away from the volatile Middle East.
- IOC signed the contract to import up to **2 million tonne** of Urals grade crude oil from Rosneft of Russia. India is 83 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil needs. Two-thirds of the imports come from the Middle East, Iraq being the biggest supplier followed by Saudi Arabia.

Mangalore varsity pact on radioecology research

- **Mangalore University** has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with **Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR)**, Kalpakkam, for conducting joint research in the field of radioecology.
- Under the MoU, the **Centre for Advanced Research in Environmental Radioactivity (CARER)** of Mangalore University will be conducting joint research with scientists of IGCAR.

- This is an advanced centre for **radioecological** and radiation protection research in the country.

India-Norway sign MoUs in field of research and higher education

- **India** and **Norway** signed a total of four memorandum of understanding (MoUs) in the field of research and higher education.
- The MoUs signed between two countries include one between **Indian Institute of Technology Delhi** and **UiT, The Arctic University of Norway** for cooperation in fields such as bio-photonics, health and diagnostic tools, nanotechnology, water management and renewable energy.
- The other MoU that has been signed is between **Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology** and **UiT, The Arctic University of Norway** to facilitate the exchange of students and staff and consolidate joint efforts towards project initiatives in national and EU arena.

APEDA-CFTRI Sign MoU for Liason Office in Guwahati :Will Promote Food Processing & Organic Agri Exports in North-East States

- A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by **CSIR-CFTRI** with **APEDA** to set up a Liaison Office in **Guwahati, Assam** to provide technical support to the **food industries in the North East region**. It will benefit the farmers, producers and entrepreneurs.
- **Central Food Technological Research Institute, (CSIR-CFTRI)**, Mysore, Karnataka, working in the area of Food and Science & Technology, Human Resource Development started during 1950.
- To create awareness on agriculture and exports in the North-East states, converting the large areas of land into organic certification training is provided based on requirements based on National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP).

HAL signs MoU with Israeli firm to make, sell drones

- **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bengaluru based **Dynatomic Technologies Limited (DTL)** and **Israel Aerospace Industries Limited (IAI)** at DefExpo 2020.
- In India drones are playing significant role in wars and other tactical missions such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR).
- Under the scope of this MoU, the partnership would be the first in the country to manufacture IAI designed UAVs in India such as short-range tactical class having long endurance. This collaboration will enhance technology sharing and business partnership between India and Israel.

Revision Points

Organizations	Purpose
Uttar Pradesh & eGov	Implementation of municipal financial accounting platform
Gujarat Tourism Department & ITDC	Developing Light, Sound show
BBIN Member countries	Implementation of Motor Vehicles Agreement
Andhra Pradesh & 11 reputed institutions	Help Ryots
Bihar & Bombay Natural History Society	Developing Bird Ringing Station

EESL & BSNL	1000 EV charging stations
NITI Aayog, Atal Innovation Mission & NASSCOM	Bringing AI modules to Indian schools
ICT, NMCG & SPMG	Developing ghats in Badrinath & Gangotri
Mangalore University & IGCAR	Research in the field of Radioecology
India & Norway	Research & Higher Education
HAL, DTL & IAI	Making & selling of Drones

Important Summit & Conference

Kerala to host global meet on climate change, ocean health

- **ClimFishCon 2020**, a three-day international conference on the impact of climate change on 'hydrological cycle, ecosystem, fisheries and food security'.
- **Theme: Climate Change-Effective Adaptation for a Secure Future.**
- The conference is organised jointly by the CUSAT School of Industrial Fisheries and the Department of Fisheries, Kerala.
- A major workshop titled Impact of Climate Change on Coastal Wetlands was held on February 13.

MP: National Water Conference to be held in Bhopal

- In **Madhya Pradesh**, a **National Water Conference** is going to be held in the capital **Bhopal** to solve water crisis and make the state a water-rich state.
- The purpose of the conference is to finalize the guidelines for the **Water Rights Act** in Madhya Pradesh. A framework for better implementation of this act will also be made in the conference.
- Madhya Pradesh Government has announced to implement the Water Rights Act in the state. MP will be the first state in the country where this law will be implemented.

India to host COP13 UN Summit on conservation of migratory birds

- **The 13th Conference of Parties (COP)** of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), an environmental treaty under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme hosted by India during 17 to 22 February at **Gandhinagar, Gujarat**.
- The Government of India is Signatory to the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Wild Animals since 1983. The Government of India has been taking necessary actions to protect and conserve migratory marine species.
- The theme of CMS COP13 in India is '**Migratory species connect the planet and we welcome them home**'.
- The CMS COP 13 logo is inspired by '**Kolam**', a traditional art form southern India. In the logo of CMS COP-13, Kolam art form is used to depict key migratory species in India like Amur falcon, humpback whale and marine turtles.
- The mascot for CMS COP13 is '**Gibi – The Great Indian Bustard**'. It is a critically endangered species which has been accorded the highest protection status under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

43rd Session of IFAD Governing Council

- 43rd Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) of the United Nations was held for two days at the headquarters of the FAW in **Rome**, with the presence of 177 member states of the organization.
- Titled: **"Investing in sustainable food systems to end hunger by 2030"**.
- It was also announced at the meet that the UN (United Nations) will not be able to achieve the target of Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 due to the lack of funds & it would be achieved only by 2040 with an annual investment of more than \$115 billion.

Naveen Inaugurates 2nd BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise

- The second **BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise-2020 (BIMSTEC DMEx-2020)** hosted by National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) in **Odisha**.
- The three-day exercise was held in Bhubaneswar and Puri with the theme: **'A cultural heritage site that suffers severe damage in the Earthquake & Flooding or Storm'**.
- The participants of five countries — Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Nepal are participating in this exercise.
- The objective of the exercise is to test the existing emergency procedures for notification, preparedness and emergency response, during a major earthquake and flood scenarios.

Difficult Dialogues 2020

- The fifth edition of **Difficult Dialogues** was held at the **International Centre Goa, Dona Paula**.
- The conference saw leading experts, policymakers, politicians, lawyers, judges and academicians gather to discuss the **state of law**.
- The conference was organised in partnership with the University of Oxford (UK), the Bar Association of India, Centre for Study of Law and Governance at Jawaharlal Nehru University, OP Jindal Global University, PLAN India, PHIA, International Centre Goa, Goa University and VM Salgaocar College of Law.

Delhi to host 3-day global conference on traditional medicines

- The 7th **International Congress of the Society for Ethnopharmacology (SFEC 2020)**, to be inaugurated by **Minister of State for AYUSH Shripad Yesso Naik**, will be attended by more than 2,000 experts and representatives from the industry in **New Delhi**.
- It was organised by Jamia Hamdard University. The mega event was supported by the Ministry of AYUSH and Department of Biotechnology among others.
- The SFE - **Herbal Industry Leader Award - 2020** was conferred upon **K K Sharma**, founder of **AIMIL Pharmaceuticals (India)** for his contribution in the field of herbal drugs as an industrialist, while the **SFE Lifetime Achievement award** was given to **Dr Nitya Anand** in recognition to his role in discovering, designing and development of herbal medicines.
- Similarly, the award for **Outstanding International Ethnopharmacologist - 2020** was given to **Dr Roy Upton**, founder of American Herbal Pharmacopoeia.

All India Conference of Central Administrative Tribunal 2020 held in New Delhi

- The annual **All India Conference of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)** was held in **New Delhi**.
- The one day conference was attended by Judicial and Administrative Members from all 17 Benches of CAT from across the country, members of the CAT Bar Association and eminent Jurists, who deliberated on key issues related to the functioning of the Tribunal and priorities for 2020.

- The Conference was presided over by Union Minister for Law and Justice, **Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad**.
- It is a platform to discuss issues related to the work of CAT, including structural and institutional issues, the functioning of administrative tribunals in other legal systems and methodology for the functioning of the tribunal among others.

PM Modi inaugurates 'Kashi Ek Roop Anek' exhibition in Varanasi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched '**Kashi Ek Roop Anek**'- a cultural, arts and handicrafts exhibition, at **Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Hastakala Sankul** in Varanasi.
- '**Kashi Ek Roop Anek**' showcased products from over 10,000 artisans from all over Uttar Pradesh.
- The Uttar Pradesh government had launched the ambitious scheme '**One District, One Product**' (ODOP) in which one craft per district was identified.
- Unveiled the **63 feet Statue of Deendayal Upadhyay** (largest statue of the leader in the country) and dedicated to the nation the Deendayal Upadhyay Memorial in Varanasi.
- Flagged off the third corporate train '**Kashi Mahakal Express**' which links 3 Jyotirling Pilgrim Centres – Varanasi, Ujjain and Omkareshwar.
- Released the translated version of '**Shri Siddhant Shikhamani Granth**' in **19 languages** and also launched the '**Shri Siddhant Shikhamani Granth**' Mobile App

2020 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 26)

- The 26th session of the **Conference of the Parties (COP 26)** to the UNFCCC is expected to take place from 9-19 November 2020, in **Glasgow, UK**.
- Indian-origin **Alok Sharma** from Agra, Uttar Pradesh (UP) has been appointed as the minister in charge of the UK's COP26 climate change summit.
- British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has promoted Alok Sharma to the post of Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in cabinet reshuffle, where he replaced Claire Perry O'Neill, a former energy minister.

J&K Global Investors Summit-2020

- Chief Secretary, **B V R Subrahmanyam** chaired 2nd Apex Committee meeting to review preparations for the upcoming J&K Global Investors Summit-2020 to be held in the capital cities of Srinagar and Jammu.
- The summit will not only help to present business-friendly policies of the Government; identify business opportunities in J&K to participating trade and industry organizations but also harmonize J&K's intrinsic strength and aspirations of development and employment opportunities.
- The road shows will be held at Bengaluru, Kolkata on February 17, Mumbai on February 21, Hyderabad on March 2, Chennai on March 5 and Ahmedabad on March 9, 2020.
- Mini Conclaves will be held at Srinagar and Jammu in the month of March, 2020.

Hyderabad all set to host 17th Edition of BioAsia 2020

- **Telangana** is all set to host the three-day **Bio Asia 2020**, Asia's largest Biotechnology and Life Sciences Forum with the theme of '**Today for Tomorrow**' in **Hyderabad**.
- **Switzerland** will be the **partner Country this year** as part of the annual tradition. An eminent 40-members team comprising industries, academia and start-ups from Switzerland will participate in the event.

- The best 5 out of the 75 start-ups will be awarded a cash prize co-sponsored by BIRAC and CIE-IIIT Hyderabad during the closing ceremony and present their innovative solutions.
- **BioAsia 2020** is being organized in partnership with Government of India, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of MSME, Department of Biotechnology, Department of Pharmaceuticals and it has state partners include Assam, Kerala, Odisha and Gujarat.

3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety

- The 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety "**Achieving Global Goals 2030**" will take place in **Stockholm, Sweden**.
- Hosted by the **Government of Sweden** and co-hosted by **WHO**, the Ministerial Conference will be an opportunity for delegates to share successes and lessons from implementation of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020, chart future strategic directions for global road safety, and define ways to accelerate action on proven strategies. The Ministerial Conference will also provide an opportunity to link road safety to other sustainability challenges.

Secretary Agarwal reviews Fasal Bima in Udaipur

- **Sanjay Agarwal**, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, inaugurated the **4th National Conference** on Review of Implementation of **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** began in Udaipur, Rajasthan.
- The conference saw the participation of around 140 members representing different states, banks, insurance companies, RBI, NABARD, among others.
- The main objectives of this conference are to understand the direction that the scheme is foraying into and individual roles thereof and to cross-learn from other institutions to resolve all the issues.

S Jaishankar inaugurates Indian pavilion at Berlin International Film Festival

- External Affairs Minister **S Jaishankar** inaugurated the Indian pavilion at the **Berlin International Film Festival** for which three feature films and one documentary from the country have been selected.
- **Information and Broadcasting ministry** in collaboration with the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** is participating in the 70th edition of the festival.
- This year in Berlin, three Indian feature films -- Pushpendra Singh's "Laila Aur Satt Geet", Prateek Vats' "Eeb Allay Ool", Akhsay Indikar's "Sthalpuran" as well as one short documentary film -- Ekta Mittal's "Gumnaam Din" -- have been selected.

NE Sustainable Development Goals Conclave to be held in Assam

- **North East Sustainable Development Goals Conclave 2020** was held in **Assam**.
- Niti Aayog organised the "**Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Conclave 2020: Partnerships, Cooperation and Development of North Eastern States**".
- The event is being held in association with the North Eastern Council, Government of Assam, Tata Trusts, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).
- The three-day event was held at Assam Administrative Staff College, **Guwahati**.

Union Food Processing Industries Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal Launched Market Intelligence and Early Warning System (MIEWS)

- Smt. Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Union Minister of Food Processing Industries, launched the– **Market Intelligence and Early Warning System (MIEWS)** Web Portal.

- The MIEWS Dashboard and Portal is a 'first-of-its-kind' platform for 'real time monitoring' of prices of tomato, onion and potato (TOP) and for simultaneously generating alerts for intervention under the terms of the **Operation Greens (OG) scheme**.
- The initiative of MoFPI is expected to leverage the strengths of IT in real time monitoring and timely responding to any exigency on account of supply side irregularity or constraints in respect of these three crops.

WCD & FPI Ministers Irani, Badal inaugurate Delhi Organic Food Fest

- The **Organic Food Festival** was jointly inaugurated by **Harsimrat Kaur Badal**, Union Minister for Food Processing Industries and **Smriti Irani**, Union Minister for Women and Child Development and Textiles.
- The theme of the festival is '**Unleashing India's Organic Market Potential**'.
- The Organic Food Festival would provide an opportunity to women entrepreneurs for capacity building and economic empowerment.
- The Organic Food Festival for women entrepreneurs is as an outcome of the MoU (which aims at building capacities of women entrepreneurs) signed between the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) and Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD).
- Kiwi from Arunachal Pradesh, black wheat, pesto sauce from Ladakh, chia seeds cookies and apricot oil from Uttarakhand are available at the fest. This festival will strive to provide linkages to women producers to market and supply chains, thereby facilitating their financial inclusion.

CM Kamal Nath inaugurates IFS Meet in Bhopal

- Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister **Kamal Nath** inaugurated a **Forestry Conference of Indian Forest Service** officers at Noronha Academy of Administration in **Bhopal**.
- Chief Minister Kamal Nath also released three books including '**Camping Destinations of MP**', '**Wildlife Destination Map of MP**' and **a magazine at the IFS meet**.
- The main purpose of the conference is to deliberate on the usage of forest produce and the role of forests in economic growth.

National Museum hosts 'Historical Gastronomica - The Indus Dining Experience' exhibition

- **The National Museum in New Delhi** is hosting a unique exhibition on India's ancient food history called "**Historical Gastronomica - The Indus Dining Experience**" that goes back to over 5000 years ago.
- The event is curated jointly by the **National Museum and One Station Million Stories (OSMS)** - is based on archaeological research, museum artifacts and their characteristics.
- Recreation of food of the Indus-Saraswati Civilization by National Award-winning **Chef Sabyasachi Gorai** is one of the main attractions of this exhibition which is first of its kind in the country.

NITI Aayog organizing Sustainable Development Goals Conclave 2020

- NITI Aayog is organizing **Sustainable Development Goals Conclave 2020: Partnerships, Cooperation and Development of North Eastern states-** in **Guwahati, Assam**.
- The technical sessions would include SDG localization in the North East, economic prosperity and sustainable livelihoods, climate adaptive agriculture, health and nutrition among others.
- This conclave is part of the NITI Aayog's continuous efforts towards fostering partnerships at the sub-national level.

Union HRD Minister Launches UKIERI-UGC Higher Education Leadership Development Programme for Administrators in New Delhi

- The Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' launched 'Higher Education Leadership Development Programme for Administrator' – a joint initiative of UGC and British Council under the auspices of UK India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI), which aims to deliver a leadership development programme for middle and senior level administrative functionaries in Indian Universities.
- The main objective of the programme is to train the senior and middle level academic administrators to enable them to bring about systemic changes with renewed approaches, capacity, tools and skill in Universities in India.
- The University Grants Commission (UGC) will conduct this programme in collaboration with Advance HE as the training partner with globally recognized institutional expertise and leadership excellence from the UK, which is being enabled by the British Council in India.

PM Modi to inaugurate two-day International Judicial Conference 2020 in New Delhi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a two-day International Judicial Conference 2020 organised by Supreme Court in New Delhi.
- The theme of the International Judicial Conference 2020 is "Judiciary and the changing world".
- The Conference also focused on the need for technology for timely justice like "E-Court Integrated Mission Mode Project" and establishment of "National Judicial Data Grid".
- The Conference introduced the "Just World" concept in the Judicial System of India which aims to take the judicial system of the country to every citizen irrespective of their gender.

G20 finance ministers', central bankers to meet in Riyadh

- Riyadh is hosting the inaugural G20 finance ministers' and central bank governors' meeting.
- The ministers and governors will come from G20 countries and invited countries, as well as heads of international and regional organizations.
- The meeting will be chaired by Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan and Ahmed Alkholifey, chairman of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority.
- They will also discuss the priorities of the Saudi G20 presidency under the theme of "Realizing Opportunities of the 21st Century for All."

International conference on EMMDA at NCMRWF, Noida

- An international conference on "Ensemble Methods in Modelling and Data Assimilation (EMMDA)" began at NCMRWF, Noida, India.
- The conference is aimed to provide a platform for discussions and deliberations on the present status, future prospects and optimum use of 'Ensemble Prediction System' (EPS).
- The three-day conference is organized by the National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF) that functions under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Govt.
- The major themes of the conference are ensemble methods in Data Assimilation, Global Weather Prediction, Monthly and Seasonal Forecasting, Convection Permitting Ensemble Prediction Systems, Verification of Ensemble weather forecasts, Applications of Ensemble weather forecasts.
- Discussions include techniques used in Data Assimilation, Ensemble Methods, and use of Probabilistic Forecasts for developing new applications from Ensemble Products.

Govt to host Artificial Intelligence Summit 'RAISE 2020' in April

- The government will host RAISE 2020 - an event focussed on artificial intelligence on April 11-12 in New Delhi.

- **RAISE (Responsible AI for Social Empowerment) 2020** will be organised by the government in partnership with industry and academia.
- The summit will be a global meeting of minds to exchange ideas and charter a course to use AI for social empowerment, inclusion and transformation in key areas like healthcare, agriculture, education and smart mobility, among other sectors.
- The first of its kind two-day summit- '**Responsible AI for Social Empowerment 2020**'.
- Industry associations like FICCI, CII, ASSOCHAM and NASSCOM, companies including Intel, AWS, KPMG, IBM, Oracle as well as AI startups participated in the consultation.

Enhancing Energy Cooperation in the BIMSTEC region held in Dhaka, Bangladesh

- Two Days Conference on **Enhancing Energy Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) region** held at Bangladesh.
- The bloc of seven countries organised the conference in collaboration with the **South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy Integration (SARI/EI) of USAID**.
- The Report "prospect of regional energy cooperation and cross-border energy trade in the BIMSTEC region"
- The report showed that the BIMSTEC region has 323,504 million tonnes(MT) of coal, 664 million tonnes of oil, 99 Trillion Cubic Feet(TCF) of gas, 11,346 MT of biomass, 328 Giga Watts(GW) of hydropower and 1,117 GW of renewable energy.
- **India** tops on all energy resources by having 319,020 MT of coal, 600 MT oil, 45.5 TCF gas, 4,150 MT biomass and 145 GW hydro and 1,000 GW renewable energy respectively.

Rajnath Singh at 12th South Asia Conference on "India's Neighbourhood First' Policy: Regional Perceptions"

- The 12th edition of the annual South Asia Conference was held in New Delhi.
- The theme of the South Asia Conference 2020 was India's "**Neighbourhood First**" Policy: Regional Perceptions.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh delivered the inaugural address at the conference.
- The conference is organised by **the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA)**, New Delhi since 2007.
- All members of SAARC and Myanmar participated in the conference.
- The conference deals with a number of important issues such as economic cooperation for development, changing political context in India's neighbourhood, common challenges of terrorism in South Asia and prospects of regional cooperation among other important aspects.

India to host EAS conference in Chennai

- India hosted an 4th **East Asia Summit conference** in **Chennai** with a focus on maritime security cooperation and tackling challenges in the maritime domain.
- As **announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi** at the **14th East Asia Summit (EAS) in Bangkok in November 2019**, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in partnership with the governments of Australia and Indonesia organised the fourth EAS Conference on Maritime Security Cooperation in Chennai.
- This conference is the fourth in a series of EAS Maritime Security Conferences organised by the Indian government -- the first conference was organised in **New Delhi** in November 2015, the second in **Goa** in November 2016 and the third in **Bhubaneswar** in June 2018.
- Senior officials and experts from the EAS participating countries discussed various aspects of maritime security cooperation under five thematic sessions such as Holistic Maritime Security, Maritime Safety, Transition to a Regional Blue Economy, India's Indo-Pacific Oceans" Initiative and the Way Forward.

Country's biggest horticultural fair begins

- The four-day mega event '**National Horticultural Fair 2020**' at ICAR-Indian Institute of Horticultural Research kick-started in **Bengaluru**.
- It was held at **Hessarghatta**, and it had over 200 exhibition stalls.
- '**Making farming an enterprise**' is the theme of 2020's fair, special focus has been given to showcasing technologies, crop varieties and management practices that can turn farming into a sustainable as well as a profitable venture.

IIMB to host meet on future of aviation and aerospace

- **Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB)**, in partnership with **Toulouse Business School (TBS)**, France hosted an international conference on '**Future of Aviation & Aerospace**'.
- IIMB offers a General Management Programme on Aviation and Aerospace, as part of its executive education programmes, in partnership with TBS.

Prime Minister inaugurates DefExpo in Lucknow

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated the **11th edition of DefExpo** in **Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**.
- India's biennial military exhibition seeks to showcase the potential of the country as a global defence manufacturing hub.
- The 11th edition of Def Expo promises to bring new technologies, technological solutions, where Defence manufacturing companies from India and abroad showcase their products and services in the Defence arena, on a single platform.
- The Theme of the Expo is '**India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub**' with main focus on '**Digital Transformation of Defence**'.

22nd India International Seafood Show

- **22nd India International Seafood Show 2020** is one of the largest Seafood Fairs in Asia. It is a biennial show and a common forum for Seafood processors, Exporters, Importers, Aquaculturists, Processing Machinery manufacturers and allied industries to meet under one roof.
- 22nd India International Seafood Show 2020 will be held on 07th-09th February 2020 , **Kochi**.
- The theme of this year's seafood show is "**Blue Revolution- Beyond Production to Value Addition**".
- The very objective of organizing the IISS is to highlight India's immense fishery potential and the rapid progress made by the country in the fisheries sector.

FADA to organise 11th Auto Summit 2020

- **The Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA)** is all set to organise the **eleventh edition of the Auto Summit 2020**, the biennial flagship convention for Indian automobile dealers.
- The theme of this edition of the convention is '**Thriving Amidst Disruption**' and is scheduled in **New Delhi**.
- The summit is expected to bring together senior delegates from the government, leadership across OEMs and industry think tanks.

African Union 2020 Summit

- The annual African Union Summit held in **Addis Ababa**. This 33rd Ordinary Summit, which commenced on 21st January.
- The summit is being held under the African Union's theme for the year 2020 **Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions For Africa's Development**.

- Silencing the Guns is a commitment to achieve the Aspirations of Africa's Agenda 2063, specifically Aspiration 4, which envisions a peaceful and secure Africa, thereby making peace a reality for African people.

The 2020 summit has adopted 8 resolutions as follows

- Compromise with the United Nations over co-funding in peace operations
- To support elections in Ethiopia and to mediate events of disputes
- To deter leaders in Guinea to use Constitutional Amendments to hold on to power
- To help to calm Burkina Faso's insurgency
- To push Somali Government towards regional compromise
- To press East African heads to support South Sudan peace process
- To support Sudan transition by supporting deal between civilian leaders and security forces.

The 23rd Edition of National Conference on e-Governance inaugurated in Mumbai

- The **23rd edition of the annual National Conference on e-Governance** has been inaugurated by Minister for Environment, Tourism & Protocol, Government of Maharashtra, **Shri Aaditya Thackeray at National Sports Club of India (NSCI) Worli, Mumbai.**
- The two-day conference on e-governance has been organized by DARPG and MeitY in association with Department of Information & Technology, Government of Maharashtra this year.
- The theme of the conference was: India 2020: Digital Transformation.
- He also launched the '**Blockchain Sandbox –Maharashtra**', which will be used for various applications to enhance efficiency in e-Governance. The main attraction of *Blockchain* is the security offered by distributed ledger technologies, efficiency of internal system and reduced time and labour in execution of departmental tasks.

International Conference on Alternate Medicines Concludes at Delhi

- The **two-day International Conference on Standardisation of Diagnosis and Terminologies in Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha Systems** of Medicine concluded in **New Delhi** recently with adopting the "**New Delhi Declaration on Collection and Classification of Traditional Medicine (TM) Diagnostic Data**".
- The **sixteen countries** which came together for the cause of Traditional Medicine at this conference are Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Serbia, Curacao, Cuba, Myanmar, Equatorial Guinea, Qatar, Ghana, Bhutan, Uzbekistan, India, Switzerland, Iran, Jamaica and Japan.
- **ICoSDITAUS-2020** is the biggest ever international event dedicated to standardisation of Diagnosis and Terminologies of Traditional Medicine in terms of the broad level of participation covering virtually all the continents.

Several topics discussed in the conference

- The challenges in Counting and classification of traditional medicine encounters
- Adapting ICD to TM Systems and their implementation
- Relevance and regulation of Traditional Medicine in Health Systems

Narendra Singh Tomar inaugurates the 11th National Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Conference

- The Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, **Shri Narendra Singh Tomar** inaugurated the **11th National Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Conference -2020** in **New Delhi**.
- The theme of the three day national conference is '**Empowering Youth for Technology Led Farming**'.
- The KVK national conference will mainly highlight technology-led farming and youth entrepreneurship through agriculture which will be attended by all the KVKs across India.

- **eNAM portal** has been created so that the farmer gets better price for his produce. Already 585 Mandis have boarded the eNAM platform and another 415 Mandis will be added in due course. More than Rs.91,000 crore of **eVyapar (e-trade)** has been performed on the eNAM.

Revision Points

Conference/Summits	Venue	Theme
23 rd edition of the annual National Conference on e-Governance	Mumbai	NA
African Union 2020 Summit	Addis Ababa	Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions For Africa's Development
11 th edition of the Auto Summit 2020	New Delhi	Thriving Amidst Disruption
22nd India International Seafood Show 2020	Kochi	Blue Revolution- Beyond Production to Value Addition
11th edition of DefExpo	Lucknow	India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub' with main focus on 'Digital Transformation of Defence'
National Horticultural Fair 2020	Bengaluru	Making farming an enterprise
4th East Asia Summit conference on maritime security cooperation	Chennai	NA
12th South Asia Conference	New Delhi	Neighbourhood First" Policy: Regional Perceptions.
RAISE 2020	New Delhi	NA
International conference on " Ensemble Methods in Modelling and Data Assimilation "	Noida	NA
G20 ministers' and central bank governors' meeting	Riyadh	Realizing Opportunities of the 21st Century for All
International Judicial Conference 2020	New Delhi	Judiciary and the changing world
Sustainable Development Goals Conclave 2020	Guwahati	NA
Organic Food Festival for Women entrepreneurs	New Delhi	Unleashing India's Organic Market Potential'

North East Sustainable Development Goals Conclave 2020	Guwahati	NA
3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety	Stockholm, Sweden	Achieving Global Goals 2030
17 th edition of BioAsia 2020	Hyderabad	Today for Tomorrow
26 th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26)	Glasgow, UK	NA
All India Conference of the Central Administrative Tribunal 2020	New Delhi	NA
7th International Congress of the Society for Ethnopharmacology	New Delhi	NA
2 nd BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise-2020	Odisha	A cultural heritage site that suffers severe damage in the Earthquake & Flooding or Storm
43 rd Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development	Rome	Investing in sustainable food systems to end hunger by 2030
The 13th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals	Gandhinagar	Migratory species connect the planet and we welcome them home
National Water Conference	Bhopal	NA
ClimFishCon 2020	Kerala	Climate Change-Effective Adaptation for a Secure Future

Important Defence News

Exercise	Conducted by	Conducted at
14-day Sampriti - IX	India & Bangladesh	Umroi, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya
Matla Abhiyaan	Indian Coastal Service	Riverine Border with Bangladesh
Indradhanush 2020	India & UK	Uttar Pradesh
Ajeya Waarrior	India & UK	Salisbury Plains

Indian DRDO developing Pranash, a new 200km strike range ballistic missile

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (**DRDO**) has started working on the development of the **Pranash**, a 200-km range **surface-to-surface ballistic missile** that would be armed with conventional warheads.
- It would also be readied for exports to friendly foreign countries as its strike range is within the permissible limits of international regimes on missile sales.
- **The Pranash** is an **advanced version** of the **150-km strike range Prahaar** missile which was designed for tactical missions. The surface-to-surface ballistic missile will be of use for the Air Force and Army.

Kovind awards President's Colour, highest military honour, to INS Shivaji

- President Ram Nath Kovind presented the **President's Colour** to **INS Shivaji** in Lonavala, Maharashtra.
- INS Shivaji houses the Naval College of Engineering which trains officers of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard.
- The Station has rendered 75 years of service to the country by providing training to the personnel from Coast Guard, Indian Navy and also for Naval personnel from other countries. The Courses at INS Shivaji are conducted by AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education).
- Last year, President Kovind had awarded the President's Colour to the Indian Naval Academy (INA), which was received by Academy Cadet Captain Sushil Singh on behalf of the INA in a parade comprising 730 cadets of INA and a 150-man Guard of Honour.

US approves sale of Integrated Air Defense Weapon System to India

- The US has approved the sale of an **Integrated Air Defense Weapon System** to India for an estimated cost of **USD 1.867 billion** to modernise its armed forces and to expand its existing air defense architecture to counter threats posed by air attack.
- The Trump Administration has notified to the US Congress of its determination to sell India the Integrated Air Defense Weapon System (IADWS).
- The entire system is estimated to cost USD USD 1.867 billion, the State Department has told the Congress in a notification.

Army received banned anti-aircraft ammunition worth Rs 39 crore from OFB in Aug 2015: CAG

- Indian Army "**received**" banned **anti-aircraft ammunition** worth around **Rs 39 crore** from the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) in August 2015, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) said in its latest report that was tabled in Lok Sabha.
- As an accident had taken place with this ammunition "K" at Gopalpur firing range in November 2014, the Army Headquarters (AHQ) had asked the OFB to stop its production from December 2014 onward, the report noted.
- This ban was lifted in September 2015 when a recommendation by a board of officers regarding improvements in the ammunition "K" were accepted by the AHQ, the CAG noted.

Indian, Sri Lankan Navies to conduct joint hydrographic survey

- Indian Navy's **Sandhayak** class **Hydrographic Survey Ship**, **INS Jamuna (J16)**, commanded by **Captain HA Hardas**, arrived in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- The ship has been deployed to Sri Lanka based on a mutual agreement to carry out Joint Hydrographic Survey off the South West Coast of Sri Lanka.
- The ship carried out detailed hydrographic surveys and several shore-based survey activities. Sri Lankan Navy personnel will embark the ship during the conduct of the Joint Survey.

- INS Jamuna also hosted a meeting between Rear Admiral Sisira Jayakody, Chief Hydrographer of Sri Lankan Navy, other officers of Sri Lankan hydrographic department and Indian officers of the ship.

Surprise third American entry for Indian fighter jet deal, F 15EX in the fray

- The multi-billion dollar Indian program to acquire new fighter jets could see a third American aircraft enter the fray, with permissions being sought to offer the iconic **F 15 EX** to the air force for its requirement of 114 fighters that are to be produced domestically.
- The US made jet, which has made a comeback after the US Air Force placed an order for 8 which could go up to 72, will join the F/A 18 Super Hornet and the F 21 (a variant of the F 16) that are already on offer. The more advanced F 35 has not been offered to India, with reluctance over the purchase of **Russian S 400** air defence systems.
- The US Company continue to offer the F/A-18 Super Hornet to both the Indian Navy and Indian Air Force.

Anti-hijack mock drill conducted in Vishakapatnam

- A mock **anti-hijack** exercise was conducted by **INS Dega** at **Visakhapatnam airport**.
- The anti-hijack exercise was conducted with a mock situation created that involved the actions of various agencies including Marine Commandos (MARCOS), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Airport Authority of India (AAI) and the State Government agencies.
- The objective of the exercise was to test the efficacy of the contingency plans and procedures to deal with hijack threats by all stakeholders.
- The Anti-Hijack Mock Drill is conducted at every Indian airport annually as mandated by the National Civil Aviation Security Programme with an aim to test the efficiency of the airport's Contingency Plan and to familiarise all agencies about their respective responsibilities in a hijack situation.

CDS Gen Bipin Rawat announces plan to create Peninsula Command

- Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat stated there are plans to create a **Peninsula Command** with **Navy's Eastern** and **Western Command** under it.
- General Rawat stated India is looking at setting up two to five theatre commands. Air Defence command will be rolled out by beginning of next year and peninsula command will be rolled out soon.
- He also stated that India may have a separate Jammu and Kashmir theatre but the shape would be finalised later. He added that India is also working on separate joint commands for logistics and training.

India to send its largest military aircraft to evacuate more Indians from Wuhan

- India will send a **C-17** military transport aircraft to the Chinese city of **Wuhan** to evacuate more Indians and deliver a consignment of medical supplies to China's coronavirus-hit people.
- The **C-17 Globemaster** is the largest military aircraft in the Indian Air Force's inventory. The plane can carry large combat equipment, troops and humanitarian aid across long distances in all weather conditions.
- The aircraft will carry a large consignment of medical supplies to China and bring back more Indians from Wuhan, the epicentre of the coronavirus epidemic.
- India's national carrier Air India has already evacuated around 640 Indians from Wuhan in two separate flights.

GRSE delivers the 4th Anti-Submarine Warfare Corvette, INS Kavaratti

- **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd., (GRSE)**, a leading Warship builder and Miniratna Category 1 Company under the administrative control of the Ministry of Defence delivered **Yard 3020 INS Kavaratti**, to the Indian Navy.

- The ship is the 104th Warship built and delivered by GRSE since its inception in 1960 and is the Last in the Series of 04 Anti-Submarine Warfare Corvettes (ASWC) under the **Project 28**.
- The first three ships of the series, **INS Kamorta, INS Kadmatt & INS Kiltan** were delivered earlier and now form an integral part of Eastern Fleet of the Indian Navy. The P 28 Class of ships strengthens the Indian Defence System and is the shining Armor in the “**Make in India**” programme.
- The Kamorta class of Corvettes are designed to be equally effective in the littorals as well as in the deep oceans.

India-Russia defence deals set to cross \$16 bn; to include S-400 systems, Kalashnikov rifles

- Defence deals between **India** and **Russia** are set to cross **\$16 billion** and Moscow is committed to the timely implementation of contracts, including the supply of **S-400 air defence systems** and production of **Kalashnikov rifles** and **Kamov helicopters**.
- The two countries signed 14 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) during the recent **Defexpo 2020 in Lucknow** that covered development and production of land, air and naval systems and hi-tech civilian products.
- Russia’s state-run **Rosoboronexport** inked deals with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for advanced pyrotechnic ignition systems, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for export of spares and services to friendly countries, and Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) for land systems.
- A separate MoU was signed by Russian Helicopters and Indo-Russian Helicopters Ltd for localisation of component to be used in **Kamov Ka-226 helicopters**. India has plans to buy 200 Ka-226 helicopters.
- India made the first payment of **\$850 million** last year for the \$5.4-billion deal for five S-400 systems through a special mechanism worked out by the two sides.

Rajnath Singh presents trophies of best marching contingents for Republic Day Parade 2020

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh presented trophies of best marching contingents for **Republic Day Parade-2020**. The Indian Air Force contingent was adjudged the best among the three services. **Air Marshal M S G Menon** and **Flight Lieutenant Shrikant Sharma** received the trophy.
- **The Central Industrial Security Force** was named the best marching contingent among the Central Armed Police Forces. The trophy was received by Director General of CISF **Rajesh Ranjan** and Deputy Commandant **Prabh Simran Singh**.

Rajnath Singh lays foundation stone of new Army headquarter building

- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** laid the foundation stone for construction of a new Army headquarter building in **Delhi**.
- **Thal Sena Bhawan**, the multi-storeyed complex adopting Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA-5 rating) norms, designed like a “rising sun” and spread over nearly 39 acres.
- ‘**Thal Sena Bhawan**’ will help bring down pollution, reduction in fuel consumption, cutting down the movement of about 3,000-4,000 vehicles on a daily basis between different offices every day.

Offshore Patrol Vessel-6 “VAJRA” is launched at Chennai

- **Shri Mansukh Mandaviya**, Minister of State for Shipping(I/C) and Chemicals & Fertilizers was the Chief Guest for the launching ceremony of 6th Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV-6) ‘**VAJRA**’ at **Chennai**.
- **OPV-6** is truly state of the art platform which will enhance the capabilities of Indian Coast Guard in terms of **Operation, Surveillance, Search & Rescue**.
- The ship would be utilized for day and night patrol/surveillance along with anti-terrorist/ anti-smuggling operations in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as well as Coastal Security.

India's annual defence exports to touch Rs 35,000 crore by 2024

- Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh projected that the annual Indian defence exports will touch **Rs 35,000 crore by 2024** from the current level of **Rs 17,000 crore**.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the **new Light Combat Helicopter Production Hangar** at Helicopter Division in Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Complex.
- India emerging as among the three major economies of the world by 2030 and the defence industries will have an important role to play.
- Especially defence public sector units, will have to play a major pro-active role in achieving the goal of 'Make In India' as envisaged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- By March 2019, the company's turnover was ₹19,705 crore, and the HAL gave shareholders 198 per cent healthy dividend

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addresses Third Defence Attachés Conference in New DelhiPTI

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has stated that terrorism poses a serious challenge, but India has displayed that it can disrupt and deter terrorist groups and their patrons. He was addressing the **Third Defence Attachés Conference in New Delhi**.
- On DefExpo-2020, the Minister stated, opportunities will increase with the establishment of **two industrial corridors** in **Tamil Nadu** and **Uttar Pradesh**. He added that a large country like India cannot restrict its defence cooperation to a few countries and efforts should be made to expand it continuously.
- In this direction, he announced the creation of **10 new Defence Wings** so that 10 more Defence Attachés could be appointed. This will further strengthen India's defence diplomacy.

BDL introduces new missile at DefExpo-2020

- Hyderabad-based **Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)** launched its new product, the **Amogha-III Anti-Tank Guided Missile**, during the Defexpo-2020 at Lucknow.
- The missile, with a dual-mode IIR seeker, has a range of over 200 to 2,500 metres. Equipped with a tandem warhead, Amogha-III is a top direct attack missile. It will be commercialised after successful completion of user trials.
- The missile is developed by the BDL with support from the DRDO. The first model of the same was handed over by the CMD of BDL Commodore Siddharth Mishra (Retd) to Defense Minister Rajnath Singh at the event.
- Another ammo manufactured by the BDL, namely Varunastra, was handed over to the Indian Navy.

Navy to get third Scorpene submarine in December

- The third Scorpene submarine, **Karanj**, will be delivered to the Indian Navy by December and all six submarine deliveries would be completed by **2022**.
- **Karanj** was launched into water in January 2018 and is currently in advanced stages of sea trials.
- The **first Scorpene, Kulvari**, was commissioned in 2018 and it would go for a normal refit after six years in 2023, during which time the AIP would be installed. **Second Scorpene Khanderi** was inducted in September last.

Russian S-400 missile delivery to India to begin by end-2021

- **Russia** will begin delivering **S-400 surface-to-air missile systems** to India by the end of **2021**.
- India signed a **\$5 billion** deal for S-400 missiles in 2018, drawing warnings from the United States that such an acquisition would trigger sanctions as part of a wider program against Russia.

- The contract is being implemented on schedule. The first shipment is due by the end of **2021**.

DefExpo 2020: 'Lucknow Declaration' adopted at India-Africa Defence Conclave

- '**Lucknow Declaration**' was adopted at the India - Africa Defence Conclave held on the sidelines of the event. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his counterparts from 12 African countries along with representatives of 38 other African countries were present at the conclave, which was organised for the first time.
- The 'Lucknow Declaration' recalled the Indian contribution to defence and security in the African continent and states that terrorism is a major threat in the region.
- India is an all weather friend of Africa and Africa is at the top of India's priorities. **14 MoUs** had been signed between **India** and **Russia** which will pave way for production of different Russian defence equipment in India.

Larsen & Toubro built 5th offshore patrol vessel ICGS Varad commissioned into India Coast Guard

- **Larsen & Toubro** built offshore patrol vessel **ICGS Varad** was commissioned into the **Indian Coast Guard**.
- ICGS Varad set a record in Indian shipping industry by becoming the first major defence ship to clear all Sea Acceptance Trails in a single sea sortie, underlining the high quality of design and construction of these ships.
- The vessel is the **fifth in the series of seven** offshore patrol vessels contracted by Ministry of Defence on Larsen & Toubro in March 2015.

Indian Army Major develops world's first bulletproof helmet

- An **Indian Army** has developed the world's **first bulletproof helmet** which withstands even an AK-47 bullet round from a distance of 10 meters. Earlier, Major **Anoop Mishra** had developed a **bulletproof jacket** against sniper bullets.
- Anoop Mishra is a part of the Indian Army's College of Military Engineering and had got into the development of bulletproof jackets after he had received gunshots on his vintage bulletproof jacket.
- The **Indian Army's College of Military Engineering** has also developed India's first and world's **cheapest gunshot locator**. The device can locate the exact location of the bullet from a distance of 400 meters which will help to locate and neutralize terrorist faster.

DRDO inks deal with Russian company for missiles propulsion systems

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) signed a technology development contract with a Russian company **Rosoboron export** at **DefExpo2020**.
- DRDO's High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) signed contract with Rosoboronexport for development of Advanced Pyrotechnic Ignition Systems.
- This will enable advancement in the field of energetic materials and pyrotechnic technology leading to the development of advanced ignition systems.
- HEMRL is the DRDO laboratory working in the development of spectrum of high energy materials required for missiles, rockets and guns.

Important Science and Technology

Iran shows ballistic missile Raad-500 from US, dedicates to Sulaimani

- Iran made the short-range ballistic missile **Raad-500** amid heightened tensions with the US.
- The missile has a new generation engine to put the satellite into orbit. The name of this engine is **Zuhair** which is made of alloy. It is lighter than a steel engine built earlier, so it is easier for the missile to capture high speed.

- The Revolutionary Guards website stated that the Raad-500 missile is half the weight of the previously built Fateh-110 missile, but its firepower is 200 km more than that.
- It has been dedicated to the former head of the organization, **Major General Qasim Sulemani**. Sulaimani was killed in a drone strike by the US in Baghdad on January 3.

Atlas 5 blasts off with Solar Orbiter

- A United Launch Alliance **Atlas 5** rocket lifted from Cape Canaveral, boosting the European Space Agency's **\$1.5 billion** Solar Orbiter probe out of Earth's gravitational grip toward a multi-year voyage around the sun that will give scientists their first glimpse of the star's poles.
- The **Solar Orbiter mission** comes a year and a half after **NASA's Parker Solar Probe** was launched, a spacecraft that periodically flies through the sun's super-heated outer atmosphere, or corona, enduring extreme temperatures that rule out the use of sun-facing cameras.
- The Solar Orbiter mission cost roughly \$1.5 billion, including the Atlas 5 rocket provided by NASA. The U.S. space agency spent another \$70 million building one of the spacecraft's instruments and other components, including a sensor.

Indian Army, pvt firm develop world's cheapest gun shot locator

- '**Parth**' gun shot locator device developed by the Army's College of Military Engineering jointly with a private firm costs much cheaper than the imported ones.
- The device costs around **Rs 3 lakhs**, and if inducted, would replace a similar imported item which costs around Rs 65 lakhs. The device can locate the exact location of a bullet from a distance of 400m and will help to locate and neutralize terrorist faster.
- Major **Anoop Mishra** showcased the indigenous 'Parth' gun shot locator device at **DefExpo 2020**.

Ananth Technologies first Indian private firm to build foreign-owned satellites

- Hyderabad-based **Ananth Technologies** has signed deals to build six foreign-owned satellites in India, a first by an Indian private company. Ananth will open a facility later this month in **Bengaluru**, where it will build satellites weighing **50-250 kg** for customers in **Sweden** and **France**.
- This is the first time a private firm is making satellites for global customers using the country's low-cost base.
- The company is a supplier of systems to Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).
- The firm has expertise in providing services for satellites or operators covering all the phases of communication satellites.

NASA says it wants next generation of astronauts to walk on Moon, journey to Mars

- NASA says it wants the next generation of astronauts to walk on the Moon and journey to Mars. The US Space Agency announced that it is seeking to add its astronaut corps as part of plans to dramatically expand its crewed space missions in the coming years. The corps currently stands at 48 active personnel.
- NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine stated the agency is celebrating its 20th year of continuous presence aboard the International Space Station (ISS) in low-Earth orbit this year. NASA plans to send the first woman and next man to the Moon by **2024**.

Seventeen new planets, including one Earth-sized habitable world discovered

- Astronomers have discovered **17 new planets**, including a potentially habitable Earth-sized world, by combing through data gathered by **NASA's Kepler space telescope** which was launched in **2009**, and retired in October 2018.

- According to the researchers, including Michelle Kunimoto from the University of British Columbia in Canada, the Kepler satellite, over its original four-year mission, looked for planets, especially those lying in the potentially habitable "**Goldilocks Zone**" of their stars, where liquid water could exist on a rocky planet's surface.
- The current findings, published in The Astronomical Journal, include one such rare planet named **KIC-7340288 b**.
- The study noted that the planet has a year that is 142 and a half days long, orbiting its star at 0.444 Astronomical Units (AU, the distance between Earth and the Sun) -- just bigger than Mercury's orbit in our Solar System.

Scientists discover animal that doesn't survive on oxygen

- Scientists have discovered an animal that does not need oxygen to produce energy needed for its survival, a finding that changes one of science's assumptions about the animal world.
- The tiny, less than 10-celled parasite **Henneguya salminicola** lives in salmon muscle. As it evolved, the animal, which is a relative of jellyfish and corals, gave up breathing and consuming oxygen -- or became anaerobic -- to produce energy.

Great Indian bustard, Asian elephant added to 'facing extinction' list

- The **Asian elephant** and the '**great Indian bustard**' bird have been added to the **list of migratory species** that are '**threatened with extinction**' under the 13th Convention of Parties (CoP) that will bring together 130 countries in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat**, where the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals under the United Nations Environment Programme will be hosted.
- Ahead of the CoP, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has floated a draft Visionary Perspective Plan (2020-2030) for conservation of avian diversity, their ecosystems, habitats and landscapes in the country.

OneWeb: London start-up launches first big batch of satellites

- UK-based **OneWeb company** has sent **34 satellites** into orbit on a single **Soyuz rocket** from **Baikonur** in **Kazakhstan**.
- The start-up is building a mega-constellation in the sky to deliver broadband internet to all corners of the globe.
- Six spacecraft were lofted in 2019 to prove the technology, but this year will see big batches of platforms going up on a near monthly basis. The aim is to have the full network in operation by the end of **2021**.

NIT, Trichy develops a mobile app for Self Help Group products

- The **National Institute of Technology (NIT)**, Trichy, Tamilnadu has developed **Thirumathikart** - a mobile app for SHG (**Self Help Group**) products.
- The application was developed in coordination with the Union Department of Science and Technology. The main objective of the app is to empower women and help them access market opportunities in a seamless manner. The platform will also enable Self Help Groups to showcase their products to a wider audience.

ISRO to launch an unprecedented 10 earth imaging satellites

- The country will send up an unusually large number of **10 earth observation (EO) satellites** during **2020-21**, according to the latest annual report of the Indian Space Research Organisation for 2019-20.
- It includes new categories such as the first Geo Imaging Satellite, **GISAT-1**.
- The annual plan mentions 36 missions, another high for a year: these include both satellites and their launchers.
- For the ongoing fiscal, ISRO had proposed launching six EO satellites, of which two are due to go. For 2021-22, the plan is to add eight EO satellites.

- ISRO was recently given a budget of nearly ₹13,480 crore for the next fiscal.
- The upcoming EO satellites include radar imaging satellites RISAT-2BR2, RISAT- 1A and 2A; Oceansat-3 and Resourcesat-3/3S.

Pakistan Test Launches Ra'ad II Nuclear-Capable Air-Launched Cruise Missile

- Pakistan test-launched a new variant of its **Ra'ad II nuclear-capable air-launched cruise missile (ALCM)**.
- The new longer-range Ra'ad II significantly enhances air delivered strategic standoff capability on land and at sea.
- The weapon system is equipped with state of the art guidance and navigation systems ensuring engagement of targets with high precision.
- The Ra'ad II being launched from a Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Mirage III fighter aircraft.
- The Ra'ad II was first publicly revealed as a mock-up in 2017 during Pakistan's annual military parade in Islamabad.
- The **4.85 meter-long** Ra'ad-II had a stated range of **550-600 kilometers**. It is capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear payloads.

Solar Powered PHASA-35 Completes First Test Flight In Australia

- BAE Systems is celebrating the successful maiden flight of a solar powered **High-Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) aircraft** at the RAAF's Woomera Test Range in **South Australia**.
- **PHASA-35** is an unmanned 35-metre wingspan solar-electric aircraft that has progressed from design to flight in just 20 months. Built in partnership with **UK's Prismatic Ltd**, which BAE Systems announced it would be acquiring last year, **PHASA-35** has military applications but could also be used for purposes such bushfire detection and delivering communications services.

SCSC launches new app to make women feel safe

- The **She M Power Women Security Conclave** organised by the **Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC)** saw the launch of a new comprehensive mobile application called **She Safe**.
- The app, made by a group of women IT professionals, offers a one-stop tech solution to a variety of security needs of women, and allows them to rate various services.
- SCSC members stated one of the features of the app, which is the most promising, is '**Safe Stay**' wherein nearly 100-200 hostels and PG guest houses have been enlisted with security ratings given to them by the police and the SCSC.
- Another critical feature is '**Radiant Hyderabad**' wherein women can click photos of dark streets and roads and upload the location on the app to submit a complaint on unsafe spaces.
- The feature also has an option called '**Margadarshak**', where the margdarshaks registered with the SCSC, can be reached out based on their proximity to one's present location.

Personal reading scanner machine for visually impaired

- Nearly **4.7 million people** in India are blind or visually impaired, this physical disability keeps them away from many things one of which is, reading. To make them self-dependant when it comes to reading **Central Scientific Instruments Organisation, (CSIO) Chandigarh** has developed a scanner-based reading device called '**Divyanayan**'.
- It is a reading machine for visually impaired or illiterate person where any printed or digital document can be accessed in the form of speech output. The device uses a contact line scanner for acquiring the image of a printed document.

Sub-Neptune sized planet validated with the habitable-zone planet finder

- A signal originally detected by the Kepler spacecraft has been validated as an exoplanet using the **Habitable-zone Planet Finder (HPF)**, an astronomical spectrograph built by a Penn State team and recently installed on the 10m Hobby-Eberly Telescope at McDonald Observatory in Texas.
- The HPF provides the highest precision measurements to date of infrared signals from nearby low-mass stars, and astronomers used it to validate the candidate planet by excluding all possibilities of contaminating signals to very high level of probability.
- The newly confirmed planet, called **G 9-40b**, is the first one validated by HPF.
- NASA's Kepler mission observed a dip in the host star's light, suggesting that the planet was crossing in front of the star during its orbit. It is about twice the size of Earth, and orbits its star once every six Earth-days. HPF is being searching for Exoplanet by using the **Doppler Effect**.

ISRO to launch geo imaging satellite on March 5

- The Indian Space Research Organisation stated it is scheduled to launch its geo imaging satellite '**GISAT-1**' onboard the geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle '**GSLV-F10**' on March 5.
- The launch is tentatively scheduled at 5:43 pm on March 5, subject to weather conditions, from the second launchpad of Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- Weighing about **2,275 kg**, GISAT-1 is a state-of-the-art agile earth observation satellite which would be placed in a geosynchronous transfer orbit by GSLV-F10.
- According to the space agency, operating from geostationary orbit, GISAT-1 would facilitate near real-time observation of the Indian sub-continent under cloud-free condition at frequent intervals.

Top IITs, IIMs launch iVEIN to promote entrepreneurship

- India's premier technical and management institutions have joined hands to launch a consortium to boost entrepreneurship ecosystem through high quality research in innovation, venturing and entrepreneurship.
- Called '**Innovation-Venturing and Entrepreneurship in India Network (iVEIN)**,' its founding members are faculty at IIT Madras, IIT Bombay, IIM Bangalore, IIM Calcutta and IIM Kozhikode.
- iVEIN was launched on February 15 on the sidelines of Dialogue with Stakeholders event held by the Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at **IIT Bombay**.
- The objectives of iVEIN network include creating an interdisciplinary body of knowledge synthesising multiple perspectives; help in effective policy formulation at multiple levels; develop thought leadership for practice and seed the creation of a society that will organise annual conferences, publish a journal, and architect a data repository in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- The first report would be published in 2020 with the theme: **Creating Successful Ventures**.

IIT Madras to join hands with AIIMS Mangalagiri for quality healthcare delivery

- The Indian Institute of Technology (**IIT Madras**) will join hands with **AIIMS Mangalagiri** on affordable future technological solutions in multiple areas such as **patient safety** and **quality healthcare**.
- The Institute stated that the partnership between these institutions would also feature academic and research collaborations in areas of mutual interest, exchange of scholarly information, students and faculty besides sponsorship of joint seminars, workshops, health and wellness projects of high impact.

Incois launches three ocean-based services

- The **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (Incois)**, **Hyderabad**, has launched three ocean-based specialised products/services — the **Small Vessel Advisory and Forecast Services System (SVAS)**, the **Swell Surge Forecast System (SSFS)** and the **Algal Bloom Information Service (ABIS)**.
- **Incois**, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, provides a number of free services for users in the marine realm, including fishermen.
- The SSFS is designed to predict the **kallakkadal**, or swell surge, that occurs along the Indian coast, particularly the West. **Kallakkadal** is a colloquial term used by Kerala fishermen to refer to the 'freaky' flooding episodes.

NASA astronaut Christina Koch returns to Earth after record-setting stay in space

- **NASA's astronaut Christina Koch** returned from space to Earth safely. Koch returned after an 11-month mission, breaking the world record for the most time spent by a woman in space.
- Koch has spent **328 days** on International Space Station ISS, surpassing the previous record of 289 days held by fellow American **Peggy Whitson**.
- Koch's medical data will be especially valuable to NASA scientists as the agency draws up plans for a long-duration manned mission to Mars.

Molecule to treat ALS identified

- **IITH** research team hopes '**AIM4**' will help arrest the disorder, which is only managed .A drug molecule that promises to help in the treatment of **Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)**, a rare disease of the nervous system, has been identified by researchers at the **Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IITH)**.
- With no known drugs to treat ALS, which is a debilitating neurodegenerative disease, the molecule code named '**AIM4**' raises expectations. Treatment options are limited to two drugs available for management of the condition.

ISRO announces it is preparing low-cost satellite launch vehicles

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced that it is preparing **low-cost satellite launch vehicles** costing around **30-35 crores** rupees each, which can put into orbit satellites weighing **500 kgs**.
- The first such launch is expected to take place in the next four months from the country.
- Deputy Director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Haridas T V stated that this capability will give ISRO a big commercial boost as it will be able to cater to micro, mini and medium segments of the market.
- Haridas also stated that ISRO has earmarked **1,600 million Dollars** for launch vehicles of which **870 million Dollars** will be for PSLV and the remaining for GSLV.

NASA decommissions Spitzer Space Telescope after 16 years of service

- The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** has decommissioned its **Spitzer Space Telescope**, after being into service for more than 16 years.
- The Spitzer Space Telescope (SST), formerly the Space Infrared Telescope Facility (SIRTF), was an infrared space telescope launched.
- Spitzer was planned to be decommissioned in 2018 in anticipation of the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), but as JWST launch mission was postponed spitzer was given 5th and final extension till 2020.

Researchers at IIT Madras develops AI technology to convert brain signals of speech-impaired humans into English language

- The **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras** announced that its researchers had developed an **Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology** to convert **brain signals of speech impaired humans** into language.

- Brain signals are typically electrical signals. These are wave-like patterns with spikes, humps and crusts which can be converted into simple human language - meaning speech using AI and Deep Learning algorithms. This enabled the researchers to read direct electrical signals of the brain.

ICAR lab develops cheaper vaccine for swine flu

- Researchers at the **Izatnagar-based Indian Veterinary Research Institute (ICAR-IVRI)** — a constituent institute of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research — have developed a more efficient and cost-effective vaccine against classical swine fever, a disease associated with heavy mortality and morbidity in pigs.
- The live attenuated vaccine developed by the ICAR-IVRI team led by its director Raj Kumar Singh costs just Rs.2 per dose as against Rs. 15-25 per dose of the existing swine fever vaccine, most of which is imported currently.
- The vaccine, expected to be available for use within the next 12 months, would improve pork production and India may even be able to export to other countries.
- Once the ICAR-IVRI vaccine is ready, India would be able to save the money spent on imported the vaccine.

L&T MBDA Missile System sets up integration facility in Tamil Nadu

- **L&T MBDA Missile Systems (LTMMSL)** has set up a missile (inert) integration facility at **Coimbatore**.
- LTMMSL is a joint venture between engineering and construction major L&T and the European defence company MBDA. L&T owns 51% stake in LTMMSL while MBDA has 49%.
- The inert facility spreads across an area of 16,000 sq. meters in a Special Economic Zone and will cater to domestic and global markets. The company has set up the assembly line for inert integration (without explosives), testing the Missile Subsystems and weapon launch systems.
- Part of the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor, the investment in the facility is yet to be disclosed.

HAL to make advanced armed UAVs with Israeli Co

- In a first, advanced **Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs)** will be manufactured in India, with leading aeronautical entity **Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL)** set to formalise a partnership with an Israeli firm that specializes in autonomous weaponry.
- The advanced Heron TP, which belongs to the Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) class with endurance of over 36 hours, will be manufactured to cater both to Indian requirements for a combat UAV and possibly exports to third nations in the future as well.
- **HAL** is set to sign a partnership pact with **Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI)** at the upcoming DefExpo 2020 in Lucknow, with estimates that in the Indian market alone, there is a requirement of at least 100 drones of this type.

Important Ranking and Indexes

Index	India's Rank	Top	Released By
TomTom Traffic Index	1	India	-
Global Intellectual Property Index	40 th		Global Innovation Policy Center
Worldwide Education for	35th	Finland followed by	The Economist

the Future Index 2019		Sweden & New Zealand	Intelligence Index
Risk of Coono Virus Import	17th	Thailand, Japan, South Korea	Based on Mathematical Model

DMart's Radhakishan Damani is second richest man in India: Forbes

- **Avenue Supermarts** founder **Radhakishan Damani** has become the **second most richest** in India, behind Reliance Industries's **Mukesh Ambani (\$57.4 billion)**.
- According to Forbes' Real-Time Billionaires Index, the total net worth of Damani is at **\$17.8 billion**.
- Avenue Supermarts is the most profitable grocery retailer in India and has 196 stores across the country. Damani got into retailing in 2002 with one store in suburban Mumbai and has been unstoppable since. He was also a mentor to billionaire investor Rakesh **Jhunjhunwala**.

Global defence spending: the United States widens the gap

- In 2019, the **United States** remained by far the **world's largest defence spender**, widening the gap between it and the second largest spender, **China**.
- IISS data shows that in 2019 the **United States, China, Saudi Arabia, Russia and India** retained their positions as the world's top defence spenders.
- Indeed, the only movement in the top 15 saw Italy and Australia swap places, with Italy taking the 12th position and Australia the 13th.

India becomes world's 5th largest economy, overtakes UK, France

- India emerged as the world's **fifth largest economy** by overtaking the UK and France in 2019.
- India's economy is the fifth largest in the world with a GDP of USD **2.94 trillion**, overtaking the **UK** and **France** in 2019 to take the fifth spot.
- The size of the UK economy is **USD 2.83 trillion** and that of France is **USD 2.71 trillion**.
- In purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, India's GDP (PPP) is USD 10.51 trillion, exceeding that of Japan and Germany. Due to India's high population, India's GDP per capita is USD 2,170 (for comparison, the US is USD 62,794).
- India's real GDP growth is expected to weaken for the third straight year from 7.5 per cent to 5 per cent.

Country	GDP
United States (US)	\$21.44 trillion
China	\$14.14 trillion
Japan	\$5.15 trillion
Germany	\$4 trillion
India	\$2.94 trillion

Hindi is 3rd most spoken language in the world with 615 million speakers after English, Mandarin

- **Hindi** is the 3rd most spoken language of the world in 2019 with 615 million speakers. The 22nd edition of the world language database Ethnologue stated **English** at the top of the list with 1,132 million speakers. Chinese **Mandarin** is at the second position with 1,117 million speakers.
- **Bangla** has been ranked as the 7th most spoken language of the world. Bangla has 228 million native speakers.
- **Ethnologue** brings out a yearly database of living languages of the world since its establishment in 1951.
- The current round of the database covers 7,111 living languages of the world. This edition lists 348 such languages.

CSIR tops scientific research institutional ranking

- **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** has been ranked first in the **Nature Ranking Index-2020**. The rankings are based on total research output which the institutions have carried out from December 01, 2018 to 30th November, 2019. **Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore**, has been ranked **second**.
- **CSIR-New Delhi** has achieved the top position with 142 counts (C) and a share percentage (SP) of 87.74 while **IISc-Bengaluru** stands second with 211 counts and 83.61 in share percentage.
- The third place in India is secured by **Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR-Mumbai)** with a research count of 232 and share percentage of 62.18. **Homi Bhabha National Institute (HBNI), Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT Bombay), Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras), Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS), Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Kolkata (IISER Kolkata), Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IIT Guwahati), Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Pune (IISER Pune)** are among other institutions that have been ranked in the list.

IISc ranks 16th among top 100 universities of emerging economies

- The **Indian Institute of Science (IISc)** has ranked **16th** among the top 100 universities of emerging economies.
- Indian universities had a good performance year within the emerging economies of the world as a record 11 made it to the top 100 Times Higher Education's (THE) Emerging Economies University Rankings 2020.
- Only China has more universities than India in the top 100 at 30 from a total of 47 countries and territories included in the analysis released in London.
- **The Indian Institute of Science (IISc)** emerged as **India's top-ranked institution** followed by the Indian Institute of Technologies (IITs).
- Indian Institute of Technology Ropar and Institute of Chemical Technology are entering the ranking for the first time, and both debut in the top 100.

MP, Odisha top performers in digitising land records: NCAER

- **Madhya Pradesh**, is the **best performing state** in terms of digitising land records, followed by **Odisha**, according to the **NCAER Land Records and Services Index**.
- Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Tamil Nadu are the other states in the top five. The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) released India's first land records and services index.
- From sixth to tenth position, are West Bengal, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, respectively.
- While Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh ranked at bottom at 33rd position with a score of 2.0.
- The index is based on data collected over 2019-20 on two aspects of the supply of land records-the extent of digitisation of land records and the quality of these land records.

India ranks 77th on sustainability, 131st in child flourishing index rankings

- India **ranked 77th** on a **sustainability index** that takes into account per capita carbon emissions and ability of children in a nation to live healthy lives and secures **131st spot** on a flourishing ranking that measures the best chance at **survival and well-being for children**.
- **Norway** leads the table for survival, health, education and nutrition rates – followed by South Korea and the Netherlands. Central African Republic, Chad and Somalia come at the bottom.
- Each of the three emits 210 per cent more CO2 per capita than their 2030 target, the data shows, while the US, Australia, and Saudi Arabia are among the 10 worst emitters. The lowest emitters are **Burundi, Chad and Somalia**.

21 Indian cities among world's 30 most polluted; Ghaziabad tops list

- **Delhi** topped the **list of most polluted capital cities** in the world in 2019, which also revealed that 21 of the world's 30 most polluted cities are in India.
- According to the **World Air Quality Report 2019** compiled by IQAir Air Visual, **Ghaziabad** is the **most polluted city** in the world, followed by Hotan in China, Gujranwala and Faisalabad in Pakistan and then Delhi in the fifth place.
- The 21 Indian cities are Ghaziabad, Delhi, Noida, Gurugram, Greater Noida, Bandhwari, Lucknow, Bulandshahr, Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat, Jind, Faridabad, Coraut, Bhiwadi, Patna, Palwal, Muzaffarpur, Hisar, Kutail, Jodhpur and Moradabad.
- According to **country-wise data**, **India ranked fifth** in the world's most polluted countries with **Bangladesh on top** of the list followed by Pakistan, Mongolia and Afghanistan.

Hurun Global Rich List: Jeff Bezos retains No. 1 spot, Mukesh Ambani richest in Asia

- **Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos** is still the richest person in the world, even after losing \$7 billion in one year, according to the ninth annual Hurun Global Rich List.
- Bezos has retained the top spot for the third year with an estimated net worth of **\$140 billion**, mainly due to the world's largest divorce settlement with former wife **MacKenzie Bezos**, who made the list in her own right with **\$44 billion**.
- French billionaire business magnate **Bernard Arnault** ranked **second**, with an estimated worth of **\$107 billion**, up \$21 billion from last year.
- Microsoft founder **Bill Gates** and **Warren Buffett** were on **third and fourth spots**.
- Bezos, Arnault, Gates and Buffett were the only four billionaires on the list with wealth over \$100 billion.
- Reliance Industries (RIL) Chairman **Mukesh Ambani** was the only Indian to make into the top 10 rankings this year with a net worth of \$67 billion.

Samsung Mobile is India's most desired brand for the fourth time

- **Samsung Mobile** is the most desired brand, **TRA Research** (formerly known as Trust Advisory).
- This is the fourth time Samsung Mobile has been named the most desired brand. Previously, the brand has topped the list in 2013, 2015 and 2018.
- Samsung is followed by **Apple iPhone**, which is positioned **second** in the list.
- The diversified brand of Samsung which falls under the consumer electronics category features at third rank. **Sony TV**, which is a general entertainment channel, has entered the list of the top 10 brands for the first time. It has gained the **fourth position**. **Maruti Suzuki**, which is an automobile major is at the **fifth position** followed by **Dell**, the technology major at the **sixth position**.

IIM-Bengaluru ranks third in MOOC performance among B-Schools globally

- Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) secured the **third rank** in the global list of **Top Business Schools** of 2020 by **MOOCLab**.
- This was the maiden ranking for business schools globally who are offering MOOCs (massive online open courses) courses. **HEC Paris** (France) and **Wharton School** of the University of Pennsylvania (USA) have secured the first and second rank respectively.
- Sixteen business schools across the world offering open online courses on the three MOOC platforms - Coursera, edX and FutureLearn - were ranked in the MoocLab's Business School Rankings 2020.

Bengaluru has the worst traffic in the world

- India has topped the TomTom Traffic Index 2019 with 4 of its cities amongst the 10 most congested cities globally.
- Bengaluru (71%), Mumbai (65%), Pune (59%) and New Delhi (56%) ranks 1st, 4th, 5th and 8th respectively.
- The other global cities featured amongst the top 10 include Manila from the Philippines, Bogota from Colombia, Moscow from Russia; Lima from Peru, Istanbul from Turkey, and Jakarta from Indonesia.
- Bengaluru takes the top spot this year with city drivers expecting to spend an average of 71% extra travel time stuck in traffic.
- **Abu Dhabi** in the United Arab Emirates(UAE) was the least congested national capital, it had just 10% congestion level in 2019.

Telangana tops country in sustainable growth goals: UN Development Programme

- **Telangana** has emerged as the best performing state in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all on **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index 2019**, according to **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India**.
- The state has improved its performance over 2018 in eight out of 17 SDGs. In decent work and economic growth, India's youngest state moved to 82 percent from 75 percent in the previous year.
- Telangana was followed by states of Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Karnataka together with a score of 72.

Natural disasters cost world \$232 billion in 2019: Report

- Death toll in **India** was the highest at 1,750.
- The world lost as much as **\$232 billion** due to natural disasters in 2019, with India leading in casualties with 1,750 deaths, stated a recent report by AON, global professional firm which provides risk solutions to insurance firms, among other things.
- According to its report, Weather, Climate Catastrophe Insight for 2019, there were a total of 409 natural disaster events in 2019 and the monsoon floods in India was the deadliest among them, followed by **cyclone Idai**, which killed 1,303 300 people in southern Africa and turned two million people homeless.
- There were a total of 41 disasters in 2019 that cost more than \$1 billion in economic losses.

Maharashtra tops list of States hit by global medical data leak

- Medical details of over 120 million Indian patients have been leaked and made freely available on the Internet, according to a recent report published by **Greenbone Sustainable Resilience**, a **German cybersecurity firm**.
- The updated report places **Maharashtra** at the **top** of the States affected by the leak, with 3,08,451 troves offering access to 6,97,89,685 images. The next is **Karnataka**, with 1,82,865 data troves giving access to 1,37,31,001 images.
- Some of the widespread data leak include massive numbers of records, including images of CT (computerized tomography)scans, X-rays, MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) and also pictures of the patients.

- India was ranked 2nd in the ugly category after the United States (US).

Virat Kohli retains top spot as the most valuable celebrity in 2019 : Duff & Phelps

- Kholi's brand value grew **39%** to **\$237.5 million**. New faces in the top 20 include **Ayushmann Khurrana**, **Tiger Shroff** and **Rohit Sharma**.
- Virat Kohli** retained the top spot in the celebrity brand valuation rankings released by Duff & Phelps, for the third year in a row. His brand value grew by nearly 39 per cent to \$237.5 million in 2019.
- Bollywood actor **Akshay Kumar** bagged **the second spot** with a brand value of \$104.5 million up by nearly 55.3 per cent over last year.
- Meanwhile, celebrity couple **Deepika Padukone** and **Ranveer Singh** held the third spot on the list with a brand value of \$93.5 million each.
- This is the fifth edition of the Duff & Phelps Celebrity Brand Valuation Study.

Important Books and Authors

Authors/ Released by	Books
Rajat Chaudhuri	Calcutta Nights (Translated From Raater Kolkata)
Purushottam Agrawal (Released by Manmohan Singh)	Who is Bharat Mata (Kannada translation 'Yaarur Bharat Maate?' by Prof K E Radhakrishna)
Sadhguru (Released by Venkaiah Naidu)	Death - An Inside Story
Priti K Shroff	Messages from Messengers
Dharmendra Rai	Mind Map & Brain Literacy
Dr. K K Khandelwal (Released by Manohar Lal Khattar)	A Commentary and Digest on The Air, Act 1981 (Released at Chandigarh)
Ramakrishna Rao (Released by M Venkaiah Naidu)	A Child of Destiny: An Autobiography

Book compiles well-known aphorisms of Chanakya

- "Chanakya Niti: Verses on Life and Living"** is translated from the original Sanskrit by long-time career diplomat **A N D Haksar** and published by Penguin Random House India.
- A new book takes a look at the Chanakya Niti corpus as a whole through some of well-known aphorisms attributed to the ancient master of statecraft Kautilya.
- According to Haksar, who has translated several Sanskrit classics, these sayings are mainly about everyday life and living. Called Chanakya Niti as a whole, these epigrammatic verses of observation and advice have frequently been quoted in later Sanskrit works and anthologies and many are still remembered.

Union Minister Shri Prakash Javadekar unveils India/Bharat 2020

- Union Minister **Prakash Javadekar** unveiled Annual Reference **India/Bharat 2020**. The book is a complete reference manual for all people including those appearing for competitive examinations. The book has become a tradition and is becoming popular by the day.

- Javadekar also released **the e-version of the publication**. The e-version can be accessed on a variety of devices such as tablets, computers, e-readers and smart phones. The e-book conforms to the best international standards technically and is a faithful replication of the print version.

Important Sports News

Cricket

Kohli continues to top ICC Test batsmen's ranking, Rahane slips

- Indian Captain **Virat Kohli** continued to top the ICC Test batsmen's ranking but his deputy **Ajinkya Rahane** slipped a place to the **ninth** spot.
- Kohli has 928 points, 17 more than second-placed Australian run-machine Steve Smith. **Cheteshwar Pujara** also remained in **sixth** place with 791 points. Rahane has 759 points.
- **Jasprit Bumrah** was the best-placed Indian in the bowlers' ranking at **sixth** spot with 794 points, while spinner **Ravichandran Ashwin** was placed eighth. **Seamer Mohammed Shami** was the third Indian in the top 10, improving a spot to be placed in the ninth position.
- In the all-rounders ranking, **Ravindra Jadeja** remained static at the **third** place with 406 points, while Ashwin improved a place to capture the fourth position with 308 points.

Sachin Tendulkar's World Cup triumph shortlisted for Laureus Sporting Moment award

- **Sachin Tendulkar** has been shortlisted as one among five contenders for the greatest **Laureus Sporting Moment 2000-2020 Award**.
- The moment, titled '**Carried On the Shoulders Of A Nation**', is a reference to the Indian cricket team's 2011 ICC Cricket World Cup triumph.
- In his sixth attempt, Tendulkar finally tasted success in 2011 as the Indian team beat Sri Lanka by six wickets.
- **Tendulkar** was one of the **20 contenders** for the award. The 20th anniversary Laureus World Sports Awards will honour the greatest sporting triumphs of 2019 and will award the greatest Laureus Sporting Moment of the last 20 years.

Bangladesh beat India to win maiden Under-19 World Cup

- **Bangladesh** beat **India** by three wickets to win maiden **ICC U-19 World Cup cricket** title by Duckworth-Lewis method in South Africa. In a low-scoring final, Bangladesh first restricted India to a meagre 177 in 47.2 overs and then did well enough to score a revised target of 170 in 42.1 overs.
- For India, Yashasvi Jaiswal scored 88 runs off 121 balls. Bangladeshi skipper Akbar Ali was declared the Player of the Match for his captaincy and match-winning unbeaten 43.

ICC ODI rankings: Kohli retains top spot; Ravindra Jadeja grabs seventh position

- In Cricket, India skipper **Virat Kohli** continues to hold on to the top spot in **the batting chart** of the latest ICC ODI rankings released in Dubai. His deputy **Rohit Sharma** also maintains the **second position**.
- All-rounder **Ravindra Jadeja** climbed three rungs to grab the **seventh position**. Afghanistan's **Mohammad Nabi** emerged as the new world number one all-rounder. Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal jumped to the 13th spot.
- However, speedster **Jasprit Bumrah** lost the top spot and was placed at the second position in bowling chart. His place has been taken over by Kiwi pacer Trent Boult. Chinaman bowler **Kuldeep Yadav** slipped to the 16th place.

Football

Mizoram win Junior National Football C'ship for Dr BC Roy Trophy

- In Football, **Mizoram** has won the final of the **Junior National Football Championship** for **Dr BC Roy Trophy** at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium** in **Shillong** .
- Mizoram beat Punjab 5-4 on penalties as both teams finished 1-1 in regulation and extra time.
- It was the fourth time in five years that the two team met in the final of the Under -17 tournament with Punjab winning the trophy in 2015-16 and 2016-17. Last year Mizoram reversed the tide and defeated Punjab in the final 2-1.

AIFF receives 'Grassroots Charter Bronze Level' membership of AFC

- The **All India Football Federation (AIFF)** has received the "**Grassroots Charter Bronze Level**" membership of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). The Asian sport's governing body has confirmed this in a letter to the AIFF General Secretary **Kushal Das**.
- This declaration accords AIFF the right to promote its grassroots events and activities with the support and recognition of the AFC in accordance with the applicable terms of the AFC Grassroots Charter.

FIFA U-17 Women's Football World Cup to be hosted in 5 cities in November

- Union Sports Minister **Kiren Rijiju** launched an event in New Delhi to unveil the five host cities for the **FIFA Under-17 Women's Football World Cup** which kicks off on 2nd of November 2020.
- The matches of the world cup will be held in five cities including Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Kolkata and Navi Mumbai. The finals of the tournament will be played on 21st of November at **Navi Mumbai**. The cities will play host to 16 teams which will compete across 32 matches to lift the coveted title. The official slogan - **Kick Off The Dream** - was also unveiled during the event.

Other Sports News

Gulmarg all set to host five day National Winter Games from March 7

- World-famous Ski destination **Gulmarg** is all set to host a **five-day national winter games event** from 7th March under the banner of **Khelo India**.
- Secretary Youth Services and Sports, **Sarmad Hafeez** reviewed the arrangements for the mega event with all the stakeholders.
- There will be 30 events under five major activities- snowboarding, snow skiing, cross country, snow show in which 800 players from across India would participate.

Aditya Mehta & Vidya Pillai wins National Snooker Championship

- **Aditya Mehta & Vidya Pillai** has won the **National Snooker Championship** held in **pune, Maharashtra**. Aditya Mehta defeated the world champion Pankaj Advani to win the men's title of the National Snooker Championship. While representing the Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB), he defeated Pankaj Advani with a score line of 6-2.
- **Vidya Pillai** of Karnataka defeated Ameer Kamani of Madhya Pradesh to win the **women's title of the National Snooker Championship**. She defeated Ameer Kamani with a score line of 3-2 to defend her senior ladies snooker title.

Chess: Koneru Humpy wins, D Harika suffers defeat in fifth round of Cairns Cup

- Players had mixed fortunes in the fifth round of the **Cairns Cup Chess** at St Louis in the **United States** with **Koneru Humpy** posting a win and D Harika suffering a defeat.
- World rapid champion, Humpy returned to winning ways with a superb victory against overnight leader Nana Dzagnidze with black pieces .
- Humpy is on three points after five rounds, half a point behind the leaders -- Wenjun Ju and Alexandra Kosteniuk.
- Harika was beaten by Valentina Gunina in a Sicilian Closed game in 38 moves. It was Harika's first defeat in the 10-player tournament.

Indian athletes clinch 3 medals in World SnowShoe Championship

- Indian athletes finished with three medals in different categories in the **World SnowShoe Championship** at **Myoko, Japan** .
- **Ayan Bin Shahnaz** bagged **silver**, while Zain Ali and Muzamil Hussain Mir, all are from Kashmir, bagged bronze medals in their respective categories.
- Athletes from 17 countries including the USA, Canada, Australia, Italy, Germany, Spain, Sweden and France participated in the championship. The Indian contingent was fielded by SnowShoe Federation of India.

Vidit Gujrathi continues to lead standings in Masters category of Prague Chess Festival

- Indian Grandmaster **Vidit Gujrathi** continued to lead the standings in the Masters category of the **Prague Chess Festival**, after sharing a point with Swedish GM Nils Grandelius in the fourth round.
- Gujrathi, the second-ranked Indian chess player behind Viswanathan Anand, was forced to draw against Grandelius, the lowest-rated player in the field, in a 35-move game.
- P Harikrishna, the other Indian in the 10-player field, held Sam Shankland of the USA to a draw. He had suffered a defeat in round three at the hands of the world's top junior Alireza Firouzja.

Manchester City banned from European competition for two seasons by UEFA

- The Premier League stated that it had opened its own investigation into **Manchester City** and Financial Fair Play after **UEFA** began its probe.
- English champions Manchester City have been banned from **European competition** for the next two seasons and fined **30 million euros** (\$32.53 million) by European soccer's governing body UEFA after an investigation into alleged breaches of Financial Fair Play (FFP) rules.
- UEFA announced in a statement that City had committed "**serious breaches**" of the rules while the Premier League club swiftly stated on their website that they will appeal the decision to the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

Asian Wrestling Championship begins in New Delhi

- **Asian Wrestling Championship** will **begin** in **New Delhi**. It will be held at the KD Jadhav Hall of Indira Gandhi Stadium till 23rd of this month.
- The event will have a total of 30 weight classes, 10 each in Freestyle Men, Women, and Greco Roman.
- The Championship will begin with Greco-Roman events, followed by women wrestling and men's freestyle.
- On day 1 of the tournament, 55, 63, 77, 87 and 130 kg wrestlers will take to the mat to prove their mettle.

Sunil Kumar wins gold in 87-kg Greco Roman category in Asian Wrestling Championships

- Greco Roman wrestler **Sunil Kumar** opened India's medal account in the **Asian Wrestling Championships at New Delhi** by winning a Gold. The seasoned grappler beat Azat Salidinov from Kyrgyzstan in the final of the 87 kg category.
- Sunil Kumar had reached the final by a victory over Kazakh opponent Azamat Kustubayev to finish the semi-final bout 12-8.
- Arjun Halakurki lost his semi-final bout 7-8 against Iran's Pouya Mohammad Naserpour in 55 kg category. He will now be up against Korea's Donghyeok Won in the bronze medal playoff. The Indian wrestlers who crashed out were Mehar Singh, Sajan and Sachin Rana in different weight categories.

India claims five silver, six bronze medals at 2020 Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships

- India claimed **five silver** and **six bronze** medals at the **2020 Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan**.
- In 45 kilogram category, **K V L Pavani Kumari** won silver medals in both youth girls and junior women section, while **Sidhanta Gogoi** claimed silver in youth boys and junior men events in 61-kilogram category after lifting a total of 145 and 269 kilograms.
- Then, Mukund Aher in 49-kilograms then clinched a silver in youth boys category with a lift of 189 kilograms. In 45 kilogram category, Harshada Goud clinched two bronze medals with a lift of 139 kilograms in youth girls and junior women events.
- Other lifters to win bronze medals are Boni Manghkyia in 55 kg, Nirmala Devi in 59 kg, S Gurunaidu in 49 kg and Golom Tinku in 55 kg.

KIUG 2020: Savitribai Phule Pune University consolidates its position at top; claims 3 gold medals in Weightlifting, Wrestling

- **Savitribai Phule Pune University** consolidated their position at the top by claiming three gold medals at the Khelo India University Games in **Odisha**.
- **Mahesh Datta Asawale** and **Prajakta Ravindra Khalkar** won gold in weightlifting competition, while **Jyotiba Bajrang Atkale** bagged a yellow metal in wrestling for the Pune varsity.
- While **Punjab University (Chandigarh)** in on the second position, **Jain University (Bengaluru)** is at the third place with eight gold medals each.

India to host AFC Women's Asian Cup in 2022

- India will host the **2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup**. The Women's Committee of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced this in **Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**.
- Chinese Taipei and Uzbekistan were the other competing candidates. But It was felt that India was best placed among the three bidders.
- Besides, India will have the experience of hosting the FIFA Women's Under-17 World Cup . Hence India stands out.

Asian Wrestling C'ships: Indian wrestlers win three bronze medals in Greco-Roman events

- **Ashu, Aditya Kundu** and **Hardeep** have won a bronze medal each in their respective weight categories as Indian wrestlers bagged five medals in **Greco-Roman** events of the **Asian Wrestling Championships in New Delhi** While Ashu won a bronze in 67kg category, Aditya and Hardeep also bagged the medals of same colour in the 72kg and 97kg respectively on the second day of the competitions.

- Ashu beat Syria's Abdulkarim Mohammad Al-Hasan 8-1 while Kundu defeated Nao Kusaka of Japan 8-0 inside one and a half minutes in a lop-sided 72kg bronze medal bout. Hardeep beat Kyrgyzstan's Beksultan Makhamadzhanovich Makhmudov 3-1 to register India's third podium finish of the day.
- India has five medals in the championships, after Sunil Kumar's historic gold in 87kg and Arjun Halakurki's bronze in 55kg Greco-Roman category.

Achanta Sharath Kamal, Sathiyen Gnanasekaran win silver at Hungarian Open

- Indian men's doubles pair of **Achanta Sharath Kamal** and **Gnanasekaran Sathiyen** settled for a silver medal at the **ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open** after losing the summit clash to German combination of **Benedikt Duda** and **Patrick Franziska** at Budapest 5-11, 9-11, 11-8, 9-11.
- The Indian pair had defeated top seeds Ho Kwan Kit and Wong Chun Ting of Hong Kong 3-2 in the semi-finals. It is Sharath Kamal's second medal from the prestigious tournament. He also won a bronze with Manika Batra in mixed doubles.

India's 13-year old Grandmaster D Gukesh wins 34th Cannes Open

- In Chess, India's **13-year old Grandmaster D Gukesh** emerged champion in the **34th Cannes Open** in **France**. Gukesh defeated Harutyun Bargseghyan of the host nation in the final round to end with 7.5 points. Gukesh, who last year became the world's second youngest Grandmaster ever, beat the Frenchman in 50 moves to emerge clear winner.
- Tamil Nadu player had won his first open tournament, bagging top honors in the Hillerod 110th Anniversary Open event in Denmark.

India wins one silver, two bronze medals in Asian Wrestling Championships

- India won **one silver** and **two bronze medals** on concluding day of **Asian Wrestling Championships** in **New Delhi**. In 74 kilogram category India's **Jitender** settled for a silver medal following a defeat by defending champion Kazakhstan's Daniyar Kaisanov 1-3.
- In 86 Kg category, **Deepak Punia** defeated Issa Abdulsalam Abdulwahhab Al Obaidi of Iraq 10-0 and clinched a **bronze medal**. **Rahul Aware** defeated Iran's Majid Almas Dastan by 5-2 and settled for a bronze. India secured total 20 medals in the championship including five golds and six silvers and nine bronzes.

PM Narendra Modi declares first-ever Khelo India University Games open

- PM Narendra Modi declared open the **first-ever Khelo India University Games** at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium Cuttack** in Odisha.
- India joined the league of nations where University Games are organized. Launching the multi-disciplinary sporting event through video conferencing, the Prime Minister said it marks the next step in the country's sporting revolution.

Ladakh all set to host first-ever Khelo India Winter Games

- The Union Territory of **Ladakh** is all set to host the **first-ever Khelo India Winter Games**. In the presence of Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur, Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju will inaugurate the games at **NDS Indoor Ice Hockey Rink** in Leh.
- About 1,700 athletes of different ages, from Leh and Kargil districts of Ladakh, will compete in the Khelo India Ladakh Winter Games at 10 blocks, district and then at UT level. Under Khelo India, in the first edition of Winter Games in the country, the players will compete in ice hockey, figure skating and speed skating events.

Mumbai's twin-sisters bag four medals in swimming at KIUG

- At the Khelo India University Games (KIUG) in **Odisha**, the University of Mumbai's twin-sisters **Jyoti and Aarti** bagged four medals.
- The twin sisters ended up on the podium in the 200m breaststroke, Jyoti winning a gold and Aarti a bronze, the duo also helped the University of Mumbai to clinch a bronze in the 4x200m freestyle relay.
- Meanwhile, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ended the fourth day of the Games on top with 11 medals, including six gold. Punjab University, Chandigarh gave a tough competition by winning 16 medals with 5 gold. Jain University, Karnataka is in the third spot with 7 medals including 4 gold.

India to host Commonwealth Shooting and Archery Championships in January 2022

- India will host the **Commonwealth Shooting and Archery Championships** in **January 2022**. The medals from the two events will be counted for ranking of competing nations at the **Birmingham Games**.
- The Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) announced the three-day Executive Board meeting in London . The two events will be held in Chandigarh in January 2022 while the Birmingham Commonwealth Games is scheduled from 27th of July to 7th of August , 2022. The event hosted in 2018 at Gold Coast, Queensland of Australia.
- While the cost for the shooting championship is to be met largely by the **National Rifle Association of India (NRAI)**, the archery event would be funded solely by the Government of India.
- India also received wholehearted support from **International Shooting Sports Federation** and **World Archery**.

Jagmohan Dalmiya's son Avishek becomes youngest CAB president

- Former BCCI president late **Jagmohan Dalmiya's son Avishek** became the youngest president of **Cricket Association Bengal** after being elected unopposed. Avishek, 38, was holding the post of joint secretary before his elevation.
- BCCI president Sourav Ganguly's elder brother Snehasish Ganguly, a former Bengal left-hander, is the **new joint secretary**. Avishek has become the 18th president of CAB.
- Avishek, however, will go for a cooling-off period from November 6, 2021 as per the Lodha recommended Constitution giving him a tenure of about 22 months.

Rakhi Halder bags gold at Senior Women's National Weightlifting Championships

- In Senior Women's National Weightlifting Championships, **Rakhi Halder** of Bengal has bagged gold in the **64kg category** of the 35th edition of the event in **Kolkata**.
- Halder lifted 93 kg in snatch and 117 kg in clean and jerk to clinch the gold medal .She was 10kg ahead of her nearest rival Harjinder Kaur of Chandigarh.
- Ranked 19th in the Olympic qualifiers list, Halder had produced a personal best of 218 kg at the Qatar International Cup last year to win the bronze medal.
- At the Commonwealth Championship in June 2019, Halder who is also an Indian Railways employee had clinched the gold with a total lift of 214-kg.

Flame-Throated Bulbul 'Rubigula' official mascot for Goa 2020 National Games

- 'Rubigula', Flame-Throated Bulbul, has been unveiled as the official mascot for the Goa 2020 National Games in Panaji, Goa.
Goa will be hosting the 36th edition of the National Games from 20th October to 4th November 2020.
- The event will see participation by 36 states and union territories, 12,000 athletes, officials and will host 37 sports disciplines across 24 venues in Goa.

- The Flame-Throated Bulbul is the state bird of Goa. Chief Minister of Goa Pramod Sawant and Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju were present at the unveiling ceremony.

Australian Open: Novak Djokovic wins his record 8th Men's singles title, American Sofia Kenin wins her first Grand Slam title

- In tennis, **Serbia's Novak Djokovic** won his record **8th Men's singles title** in **Australian Open** at Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne
- He beat first-time Australian Open finalist **Dominic Thiem** of **Austria**.
- The men's doubles title was clinched by Joe Salisbury of UK and American Rajeev Ram who beat Australia's Luke Saville and Max Purcell.
- **American Sofia Kenin** won her first Grand Slam title with victory over **Spain's Garbine Muguruza** at the **Australian Open**.
- Kenin won 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 against two-time major winner Muguruza in Melbourne.
- Kenin, who turned 21 in November, is the youngest Australian Open champion since Russian Maria Sharapova in 2008.

Vinesh, Sindhu, Mary Kom among nominees for inaugural BBC Sportswoman of the year award

- Wrestler **Vinesh Phogat**, Shuttler **P.V. Sindhu** and Boxer **M.C. Mary Kom** will compete for the inaugural **BBC Indian sportswoman of the year award** after being nominated for the honour.
- Sprinter Dutee Chand and para-badminton player Manasi Joshi are the other nominees for the award, the winner of which will be announced on the 8th of March. The winner will be decided on the basis of public voting, which was opened till the 18th of February on six BBC vernacular websites.

Indian boxers bag six gold at Golden Girl Championship in Sweden

- In Boxing, India's junior youth dominated the ring at the **Golden Girl Championship** in Boras, Sweden, claiming 14 medals, including six golds, the overall championship trophy and the '**Best Boxer**' award.
- While the junior women's team clinched five golds, three silvers and one bronze medal, the youth team secured a single gold and four bronze medals.
- Haryana's **Prachi Dhankar** (50 kilogram), playing in the junior category, won the '**Best Boxer**' award.
- Besides **Prachi**, **Ethoibi Chanu Wangjam** (54 kilogram), **Lashu Yadav** (66 kilogram) and **Mahi Raghav** (80 kilogram) also won gold medals.
- The three silver medals in the junior category were won by **Janhavi Churi** (46 kilogram) **Rudy Lalhmingmuani** (66 kilogram) and **Tanishka Patil** (80 kilogram) while **Diya Negi** brought home a bronze in the 60 kilogram slot.

Weightlifting: Mirabai Chanu betterers her own national record; wins gold with 203 kg lift

- In Weightlifting, former world champion **Mirabai Chanu** bettered her own national record by two kilogram as she lifted a total of 203kg to win the 49kg gold in the **National Championships** in **Kolkata**.
- The 25-year-old Manipuri lifted 88kg in snatch in her second attempt and 115 kg in clean and jerk for a total of 203kg.
- The effort has put her in fourth place in world rankings behind Chinese Jiang Huihua 212kg and Hou Zhihui 211kg and Korean Ri Song Gum 209kg. Mirabai's previous best of 201kg had come at the World Championship in Thailand in September 2019, where she had finished **fourth**.

Rohit Rajpal to continue as India's Davis Cup captain

- **Rohit Rajpal** will continue as India's non-playing **Davis Cup captain** while veteran **Leander Paes**, too, has retained his place in the six-member squad picked for the tie against Croatia next month.
- **Zeeshan Ali** will be the coach. India are scheduled to travel to Croatia for their next tie from 6th to 7th of March.
- The All India Tennis Association (AITA) has asked Rajpal to lead the side in the 2020 season. **Prajnesh Gunnewaran, Sumit Nagal** and **Ramkumar Ramanathan** are the other singles players in the six-member squad.

SAI, Hockey India launch High Performance Centres

- **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** and **Hockey India** announced the establishment of the High Performance Centres in seven places across the country to provide state-of-the-art facilities to Junior and Sub-Junior players. The move is aimed at grooming young talent in view of 2024 and 2028 Olympic Games.
- While the National Hockey Academy at **Dhyan Chand National Stadium, New Delhi** along with SAI at Sundergarh, Bhopal and Bengaluru will be active within the next three months, the remaining three centres will be developed over the next one year.
- The remaining three High-Performance Hockey Centres will be established at **SAI, Takyel, Imphal in Manipur, Balewadi Sports Complex, Pune in Maharashtra, SAI Centre, Ranchi** and **Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro turf Hockey Stadium**. The SAI Centre Bengaluru will remain as the main site for the senior and junior national teams.

Weightlifting: Chandrakant Mali creates 3-records in his men's 109kg title victory

- In Weightlifting, **Chandrakant Mali** created three records in his men's **109kg** title victory on the concluding day of the National Championships at Kolkata
- Services lifter Mali, who ed new snatch (149kg), clean and jerk (181kg) and total (330kg) records, posted a convincing win. Railways' **Anikit Chhoker** and **V.A. Christopher** bagged silver and bronze after registering an identical aggregate of 316kg.
- Gurdeep Singh of Railways lifted a total of 367kg to claim the men's 109kg gold medal. **S. Mirabai Chanu** (women's 49kg) and **Jeremy Lalrinnunga** (men's 67kg) emerged as '**Best Lifters**'. Railways retained team championships in men and women sections.

Shooting: Ayushi Podder wins women's 50 metres Rifle 3 Positions

- In Shooting, **Ayushi Podder** won the **women's 50 metres Rifle 3 Positions (3P)**, while **T.S. Divya** and **Adarsh Singh** claimed the titles in the **women's 10 metres Air Pistol** and men's 25 metres Centre Fire Pistol T1 events on the penultimate day of the National Trials for Rifle and Pistol in Thiruvananthapuram
- West Bengal's **Ayushi** won both the senior and junior categories in women's 3P, shooting 452.3 in the senior category and 0.1 less in the junior final to take home a coveted double. She got the better of Tamil Nadu's N. Gaayathri in the senior final by 0.4 points and Madhya Pradesh's Bandhvi Singh in the junior event by 0.9 points.
- In the women's 10 metres Air Pistol final, Karnataka's **Divya** came up trumps in a low-scoring final, finishing ahead of experienced Shweta Singh, to shot 235.3. Aadhy Tayal of Rajasthan was third with a score of 214.9. In the men's 25 metres Centre Fire Pistol event, Haryana's Adarsh continued his good form and shot 582 to leave Rajkanwar Singh Sandhu of Punjab (581) in second place. Yogesh of the Indian Navy was third with a score of 579.

Haryana thrashes SAI to win 10th Hockey Senior Women National C'ship

- Haryana thrashed **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** 6-0 to win the **10th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship 2020 (A Division)** title at Kollam.
- Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy beat Hockey Maharashtra 2-1 in the third-fourth place play-off match.

Ladakh Scouts Regimental Centre Red wins 1st Khelo India Ice Hockey tournament

Tweeted by

- The Ladakh Scouts Regimental Centre (LSRC) Red won the first Men's section Khelo India Ice Hockey tournament 2020.
- They defeated Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) team 3-2 in a nail biting thriller final match.

J&K bags gold in 6th National Ice Stock sports Championship at Ice Rink in Gulmarg

- In **Jammu and Kashmir**, the hosts bagged gold medal in the **6th National Ice Stock Sports Championship** organized at **Ice Rink** in **Gulmarg**.
- The event was organized by J&K Ice Stock Sports Association under the aegis of Indian Ice Stock Sports Federation and sponsored by J&K Tourism Department.
- During the competition in team target event, **J&K bagged gold**, **Haryana** bagged **silver** while **Maharashtra** and **Bihar** bagged **bronze** medals.
- Similarly, in the team game competition Daman and Diu bagged gold, J&K won silver and Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh got bronze medals.

AITA selection committee keep Leander Paes in playing squad against Croatia

- The All India Tennis Association (AITA) Selection Committee decided to keep veteran **Leander Paes** in the five-member playing squad for the upcoming **Davis Cup** tie against Croatia, making Divij Sharan the reserve member.
- Sumit Nagal, Prajnesh Gunneswaran and Ramkumar Ramanathan are the singles players in the squad while Paes and Rohan Bopanna will do the doubles duty. AITA had to send its final squad to the **International Tennis Federation**

Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 to be held in Chandigarh, says Punjab Sports Minister

- The events of the **shooting** and **archery** as part of the **Birmingham Commonwealth Games-2022** will be held in **Chandigarh**. Punjab Sports Minister Rana Gurmeet Singh Sodhi informed this during Zero Hour in Punjab Vidhan Sabha.
- The shooting and archery events will now be held under **Birmingham Commonwealth Games-2022** in **Chandigarh**.

P V Sindhu wins third successive ESPN's Female Sportsperson of the Year award

- World champion **shuttler P V Sindhu** won the **ESPN's Female Sportsperson of the Year award** for a third consecutive time while young shooter **Saurabh Chaudhary** bagged the honour in the male category.
- **Sprinter Dutee Chand** became the first winner of the Courage award for being inspirational both on and off the field. Ace chess player **Koneru Humpy** won the award for **the Comeback of the Year**. Wrestler **Deepak Punia** bagged coveted **ESPN's Emerging Sports Person of the Year award**.
- Chief National Badminton Coach **Pullela Gopichand** claimed the **Coach of the Year award**, for nurturing two Olympic medalists in Saina Nehwal and Sindhu. Sindhu's World Championship win, the first by an Indian in badminton, has also been selected as the **Moment of the Year**.
- Manu Bhaker-Saurabh Chaudhary grabbed the Team of the Year honour. Manasi Joshi won Differently-abled Athlete of the Year/Para-Athlete of the Year award. Hockey legend **Balbir Singh Senior**, one of independent India's most celebrated Olympians, has been conferred with **ESPN's Lifetime Achievement award**. ESPN Multi-Sport Awards recognized achievements across 10 categories.

Divya Kakran wins a gold medal at Asian Wrestling Championships

- **Divya Kakran** became only the second Indian woman to win a gold medal at the **Asian Wrestling Championships** defeating junior world champion **Naruha Matsuyuki** in **New Delhi**. Divya won all four bouts in five-wrestler 68 kilogram category, as the competition was fought in the round-robin format.
- **Navjot Kaur** had become the **first Indian woman** to win a **gold medal** at the Asian Championships in 2018 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in 65 kilogram.
- **Sarita Mor** in 59 kg, **Pinki** in 55 kg and **Nirmala Devi** in 50 kg are assured of at least **silver medals** as they reached finals of their categories.

Indian hockey captain Manpreet Singh named Player of the Year 2019 by IHF

- The Indian men's hockey team captain **Manpreet Singh** was named **Player of the Year** for **2019** by the **International Hockey Federation**.
- Manpreet, a midfielder, became the first Indian to win the accolade since the awards were introduced in 1999.
- He beat competition from Belgium's Arthur van Dorren and Lucas Villa of Argentina, who came second and third.

Vidit Santosh Gujrathi posts win in Prague Chess opener

- India's **Vidit Santosh Gujrathi** opened his campaign in the Masters event of the **Prague Chess Festival** with a win over Sam Shankland of the USA.
- P. Harikrishna, the other Indian player in the field, held Sweden's Nils Grandelius. Vidit Gujrathi and Harikrishna are ranked two and three in the latest FIDE list behind the legendary Viswanathan Anand.
- In the second round later, Gujrathi faces David Anton Guijjarro while Harikrishna tackles the top-seeded Duda.

Amit Panghal ranked No 1 by IOC's Boxing Task Force rankings for Olympic Qualifiers

- World **silver-medallist Amit Panghal** has been ranked number one in the **52 kilogram** category for Olympic Qualifiers, making him the first Indian pugilist in over a decade to achieve the global top position in the category.
- The list was released by the **International Olympic Committee's Boxing Task Force** ahead of next month's Olympic Qualifiers. The rankings took into account the last two world championships for both men and women and the continental championships and Games in 2019.
- Last year, he became the first Indian to claim a silver medal at the world championships after notching up a gold at the Asian meet.

Revision Points

Organization	Headquarters	Key Person
Financial Action Task Force	Paris, France	Xiangmin Liu
All India Football Federation	Dwarka, Delhi	Praful Patel
United Nations	New York, USA	António Guterres
Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)	New Delhi	Rita Teatia
NASSCOM	New Delhi	Rishad Premji
Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)	Bengaluru	K Sivan

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)	Washington DC, USA	James Frederick "Jim" Bridenstine
World Economic Forum (WEF)	Cologny, Switzerland	Klaus Schwab
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	Beijing, China	Jin Lique
World Bank	Washington D.C, USA	David Malpass
Asian Development Bank	Mandaluyong, Philippines	Masatsugu Asakawa
International Cricket Council (ICC)	Dubai, UAE	Manu Sawhney
Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)	New Delhi	DilipChenoy
International Hockey Federation (FIH)	Lausanne, Switzerland	Narinder Batra
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	New York, USA	Henrietta H. Fore
World Health Organization	Geneva, Switzerland	Tedros Adhanom

Important Mergers and Acquisitions

Infosys to acquire US-based Simplus for \$250 million to step up cloud biz

- Bengaluru-based IT services major **Infosys** stated it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire **US-headquartered Simplus**, a major Salesforce platinum partner, in a bid to strengthen its cloud business.
- The acquisition, expected to be complete within a month, will incur a cost of up to **\$250 million**, Infosys said in a filing with stock exchanges. \$200 million, including contingent consideration to be paid for the acquisition of shares, subject to closing adjustments.

NCLAT gives approval to JSW Steel to acquire Bhushan Power

- The **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)** approved the resolution plan put in place by JSW Steel to take over the debt-laden **Bhushan Power & Steel (BPSL)**.
- The appellate tribunal ruled BPSL will be exempted from the criminal investigation against the former promoters of Bhushan Power after its takeover by JSW Steel, paving the way for the Sajjan Jindal-led firm to complete the process of its impending acquisition.
- However, the promoters will continue to face the probe under the money laundering act by the Enforcement Directorate. In October, NCLAT had ordered a freeze on the **Rs 19,700 crore** payment by JSW Steel under the resolution plan.

CCI clears Ford-Mahindra joint venture

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved a joint venture between **Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M)** and **Ford Motor**, and the transfer of the automotive business of Ford India to the joint venture.
- The proposed combination envisages the formation of a joint venture, called **Ardour Automotive Pvt Ltd**, between M&M and Ford Motor, and the transfer of Ford's automotive business (except the powertrain business at Sanand, Gujarat) to the joint venture

- M&M is publicly traded on the NSE and the BSE.

Adani Transmission sells 25.1 pc stake in arm AEML to QIA for Rs 3,220 cr

- Adani Transmission stated it has sold **25.1 per cent** stake in its arm **Adani Electricity Mumbai Ltd (AEML)** to **Qatar Investment Authority (QIA)** for approximately **Rs 3,220 crore**.
- Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) has completed acquisition of **25.10 per cent** stake in **Adani Electricity Mumbai Ltd (AEML)** from **ATL (Adani Transmission Ltd)** along with an investment in shareholder subordinated debt in AEML on 10 February, 2020.
- The total QIA investment in AEML is approximately Rs 3,220 crore, which includes equity consideration of approximately Rs 1,210 crore and shareholder subordinated debt of approximately Rs 2,010 crore.

Modi government approves merger of Bharti Infratel, Indus Towers: Sources

- The Department of Telecom (DoT) on approved the merger of the country's largest mobile tower company **Indus Towers** with **Bharti Infratel**.
- The combination of Bharti Infratel and Indus Towers will create a pan-India tower company with over 163,000 towers, operating across all 22 telecom service areas.
- The combined entity will be the largest tower company in the world outside China. Bharti Infratel and Vodafone hold 42 per cent stake each in Indus. Vodafone Idea holds 11.15 per cent stake in the mobile tower firm.

Maker Village to tie up with AICTE on entrepreneurship

- Maker Village is planning to associate with the **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** by launching pioneering schemes that promote entrepreneurship and innovation.
- As the country's largest electronic hardware incubator and Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) facility, Maker Village aims to sign a pact on the project with **Delhi-headquartered AICTE** that functions as a statutory body under the **Union Ministry of Human Resource Development**.

ONGC, HPCL buy 34.56% of bankers' stake in Petronet MHB for Rs 371 cr

- **Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC)** and its subsidiary **Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL)** have **bought out** lenders in **Petronet MHB Ltd**, the firm that owns a petroleum product pipeline in Mangalore, for about **Rs 371 crore**.
- A consortium of eight public sector banks held 34.56 per cent stake in Petronet MHB Ltd, where ONGC and HPCL held 32.72 per cent apiece.
- The two firms paid Rs 185.38 crore each for acquiring 17.28 per cent more share in Petronet MHB Ltd.
- Now it holds 49.996 per cent each in the company.

Cognizant acquires Code Zero, a consultancy for Cloud-based CPQ & billing solutions

- Acquisition deepens **Cognizant's expertise** in Sales force Platform Advisory, implementation and managed services. Cognizant, announced it has acquired **Code Zero Consulting**, a privately-held provider of consulting and implementation services for **cloud-based Configure-Price-Quote (CPQ)** and billing solutions.
- The acquisition further strengthens Cognizant's cloud solutions portfolio and **Salesforce CPQ** and billing capabilities.
- Code Zero is a Salesforce Platinum Partner and includes leading global enterprises among its clients across industries, particularly manufacturing and financial services.

Emami inks pact with Nirma group arm to sell cement biz for Rs 5,500 crore

- Kolkata-based diversified conglomerate **Emami Group** has agreed to sell its cement unit to **Nuvoco Vistas Corporation Ltd -- a subsidiary of Nirma Group** -- in an effort to pare debt. It has entered into a binding agreement with Nuvoco Vistas for the sale of Emami Cement Limited (ECL) for an enterprise value of **Rs. 5,500 crore**.
- The transaction is subject to approval from the Competition Commission and is expected to be completed in the next 3-4 months.
- Emami Cement operates one integrated cement plant in Risdah, Chhattisgarh; and grinding units in Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha with a total installed capacity of 8.3 million tonnes per annum; and with mining leases in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh.

Revision points

Company	Merging Company
Infosys	Us Based Simplus
JSW Steel	Bhushan Power
Adani Transmission	Qatar Investment Authority
Ford Motor	Mahindra & Mahindra
Bharti Infratel	Indus Tower
Cognizant	Code Zero

Important Web Portals and Mobile Apps

Uttarakhand CM inaugurates web portal of Badrinath-Kedarnath Mandir Samiti

- Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivender Singh Rawat inaugurated official web portal of **Badrinath-Kedarnath Mandir Samiti**. He also launched **Mandir Samiti's** diary and calendar.
- This web portal is designed by **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**. Mr Rawat stated, all the important information regarding **Chardham yatra** will be accessible to the people from any part of the world through the official portal.

Labour min to soon launch mobile app "Santusht" for ESIC beneficiaries

- Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar will soon launch a mobile app "**Santusht**" with an aim to address issues of beneficiaries of **Employees State Insurance (ESI) scheme**.
- The minister also launched that **ESIC's Special Services Fortnight** from February 24 to March 10.
- The minister also renamed two ESIC hospitals. The name of ESIC Hospital, Bastatedarapur, New Delhi was changed to Sahib Singh Verma ESIC Hospital. Besides ESIC AYUSH Hospital, Narela's name was also changed to Padma Vibhushan Brihaspati Dev Triguna ESIC AYUSH Hospital.

Kerala CM launches "Yodhavu" mobile app to combat drug menace

- '**Yodhavu**' (**Warrior**), a mobile app through which the public can inform police about drug abuse and its distribution, was launched by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan as part of efforts to curb the growing menace in the State.

- A special feature of the application, introduced by the Kochi city police, was that the informer's identity could be kept secret.
- The chief minister also inaugurated a most modern **cyberdom cyber crime police station, new building of the Infopark police station** and **regional forensic science laboratory's** upper and lower subordinate quarters at the TCS auditorium at Infopark.
- The chief minister also unveiled the model of **Kochi city police's new police complex** being constructed at Marine Drive.

SPICe+ web form launched for ease of doing business

- Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), **Injeti Srinivas**, inaugurated the '**SPICe+**' Web Form in **New Delhi**.
- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has notified a new Web Form christened '**SPICe+**' (pronounced 'SPICe Plus') replacing the existing SPICe form.
- SPICe+ would offer 10 services by 3 Central Govt Ministries & Departments (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Labour & Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance) and One State Government (Maharashtra), thereby saving as many procedures, time and cost for Starting a Business in India and would be applicable for all new company incorporations.
- SPICe+ would have two parts viz.: Part A-for Name reservation for new companies and Part B offering a bouquet of services viz. Incorporation, DIN allotment, Mandatory issue of PAN, Mandatory issue of TAN, Mandatory issue of EPFO registration, Mandatory issue of ESIC registration, Mandatory issue of Profession Tax registration(Maharashtra), Mandatory Opening of Bank Account for the Company and Allotment of GSTIN (if so applied for).

Government launches mobile app to broaden reach of PM-Kisan scheme

- **PM-Kisan scheme**, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar launched a mobile app to broaden the reach of the programme that aims to provide annually **Rs 6,000** to each eligible farmer.
- The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) was launched on **February 24, 2019**, in **Uttar Pradesh** and all states are implementing the scheme, except for West Bengal.
- Launching the mobile app, the Minister said this has been developed to broaden the reach of the scheme, which is playing an important role in achieving the target of **doubling farmers income by 2022**.
- The mobile app has been developed and designed by the **National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.

Online Chatbot 'ASKDISHA' upgraded to converse with Railway customers in Hindi language

- **Indian Railways** had introduced the services of Artificial Intelligence based **ASKDISHA chatbot** in October 2018 for the benefit of the users of the ticketing website www.irctc.co.in and tourism website www.irctctourism.com of its PSU, Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC).
- The ASKDISHA Chatbot was initially launched in English language but in order to further enhance the customer services rendered and to further strengthen the services of the chatbot, IRCTC has now powered voice enabled ASKDISHA to converse with customers in Hindi language also in the e-ticketing site www.irctc.co.in. The customers can now ask queries to ASKDISHA in **Hindi language** by voice as well as text.
- IRCTC is aimed at facilitating accessibility by answering users' queries pertaining to various services offered to railway passengers.

Indian Railways launches mobile app for employees

- **Indian Railways**, Railway Board Chairman **Vinod Kumar Yadav** launched the **HRMS (Human Resource Management System) mobile app**, in which the employees can see the data related to their service and communicate with the administration for any changes.
- The app has been developed by the **Centre for Railway Information System (CRIS)**.
- The mobile app allows employees to view their historical data since their date of joining, including details related to increments, promotions, awards, transfers, postings, leave, training and retirement benefits.

Revision Points

Applications/Web portals	Launched By
HRMS (Human Resource Management System)	Indian Railways
ASKDISHA	Indian Railways
PM - KISAN	Narendra Singh Tomar
SPICe+	Ministry of Corporate Affairs
Yodhavu	Kerala govt
Santusht	Labour Ministry
Badrinath-Kedarnath Mandir Samiti	Uttarakhand govt

Important Peoples' in News

Eoin Morgan outclasses Kane, Virat to win captain of the year award

- **Eoin Morgan**, who led England to their **first World Cup title**, won the **captain of the year award** for 2019 announced by **ESPNcricinfo**.
- In the 13th edition of the annual **ESPNcricinfo Awards**, the ODI batting performance of the year award went to Ben Stokes for his nerveless performance in the tied World Cup final.
- **Matt Henry** won the award for the ODI **Bowling performance of the year**. Jofra Archer was voted the debutant of the year.
- **Meg Lanning** and **Ellyse Perry** of Australia won the **women's batting** and **bowling performances of the year awards**, respectively.

India's Lalremsiami named as 2019 FIH Women's Rising Star of Year

- India forward **Lalremsiami** has been named as the 2019 **FIH Women's Rising Star of the Year** by the International Hockey Federation.
- FIH stated that 19-year-old Lalremsiami took the prize ahead of Argentina's Julieta Jankunas and Frederique Matla of the Netherlands.
- The player from **Mizoram** got 40 per cent of all the votes cast. She got 47.7 per cent of her votes from among national associations, while the media, fans/players contributed 28.4 per cent and 36.4 per cent respectively.

NADA bans javelin thrower Amit Dahiya for four years

- **National Anti Doping Agency (NADA)** has **banned** javelin thrower **Amit Dahiya** for **four years** for evading sample collection and trying to cheat officials during the 2nd National Javelin Throw Open Championship 2019 held at SAI Centre in Sonipat.
- NADA said the ADDP has now passed an order to suspend him for four years from the date of his provisional suspension.

ICC bans Oman player Yousuf Abdulrahim Al Balushi from all forms of cricket for 7 years

- The **International Cricket Council (ICC)** has banned **Oman player Yousuf Abdulrahim Al Balushi** from all forms of cricket for seven years for his involvement in trying to fix matches.
- Al Balushi accepted four charges of breaching the ICC Anti-Corruption Code. The charges are all related to the ICC men's T20 World Cup Qualifiers 2019 held in the **United Arab Emirates**.
- According to an ICC statement, Al Balushi breached Article 2.1.1 of the Anti-Corruption Code - being party to an agreement or effort to fix or contrive in any way the result, progress, conduct or any other aspect of matches. Besides, he also breached Article 2.1.4, Article 2.4.4 and Article 2.4.7 -- all relating to corrupt practices.

Pragyan Ojha announces retirement from international, 1st-class cricket

- Indian left-arm spinner **Pragyan Ojha** announced retirement from international and first-class cricket with immediate effect. The **33-year-old last played** for India in 2013 during **Sachin Tendulkar's** farewell Test against the West Indies in **Mumbai**.
- In all, he played 24 Tests between 2009 and 2013 in which he took 113 wickets. From 18 ODIs, he grabbed 21 wickets. He also played six T20 Internationals.

Five-Time Grand Slam Champion Maria Sharapova Retires From Tennis At 32

- **Five-time Grand Slam** winner **Maria Sharapova**, one of the world's most recognisable and highest-paid sportswomen, announced her retirement at the age of 32. She won five Grand Slam titles.
- Siberia-born Sharapova first picked up a racquet at the age of four in Sochi, where her Belarus-born parents had settled after escaping the deadly clutches of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.
- She shot to fame as a giggly 17-year-old Wimbledon winner in 2004, the third-youngest player to conquer the All England Club's hallowed grass courts.

Bala Devi 1st Indian woman to become a professional footballer after being signed by Rangers FC

- Indian women's football star Ngangom Bala Devi has become the first Indian woman to earn a professional football contract abroad after signing for Scottish giant Rangers FC.
- The move, facilitated by Bengaluru FC which entered into a two-year collaboration with Rangers last September, was announced at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium.

Wasim Jaffer becomes first player to score 12,000 runs in Ranji Trophy

- **Vidharba** batsman **Wasim Jaffer** became the **first batsman** to register 12,000 runs in **Ranji Trophy**.
- He achieved the feat while batting against Kerela in the Ranji Trophy Elite Group A and B match at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium.
- Vidharba lost its first wicket with just four runs on the board and Jaffer then came out to bat in the middle.
- Jaffer has played Ranji Trophy for Mumbai and Vidharba.
- Before the beginning of the 2019-20 seasons, Jaffer had 11,775 runs in the Ranji Trophy.
- Jaffer has played 31 Tests, 2 ODIs for India. He last played a match for India in 2008 against South Africa.

Mumbai Girl Youngest In World To Climb South America's Highest Peak

- **Kaamya Karthikeyan**, a class seven student of Navy Children School (NCS) in Mumbai, became the youngest girl in the world to summit **Mt Aconcagua**, the highest peak in South America.
- At 6962 metres, Mt. Aconcagua is the highest peak outside Asia.
- She has also summited Mt Mentok Kangri II.
- She is also the youngest mountaineer to summit Mt Everest. By 2021, she aims to complete “Explorers Grand Slam”

Important Obituaries

Name	Field
VidyaBal	Social Activist & Feminist
Matthew Satya	Basket Ball player
Ajmal Sultanpuri	Urdu Poet
Rabi Singh	Odia Poet
Jaswant Singh Kanwal (Known as Writer of Movements)	Punjabi Novelist
Dalip Kaur Tiwana	Punjabi Novelist (Known for Teeli da Nishaan)
Narayana Reddy	Former Nizamabad MP
Daniel Arab Moi	Longest serving President of Kenya
Pranab Kumar Gogoi	Former Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly and sitting Congress MLA
D. Manjunath	Former Legislative Council Chairman
Alice Mayhew	Book editor
Arati Das (Miss Shefali)	Kolkata's first cabaret dancer
Dr Rajendra Prakash Singh	Senior BJP leader and former minister
Kirk Douglas	Actor
Raju Bharatan	Historian & Cricket Journalist
Giriraj Kishore	Hindi novelist
Parameswaran	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Pracharak
Robert Conrad	Two-Fisted TV Star of Wild Wild West
Sankar Sen	Former West Bengal Power Minister and former Vice-Chancellor of Jadavpur University
KPP Samy	Former Tamil Nadu Minister and DMK MLA
Pundit Sudhakar Chaturvedi	Fighter, Vedic scholar and centenarian

Hosni Mubarak	Former Egyptian President
Katherine Johnson	NASA Mathematician
C Chennigappa	Former Karnataka Minister& Janata Dal leader
Larry Tesler	Inventor of 'Cut, Copy and Paste'
Ashok Chatterjee	Former India footballer Ashok Chatterjee
Krishna Bose	Former Trinamool Congress MP from the Jadavpur constituency
Shadakshari Settar	Historian
Baidyanath Prasad Mahto	JD (U)'s Vamikinagar MP
V.L. Dutt	Executive chairman of KCP Group
Kishori Ballal	Kannada Actor
Mickey Wright	Women Golfer
MS Mani	Journalist and Chief Editor of 'Kala Kaumudi' daily
Harry Gregg	Former Manchester United and Northern Ireland goalkeeper
Tapas Pal	Bengali actor and former Trinamool Congress MP
Sonam Sherpa	Parikrama lead guitarist
R K Pachauri	Former TRAI Chief
Wendell Rodricks	Fashion Designer
Nandu R.Kulkarni	Mumbai Journalist