

Important Monthly Current Affairs Capsule –

January 2021

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Important Days

Date	Day	Theme/Others
January 2	Global family Day 2020	One Day of Peace
January 4	World Braille Day	
January 5	National Bird Day	
January 6	In Maharashtra Journalist Day	
January 6	World Day of War Orphans	
January 9	NRI or Pravasi Bharatiya Divas	Contributing to Aatma nirbhar Bharat
January 12	National Youth Day 2021	Channelizing Youth Power for Nation Building Since 1984
January 14	Indian Armed Forces Veterans Day	
January 15	Indian Army Day	
January 18	NDRF Celebrates Its 16th Raising Day	
January 23	Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Jayanti or 'Parakram Diwas	
January 24	National Girl Child Day	
January 24	International Day of Education	Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation
January 25	National Voters' Day	Making Our Voters Empowered, Vigilant, Safe and informed
January 25	National Tourism Day	Dekho Apna Desh
January 26	International Customs Day	Customs bolstering Recovery, Renewal and Resilience
January 26	72nd Republic Day	
January 27	International Holocaust Remembrance Day	
January 28	International Data privacy day	Own Your Privacy
January 30	Martyrs Day or Shaheed Diwas	
January 30	World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day	End the Neglect
January 31	World Leprosy Day	Beat Leprosy, End Stigma and advocate for Mental Wellbeing

National Road Safety Month 2021: From 18 January To 17 February

- Road Safety Week is observed from 11 January to 17th January every year.
- The Ministry of Transport and Highways, the ministry has decided to observe **Road Safety Month** from **18 January to 17 February 2021** instead of National Road Safety Week.
- **Aim:** For making the roads and streets in India safer.
- During this period, various nation-wide activities have been planned to be conducted throughout the country in association with the state governments/ UT administrations, OEMs and other stakeholders.

- The month-long event will see awards being given to best performance in road safety to a state as well as Swachata Award, road safety activities by NHIDCL (National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited), HOAI (Highway Operator Association of India), NHAI among others.

Uttar Pradesh celebrates its statehood day

- Uttar Pradesh is celebrating its foundation day on **Jan 24**.
- Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the **Sthapna Diwas** at a gala at Awadh Shilpgram in capital city Lucknow.
- The theme of Uttar Pradesh Divas is 'Self-reliant Uttar Pradesh: Women, youths, Farmers: Development of all, Honour to All.' Sabka Vikas Sabka Samman '.
- A huge exhibition on the theme of 'One District One Product' is also being displayed at Gautam Budh Nagar in NCR.
- **An app** of MSME department '**Udhyam Sarthi** ' was launched on this occasion.

Important Banking News

RBI

RBI introduces the Digital Payments Index

- The Reserve Bank of India has constructed a composite **Digital Payments Index (DPI)** to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.
- The RBI-DPI comprises **5 broad parameters** that enable measurement of deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different time periods.
- These parameters are
- Payment Enablers (weight 25%),
- Payment Infrastructure – Demand-side factors (10%),
- Payment Infrastructure – Supply-side factors (15%),
- Payment Performance (45%) and
- Consumer Centricity (5%).

RBI makes Legal Entity Identifier mandatory for transactions over Rs 50 lakhs in CPS from April 1, 2021

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to introduce the **Legal Entity Identifier (LEI)** system for all payment transactions of value **Rs.50 crore** and above undertaken by entities (non-individuals) via RTGS and NEFT.
- Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) are the Centralised Payment Systems operated by RBI.
- This will come into effect from April 01, 2021.
- About LEI :
- LEI is a **20-digit number** used to uniquely identify parties to financial transactions worldwide.
- LEI has been introduced by the Reserve Bank in a phased manner for participants in the over the counter (OTC) derivative and non-derivative markets as also for large corporate borrowers.

- LEI can be obtained from **Legal Entity Identifier India Ltd. (LEIL)**, which is also recognised as an issuer of LEI by the Reserve Bank under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.

RBI unveils guidelines for digital payment infra fund

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced operational guidelines for the **Payments Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF) scheme**, aimed at encouraging deployment of more digital payments infrastructure across **tier-3 to tier-6 centres**.
- The PIDF will be operational for three years from 1 January 2021, and may be extended for two more years based on progress.
- An advisory council (AC) under the chairmanship of **RBI deputy governor BP Kanungo** has been constituted for managing the PIDF.
- The fund has a corpus of **Rs.345 crore**, of which **Rs.250 crore** was contributed by RBI and ₹95 crore by authorized card networks operating in India.

RBI sets up College of Supervisors under former deputy governor to strengthen supervision

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced in January, it is now fully operationalizing a **College of Supervisors (CoS)** to further strengthen supervision over regulated entities.
- The Cos will be headed by former deputy governor **N S Viswanathan** and will have five other members.
- Other Members are:
- **Arijit Basu**, State Bank of India Managing Director
- **Paresh Sukhankar**, former HDFC Bank Deputy Managing Director
- **S Raghunath** of Bangalore IIM
- **Tadhagatha Bandyopphay** of Ahemadabad IIM and
- **Subrata Sarkar** of IGIDR, Mumbai
- The CoS will have a full-time Director supported by an **Academic Advisory Council (AAC)**.
- The AAC will identify areas where skill building/up-skilling are required, plan and develop curricula of all programmes, benchmark the programmes with international standards/best practices, develop appropriate teaching methods, etc.

RBI cancels the licence of Vasantdada Nagari Sahakari Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cancelled the licence of **Vasantdada Nagari Sahakari Bank Ltd., Osmanabad, Maharashtra** to carry on banking business, with effect from the close of business on January 11.
- The Bank has failed to comply with the requirements of **Section 11(1)** read with **Section 56 of BR Act** and thus would be unable to pay its present depositors in full in its current financial position.
- The Commissioner for Cooperation and Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS), Maharashtra has also been requested to issue an order for winding up the bank and appoint a liquidator for the bank.

RBI forms 6 Member working group on digital lending as frauds

- The **Reserve Bank of India** has set up a working group to study digital lending activities of the regulated and unregulated players.
- The group will suggest steps to regulate digital lending including online lending platform and mobile lending.
- The six-member panel comprised of four RBI internal and two external members
- Chairman : Jayant Kumar Dash, Executive Director,
- Ajay Kumar Choudhary, Chief General Manager-in-Charge, Department of Supervision,
- P Vasudevan, Chief General Manager, Department of Payment and Settlement Systems, RBI
- Manoranjan Mishra, Chief General Manager, Department of Regulation.
- The two external members are
- Vikram Mehta, Co-founder, Monexo Fintech and Rahul Sasi,
- Cyber Security Expert & Founder of CloudSEK.
- This Group will submit its report within **3 months**.
- The group will evaluate digital lending activities and assess the penetration and standards of outsourced digital lending activities in RBI regulated entities.

RBI imposes Rs.2 crore penalty on Standard Chartered Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary **penalty** of **Rs.2 crore** on **Standard Chartered Bank–India** for delays in reporting of frauds.
- The penalty has been imposed on the bank for non-compliance with certain directions issued by it contained in the 'Reserve Bank of India (Frauds - Classification and Reporting by commercial banks and select FIs) Directions 2016'.
- A notice was issued to the bank advising it to show cause as to why penalty should not be imposed on it for such non-compliance with the directions.

Policy Rates

Parameter	Percentage
Repo Rate	4%
Reverse Repo Rate	3.35%
Marginal Standing Facility Rate	4.25%
Bank Rate	4.25%
Cash Reserve Ratio	3%
Statutory Liquidity Ratio	18%

SBI

SBI, Indian Oil launch contactless RuPay debit card

- State Bank of India (SBI) and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) launched a co-branded contactless RuPay debit card.

- This Debit Card was launched by Mr. Dinesh Kumar Khara, Chairman, SBI and Mr. Shrikant Madhav Vaidya, Chairman, IndianOil, in a virtual ceremony .
- **6X Reward Points** for every **Rs. 200/-** spent at IndianOil fuel stations
- Fuel benefits – Cardholder earns loyalty points worth 0.75% against purchase of fuel at IndianOil fuel stations
- Pay with a tap (contactless card) for a single transaction of upto **Rs. 5000/-**

SBI, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank remain systemically important banks

- The **RBI state-owned SBI**, along with private sector lenders **ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank** continue to be **Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)** or institutions which are 'too big to fail'.
- SBIs are subjected to higher levels of supervision so as to prevent disruption in financial services in the event of any failure.
- The Reserve Bank had issued the framework for dealing with D-SIBs in **July 2014**.
- SBI, ICICI Bank, and HDFC Bank continue to be identified as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs), under the same bucketing structure as in the 2018 list of D-SIBs.

Center nods appointment of two SBI MDs

- The **Appointments Committee (ACC)** of the Cabinet cleared the names of two officials — **Swaminathan Janakiraman** and **Ashwini Kumar Tewari** as new managing directors of State Bank of India (SBI) for a period of **three years**.
- Both Tewari and Janakiraman, are eligible for the extension of their term of office after a review of their performance, according to an order issued by the Department of Personnel & Training.
- Currently, both are working with SBI.
- While Tewari is serving as MD and CEO of SBI Card, Janakiraman is working as the deputy managing director (finance), SBI.

ADB

India and ADB sign USD 231 million loan to augment electricity generation capacity in Assam

- **India and Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has signed a **USD 231 million** loan to augment electricity generation capacity in the State of Assam through construction of a **120 MegaWatts** hydroelectric power plant that will enhance availability of electricity for households.
- This is the third tranche loan for the ongoing Assam Power Sector Investment Programme that was approved by the ADB Board in **July 2014**.

ADB to provide \$100 million loan to upgrade power distribution in Bengaluru

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

World Bank

World Bank signs \$105 million project to improve waterways in West Bengal

- The **Government of India and the Government of West Bengal** and the **World Bank** signed a **\$105 million** project to improve the inland water transport infrastructure in Kolkata, West Bengal.
- The \$105 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a maturity of 17 years, including a grace period of 7 years.
- The project will cover the five most populous districts of southern West Bengal, including its urban agglomeration the **Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA)** where around 30 million people or one-third of West Bengal's population lives.

World Bank reported Bangladesh to grow at 1.6 percent in 2020-21

- The **World Bank** has projected an economic growth rate of **1.6 percent** for Bangladesh for the FY 2020-21.
- In its latest report on **Global Economic Prospects** released, the Bank has noted that the world economy is likely to grow by **4 percent in 2021**.
- The report points out that in Bangladesh, which had been one of the fastest growing emerging market and developing economies prior to the pandemic, growth is estimated to have decelerated to 2% in FY 2019/20.

Indian economy to contract by 9.6% in 2020-21, predicts World Bank

- The World Bank has projected that India's economy is estimated to contract by 9.6 percent in the fiscal year 2020-21.
- It reflects a sharp drop in household spending and private investment, and the growth is expected to recover to 5.4 percent in 2021.
- The global economy is estimated to expand by 4 percent in 2021 by the World Bank.
- According to the report, global growth is projected to moderate to 3.8 percent in 2022.

France hosts 4th One Planet Summit in cooperation with UN and World Bank

- The **Government of France**, in cooperation with the **UN and the World Bank**, the '**One Planet Summit**' for biodiversity on January 11 aims to advance the protection of nature.
- French President Emmanuel Macron, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, and World Bank Group President David Malpass are organising the fourth 'One Planet Summit' which will focus on biodiversity to mobilise commitments to protect ecosystems and make links to human health.

India and World Bank sign 500 million dollar Programme

- The Government of India and the World Bank signed a **500-million** US dollar **Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Programme (STARS)** to improve the quality and governance of school education in **six Indian states**.
- These include Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan.
- Some 250 million students (between the age of six and 17) in **1.5 million** schools and over 10 million teachers will benefit from the programme.

- The STARS programme builds on the long partnership between India and the World Bank (since 1994), for strengthening public school education and to support the country's goal of providing Education for All.
- Prior to STARS, the Bank had provided a total assistance of more than three billion US dollars towards this goal.

NDB

Government signs 2 loan agreements of USD 646 million with NDB for upgrading State Highway and District Road Network in Andhra Pradesh

- Government signed two loan agreements of USD 646 million with New Development Bank for upgrading State Highway Network and District Road Network in Andhra Pradesh.
- The first project is Andhra Pradesh Roads and Bridges Reconstruction Project comprising widening of 1,600 kilometre of State Highways to double lane and reconstructing dilapidated bridges on the State Highway network.
- The second project is Andhra Pradesh Mandal Connectivity and Rural Connectivity Improvement Project comprising widening of 1,400 kilometre of district roads to double lane and reconstructing dilapidated bridges on the district road network.

Other Banking News

DBS Bank India introduces one-stop integrated travel marketplace Travel Now

- **DBS Bank** India introduced a one-stop travel marketplace within the **digibank app**.
- Named as Travel Now, the platform enables customers to browse and book flights, bus tickets and hotels across hundreds of destinations both within and outside of India.
- With the help of this new platform customers will now be able opt for travel insurance, offered by **Bharti AXA General Insurance**, with an automated claims process for flight cancellation, and flight departure and arrival delays of more than 60 minutes.

Festival offer extended by PNB till march

- State-owned Punjab National Bank NSE **0.92 %** (PNB) announced the extension of its festival bonanza offer **till March**.
- The promotional scheme has now been rechristened as "**PNB NEW YEAR BONANZA-2021**", the bank said in a statement.
- "Under the PNB New Year Bonanza 2021 (during the offer period from **January 1 to March 31, 2021**), PNB will offer a full waiver of upfront or processing fees and documentation charges on all fresh housing loans, takeover housing loans, car loans, and property loans," it said.

Post Office Savings Bank be apt interconnected with other banks by April

- **India Post** expects to make the **Post Office Savings Bank** interoperable with other bank accounts by April and will focus on enhancing digitisation of all services in **2021**, a senior official of the department said.

- **Department of Posts Secretary Pradipta Kumar Bisoi** said that The postal department during the lockdown was at the frontline to deliver essential parcels when rail, road and air traffic were grounded and continues to enhance capacity as trains are not fully operational yet.

RuPay partners with RBL Bank to introduce 'RuPay PoS'

- **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** announced that RuPay has partnered with RBL Bank to launch an innovative payment solution for Indian merchants – **RuPay PoS** in association with **PayNearby**.
- The RuPay PoS will transform smartphones into merchant Point of Sale (PoS) terminals for the retailers.
- Merchants will now be able to accept contactless payments of up to **INR 5000** through a simple tap and pay mechanism on his NFC enabled mobile phones.

Bank of Baroda offers WhatsApp banking services

- State-run Bank of Baroda announced the launch of **banking services** on messaging platform **Whatsapp**.
- The lender is **offering services** such as balance enquiry, mini statement, cheque status enquiry, cheque book request, blocking debit card and information on products and services, among others via WhatsApp, a release said.
- **The bank's executive director AK Khurana** said that "With the growing prominence of social media, we believe that WhatsApp banking will offer immense convenience to our customers to meet their banking requirements".
- To activate the banking facility on WhatsApp, need to save WhatsApp number 8433 888 777 of Bank of Baroda (BoB) in phone book.

YES BANK partners with Aditya Birla Wellness to launch wellness themed credit card

- **YES Bank** in collaboration with **Aditya Birla Wellness Private Limited** has launched '**YES BANK Wellness**' and '**YES BANK Wellness Plus**' credit cards with the aim of holistic health, self-care and wellness growth of the consumers.
- Cardholders will be able to enjoy the complimentary health benefits by simply registering on the Aditya Birla Multiply App.
- The app will allow consumers to avail complimentary benefits such as annual health check-up, round the clock doctor or counsellor helpline, in-studio or home-based workout sessions, personalized diet plans, among others.
- This credit card comes with a first year membership fee of Rs 1,999 plus taxes and renewal fee of Rs 1,999 and taxes.

IDBI Bank launches video KYC facility for opening savings bank accounts

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

Shivalik Bank Becomes India's First Urban Co-Operative Bank to transition to SFB

- Uttar Pradesh-based **Shivalik Mercantile Co-operative Bank (SMCB)** stated it has received a license from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as a **Small Finance Bank (SFB)**.
- The RBI had given an **18 month** timeline to commence business.

- Shivalik Mercantile Co-operative Bank (SMCB), it has become India's first urban co-operative bank (UCB) to transition to a Small Finance Bank (SFB). SMCB will begin its banking operations from April 2021 onwards under the name Shivalik Small Finance Bank (SSFB).

PNB Collaborates with IIT Kanpur to set up Fintech Innovation Centre

- Punjab National Bank (PNB), the country's second largest public sector bank, has announced an alliance with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur and FIRST (Foundation for Innovation & Research in Science & Technology), to jointly establish the Punjab National Bank - IIT Kanpur Innovation Centre at the IIT campus.
- An MoU for this purpose was signed at the PNB Headquarters, Dwarka, New Delhi, in the presence of CH S S Mallikarjunarao, MD & CEO of PNB and top officials from the Bank, IIT Kanpur & FIRST.
- Under this partnership, PNB and IIT-Kanpur will set up a **"Fintech Innovation Centre (FIC)"** as a vehicle to research and develop technological solutions to explore opportunities in the BFSI space.

IDFC Mutual Fund unveils new campaign

- **IDFC Mutual Fund** announced the launch of its latest pan-India investor awareness campaign **#PaisoKoRokoMat**, nudging savers to become investors.
- A new campaign, IDFC Mutual Fund aims to shift the conversation regarding wealth creation from the traditional to the contemporary.

Government says 'Banks will need recapitalisation'

- As India prepares for the **crucial Union Budget**, which would set course for economic pick-up after the Covid carnage, economists have asked the government to be generous with the fiscal measures and have warned of weakness in the financial sector which could be a problem spot in the upcoming financial year.
- A group of leading economists, in their meeting with **Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** said the government should **further recapitalize banks**, push for divestment and the focus should be on promoting growth.
- However, it should be **"generous"** with recapitalization plans for banks which are **"under strain"**.

CBol ties up with NABFOUNDATION to Provide loans to Self - help groups

- **Central Bank of India (CBol) and NABFOUNDATION**, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), whereby working capital will be provided by the bank to all **self-help groups (SHGs)** which have an account with it and undertake the Nabard-sponsored **'My Pad My Right' project**.
- NABFOUNDATION, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard).
- This cheap, collateral-free credit support is just what the rural women will need as they take up manufacturing on a regular basis.
- The project would see Nabard providing a total support of nearly ₹50 crore over the next three years.

IRDAI sets up committee to Examine health insurance products

- **Insurance Regulatory & Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has set-up a committee to study health insurance products with the help of scientists and doctors in the panel.
- The expert committee will be headed by IRDAI Chairperson, Subhash Chandra Khuntia and will have a Member (Non-Life) as the vice-chairperson. The committee, which has a term of one year.

YES Bank launched credit cards

- **YES Bank** in collaboration with **Aditya Birla Wellness Private Limited** has launched '**YES BANK Wellness**' and '**YES BANK Wellness Plus**' credit cards with the aim of holistic health, self-care and wellness growth of the consumers.

ICICI Bank launches 'InstaFX' mobile app to help customers obtain Forex Prepaid Card swiftly

- ICICI Bank on January 20 launched a new mobile application 'InstaFX' for authorised money changers to help customers of any bank get 'ICICI Bank Forex Prepaid Card' swiftly.
- The bank is the first in the country to offer such a facility to money changers.
- The app enables the authorised money changers, who are partners of the Bank, to complete the KYC verification and validation of customers digitally and on a real-time basis.
- The 'InstaFX' app will enable the authorised money changers, who are partners of the Bank, to complete the KYC verification and validation of customers digitally and on a real-time basis.

Airtel Payments Banks launches 'safe pay'

- **Airtel Payments Bank** launched a mode of **safe digital transactions** to protect customers from online frauds.
- About Airtel Safe Pay:
- **Airtel Safe Pay** is an additional wall that will prevent online frauds when customers transact through UPI (unified payment interface) or net-banking using the **Airtel Payments Bank**.
- The new payment gateway, which is free of cost, will offer protection against phishing, stolen credentials or passwords, and phone cloning.

Bank of Baroda desire to be part of Andhra Pradesh's economic growth

- Bank of Baroda (BoB) Executive Director **Vikramaditya Singh Khichi** called on Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the CM's camp office in Tadepalli.
- Vikramaditya Singh said that the BoB wants to be a part of AP's economic growth, adding that they are **funding various development activities in the State**.

Punjab National Bank donates books to children

- Punjab National Bank, one of the leading nationalized banks of the country, **established in 1895, and completed 126 years of banking service**.
- On the occasion, the Bank's Zonal Manager, Ashutosh Choudhury, visited Vijayawada circle and participated in the **Corporate Social Responsibility activities**.
- An industrial jumbo air cooler was donated to Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Devasthanam.

- Bank officials distributed bags, uniforms, books and pens to orphans and needy children at SKCV Children's trust.
- The bank has also donated the Armed Forces Flag Fund to the Directorate of Sainik Welfare Association, Vijayawada.
- Further, a customer meet of all local branches was conducted and **many customers were honoured**.

Axis Bank unveils Aura Credit Card with health, wellness solutions

- Axis Bank has unveiled a credit '**AURA**' exclusively loaded with several health and wellness benefits for its users at an affordable price.
- The bank has also tied up with Decathlon. As part of the welcome benefit, cardholders get a **Decathlon voucher of Rs750**.
- It also offers up to four free online interactive fitness sessions per month powered by **Fitternity**, a health and fitness platform.
- Cardholders also get access to 16 recorded training sessions per month and can choose from various sessions such as yoga and cross-functional training programmes.
- According to the bank's website, the joining and annual fee for the card is **Rs749**.
- The finance charges will be **3.4% a month or 49.36%** a year.

Dhanlaxmi Bank approves appointment of Shivan as MD and CEO

- Board of Directors of Kerala-based **Dhanlaxmi Bank** have given approval to appoint **J K Shivan** as **managing director and CEO** of the Bank.
- It may be recalled that the shareholders of the Kerala-based company had voted against MD & CEO Sunil Gurbaxani On September 30, 2020.
- Then, in December that year, the lender appointed Shivan as the new MD & CEO.

HSBC inaugurates international banking unit at GIFT City in Gujarat

- Global financial services major HSBC inaugurated its International Banking Unit (IBU) branch at GIFT City near Gandhinagar city in Gujarat.
- HSBC is one of the earliest global financial institutions setting up a branch at India's GIFT City and was the first bank to get a licence from the newly set up International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA).
- HSBC's IBU branch at Gujarat International Finance Tec City (GIFT City) will be operational for customer transactions with effect from January 27.

Students in Karnataka's Hubballi made robot to help in banking services

- **Engineering college students in Hubballi** have come up with '**Maya**', a robot that has been programmed to serve in banks and speaks in many regional languages.
- The students of the Automation and Robotics department of **KLE Technological University** have spent nearly eight months and spent **Rs 5 lakh** to develop the robot.

- It was developed keeping banking sectors in mind and programmed with all banking activities such as advising the customers on opening accounts, sending them to designated counters for queries.
- With the help of artificial intelligence, it recognises customers' faces and responds to them by using a **chatbot**.
- After the banking hours, it automatically goes to the docking yard and charges its batteries without the help of any human being.

Revision Points

Name of the Organization	Headquarters	Head of the Organization
Reserve Bank of India	Mumbai	Shaktikanta Das
Securities and Exchange Board of India	Mumbai	Ajay Tyagi
National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development	Mumbai	Govinda Rajulu Chintala
Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India	Hyderabad	Subash Chandra Khuntia
Federal Bank	Aluva	Shyam Srinivasan
DBS Bank	Singapore	Piyush Gupta
EXIM Bank of India	Mumbai	David Rasquinha
DCB Bank	Mumbai	Murali M Natrajan
HDFC Bank	Mumbai	Sashidhar Jagdishan
Indian Bank	Chennai	Padmaja Chunduru
Axis Bank	Mumbai	Rakesh Makhija
State Bank of India	Mumbai	Dinesh Khara
India Post Payments Bank	New Delhi	J Venkatramu
ICICI Bank	Mumbai	Sandeep Bakshi
Indian Overseas Bank	Chennai	Partha Pratim Sengupta
SBM Bank	Port Louis	Parvataneni Venkateswara Rao
National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)	Mumbai	Dilip Asbe
Punjab National Bank	New Delhi	S.S Mallikarjuna Rao
Bank of Baroda	Vadodara	Hasmukh Adhia
YES Bank	Mumbai	Prashant Kumar
Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company	Mumbai	Nilesh Shah
ICICI Lombard	Mumbai	Bhargav Dasgupta
City Union Bank	Kumbakonam	N. Kamakodi
Central Bank of India	Mumbai	Pallav Mohapatra
ICICI Prudential Life Insurance	Mumbai	N. S. Kannan
Kotak Mahindra Bank	Mumbai	Uday Kotak
Dhanlaxmi bank	Thrissur	J K Shivan

Airtel Pyments bank	New Delhi	Anubrata Biswas
IDFC Mutual Fund	Mumbai	Vikram Limaye
IDBI Bank	Mmubai	Rakesh Sharma

Important Financial & Economy Affairs

Organization	GDP FY - 21	GDP FY-22
Fitch	9.4%	11%
ADB	8%	
CRISIL	7.7%	
S & P	7.7%	
ICRA	7.8%	10.1%
NCAER	7.3%	
India Ratings	7.8%	
OECD	9.9%	
NSO	7.7%	
IMF	8%	
FICCI	8%	9.6%

India's growth to rebound to 5.4% in FY 22: World Bank

- The **World Bank** estimates India's growth to recover to **5.4% in FY22**, as the rebound from a low base is offset by muted private investment growth given financial sector weaknesses.
- Output is estimated to **contract by 9.6% in fiscal year 2020-21**, due to drop in family spending and personal funding, at the same time as excessive frequency information point out restoration gaining momentum in providers and manufacturing, in accordance to the World Bank's January 2021 Global Economic Prospects report.

CARE lowers Centre's fiscal deficit projection to 7.8% of GDP

- CARE Ratings** has revised downwards its projection of the Centre's fiscal deficit to **7.8 percent** of GDP during FY21 against its earlier estimate of 9-9.5 per cent.
- The combined effect of lower revenues and higher expenditure is likely to push the fiscal deficit to 7.8 percent of GDP

India's GDP - 11 per cent next fiscal - V-Shaped recovery

- The government has said that the country is witnessing a **V-Shaped Economic Recovery** which is a testimony to the resilience and intrinsic strength of its economy.
- It happened due to **Mega Vaccination Drive, Robust Recovery** in the Services Sector and Robust Growth in Consumption and Investment.

- The Economic Survey tabled in the Parliament projects India's real GDP to record an 11 per cent growth in Financial Year 2021-22 and nominal GDP to grow by 15.4 per cent, the highest since independence.

NSO Estimates India's GDP may contract 7.7% in FY21

- The GDP of India is expected to **contract by 7.7 percent in 2020-21**, the first advance estimate of GDP released by the National Statistical Office under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI)** on January 07, 2021.
- The first advance estimates of GDP of a financial year are released before the Union Budget. This data helps in the budget-making process.

ICRA forecasts India's real GDP to expand by 10.1% in FY22

- India's real GDP is projected to record a growth of **10.1 percent** in 2021-22, according to ICRA Ratings.
- The rating agency ICRA had earlier projected a contraction of 7.8% for the ongoing fiscal 2020-21.

Fitch Ratings Projects GDP of India at -9.4% in FY21 & 11% in FY22

- The **Fitch Ratings** expect gross domestic product (GDP) of India to contract by **9.4 percent** in FY21 (April 2020 to March 2021).
- Fitch further projects the GDP to expand by **11 percent** in FY22 (April 2021 to March 2022).

IMF revises India growth forecast, sees GDP shrinking at sharper 8% in FY21

- The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has pegged contraction in India's economy at **8 percent** in the current financial year, higher than the 7.7-per cent decline projected by the government's advance estimates.
- However, the international organisation expects a growth rate of 11.5 per cent in the next financial year.
- The IMF projected the global growth to contract at 3.5 percent in 2020.
- The global economy is projected to grow 5.5 per cent in 2021 and 4.2 per cent in 2022.

India's GDP to deal 8 per cent in FY21: FICCI Survey

- India's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to contract by **8 per cent in 2020-21**, according to the latest round of **FICCI's Economic Outlook Survey**.
- The annual median growth forecast by the industry body is based on responses from leading economists representing industry, banking and financial services sector.
- The survey was conducted in January.
- The median growth forecast for agriculture and allied activities has been pegged at **3.5 per cent** for 2020-21.
- "Agriculture sector has exhibited significant resilience in the face of the pandemic.
- Higher **rabi acreage, good monsoons, higher reservoir levels and strong growth in tractor sales** indicate continued buoyancy in the sector," FICCI stated on the survey findings

Highlights of Economic Survey 2020-2021

- Union finance minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** presented the **Economic Survey**, that details the **state of the economy** ahead of the government's budget for the fiscal year beginning **April 1, 2021**.

- The Economic Survey 2020-2021, authored by a team led by **chief economic adviser (CEA) Krishnamurthy V Subramanian**, focused on the state of different sectors of the economy, the effect of the coronavirus pandemic as well as reforms that need to be taken.
- The survey expects the Indian economy to grow by 11 per cent during 2021-22 which is close to the growth forecast of 11.5 per cent made by the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**.
- This means that the Indian GDP in 2021-22 is expected to be at **Rs.149.2 lakh crore**.
- The Theme of Economic Survey 2020-21 :
- #SavingLives&Livelihoods
- #VshapedRecovery

Important Business News

Bajaj Auto Becomes World's Most Valuable Two-Wheeler Company

- **Bajaj Auto** has become the **first two-wheeler** company in the world to cross a market capitalization of **Rs 1 lakh crore**, making it the most valuable two-wheeler maker.
- The company's share price closed at Rs 3,479 per share on the NSE on January 1, 2021, making its market capitalisation Rs 1,00,670.76 crore at this price. This milestone comes as Bajaj celebrates the 75th year of its operations.
- Bajaj Auto is India's largest exporter of two-wheelers and three-wheelers.

Jeff Bezos tops list of richest charitable gifts in 2020

- The world's richest person made the single-largest charitable contribution in 2020, **according to The Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual list of top donations**, a **\$10 billion gift** that is intended to help fight climate change.
- **Amazon's founder and CEO, Jeff Bezos**, whose "real-time" worth Forbes magazine estimates at roughly \$188 billion, used the contribution to launch his Bezos Earth Fund.

Govt plans to launch seaplane services with airline operators

- The government is in the process to launch **seaplane services** on several routes, including **Delhi-Ayodhya**, in collaboration with the airline operators, the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.
- The development follows the launch of a seaplane service between **Kevadia and Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad** by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 31, 2020.
- **"Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)** is initiating the process of commencing operations of the Seaplane services, on the select routes, under a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) framework through prospective airline operators," an official statement said.
- The project execution and implementation would be through **Sagarmala Development Company Ltd (SDCL)**, which is under the administrative control of the ministry.

Indian student Harsh Dalal's startup wins recognition in Singapore

- A **19-year-old Indian student** in Singapore is keeping his options open on a startup named **"TEAMLABS"** he has built with four applications in his teenage while schooling.
- While keeping up with his schooling for a diploma in business administration at Singapore Polytechnic, Harsh Dalal, as CEO, has built 120-employee Team Labs' business across eight cities.
- The **software development company's clients include** the Coca-Cola Company, Google and Hilton, featuring Dalal among young entrepreneurs shaping Singapore into a smart nation and for running a USD 25 million tech startup under **"On The Red Dot"** finds out programme.

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal launches Freight Business Development Portal

- Railway Minister **Piyush Goyal** launched a **Freight Business Development Portal** as a one stop solution for all the needs of freight customers.
- The new portal will be a game changer in ensuring ease of doing business with Railways.
- The portal will ensure that best services are available to the clients.
- The portal can be accessed by logging on to Indian Railways web site <https://indianrailways.gov.in/> or <https://www.fois.indianrail.gov.in/RailSAHAY>

Karan Bajwa to head Google Cloud in Asia Pacific

- Google Cloud announced the elevation of **Karan Bajwa** as its new leader for the **Asia Pacific**. Presently, Bajwa leads Google Cloud in India.
- He will lead all regional revenue and go-to-market operations for Google Cloud, including on Google Cloud Platform (GCP) and Google Workspace.
- **Bajwa succeeds Rick Harshman** who leaves the organisation for a new opportunity.

Global Economic Prospects Report released by World Bank

- Global Economy to Expand by **4% in 2021**;
- Vaccine Deployment and Investment Key to Sustaining the Recovery.
- The global economy is expected to expand 4% in 2021, assuming an initial COVID-19 vaccine rollout becomes widespread throughout the year.
- A recovery, however, will likely be subdued, unless policy makers move decisively to tame the pandemic and implement investment-enhancing reforms, the World Bank says in its January 2021 Global Economic Prospects.

NALCO to invest around Rs 30,000 cr for development: Pralhad Joshi

- **Union Minister for Coal & Mines Pralhad Joshi** said, National Aluminium Company Limited, NALCO, will invest around **Rs.30,000 crore** by financial year 2027-28 on the **company's expansion and diversification plans**.
- He was addressing the 41st Foundation Day of NALCO in **capital Bhubaneswar in Odisha**.
- The Minister said, the ambitious growth plans of NALCO will have a multiplier effect in the production and consumption of aluminium thereby **achieving Atmanirbhar Bharat vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.

- The company that is currently operational in the tribal dominated district of Koraput and Angul in Odisha, contributes **32 per cent Bauxite, 33 percent Alumina and 12 percent Aluminium** production in the country.

Economic Survey: India to become Fastest Growing Economy in next 2-years reported by IMF

- The Union Government said that the country's V-Shaped Economic Recovery happened due to Mega Vaccination Drive, Robust Recovery in the Services Sector and Robust Growth in Consumption and Investment.
- **Chief Economic Adviser K. Subramanian** said, V-Shaped Recovery is due to Resurgence in High Frequency Indicators Such as Power Demand, Rail Freight, E-Way Bills, GST Collection and Steel Consumption.
- The Economic Survey said, India is to become the Fastest Growing Economy in next two years as per the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Microsoft launches Taj Mahal inspired engineering hub in Noida

- **Microsoft** announced the launch of its new India Development Center (IDC) facility at NCR that will serve as a premier hub for driving cutting-edge engineering and innovation.
- IDC NCR is Microsoft's **third Development Center** in India after Bengaluru and Hyderabad.
- The IDC NCR facility will collaborate with Microsoft teams globally to build products and services for driving digital innovation.
- The center will provide opportunities for engineering talent in the areas of Business & Productivity tools, AI, Cloud & Enterprise, Core Services, and the new Gaming division.

Important State Wise News

List of Festivals

Festivals	Place
Cherry Blossom Mao Festival	Manipur
Ice climbing festival	Nubra valley, Leh

Country celebrates Harvest festivals

- On Jan 14, 2021, **Harvest Festival Makar Sankranti** is being celebrated.
- The festival is seen as a celebration of the end of the winter solstice month and also marks the end of the winter harvest.
- The **harvest festival** is referred to by different names in different parts of the country such as
- **Pongal** in Tamil Nadu,
- **Makara Sankranti** in Gujarat, West Bengal, and Karnataka
- **Bihu** in Assam,
- **Paush Parbon** in Bengal
- **Lohri** in Punjab and Jammu
- **Saen-Kraat** in Kashmir
- **Sukaraat** in MP

- **Khichdi Parw** in Bihar, Jharkhand, UP

In Ladakh Khelo India 1st Zaskar Winter Sports Festival begins

- In Ladakh, Khelo India 1st Zaskar Winter Sports Festival began On Jan 18, 2021.
- **Aim** : Engaging the Youth and opening new vistas of tourism in Zaskar are the main aims of the festival.
- Ladakh MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal inaugurated Chadar Trek to kick start and set the tone for **13- Day Zaskar Winter Sports Festival** from the confluence of Indus and Zaskar rivers near Sangam, Leh.

First bird fest at mahananda sanctuary from feb 20

- First, a **bird festival** is being organised at the **Mahananda wildlife sanctuary** in West Bengal to provide an opportunity to enthusiasts to explore the forest and watch different birds.
- The Darjeeling Wildlife Division will be organising the **1st Mahananda Bird Festival from February 20 to 23**
- Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary is rich in fauna and has more than 300 species of birds.

Dhaka International Film Festival concluded

- The 19th Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF) concluded.
- During the 9-day long festival which started on **16 January, 226 films from 73 countries** were shown.
- Kyrgyz film '**The Road to Eden**' jointly directed by Bakyt Mukul and Dastan Zhapar won the best film award at the festival.

51st IFFI concludes with grand closing ceremony

- The closing ceremony of the 51st edition of the **International Film Festival** of India was held in the **Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Stadium in Goa**.
- Due to the COVID-19 the festival was held in hybrid mode, there was physical and virtual screening of **50 films out of 224 films** across various categories.
- Bangladesh was the country focus of the festival. Four films of Bangladesh were included in the 'country of focus' section.

State News

Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank bags first prize

- The **Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank (APCOB)**, Vijayawada was awarded the first prize for the overall best performance for the year 2018-19, among all the state cooperative banks in the country, by the National Federation of State Cooperative Banks, Mumbai, taking into consideration its share capital of **Rs 1,600 crore**, business turnover of **Rs 13,300 crore** and **Rs 145 crore profit**.

Government signs 2 loan agreements of USD 646 million with NDB for upgrading State Highway and District Road Network in Andhra Pradesh

- Government signed two loan agreements of **USD 646 million** with New Development Bank for upgrading State Highway Network and District Road Network in Andhra Pradesh.

- The first project is **Andhra Pradesh Roads and Bridges Reconstruction Project** comprising widening of **1,600 kilometre** of State Highways to double lane and reconstructing dilapidated bridges on the State Highway network.
- The second project is Andhra Pradesh Mandal Connectivity and Rural Connectivity Improvement Project comprising widening of **1,400 kilometre** of district roads to double lane and reconstructing dilapidated bridges on the district road network.
- The Government of Andhra Pradesh will implement the Projects through the Roads and Buildings Department.
- These two projects are expected to improve mobility and connectivity to the socioeconomic centres, enhance transport efficiency, improve road safety and riding quality, and provide all-weather accessibility for the State's road users.
- The projects will increase the roads' daily traffic capacity to **15,000 passenger car units**, which is expected to meet the projected traffic growth over the next 20 years.

Asian Water bird Census starts in Andhra Pradesh

- The two-day Asian Water bird Census-2020 commenced in Andhra Pradesh under the aegis of experts from the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)**, covering at least two dozen sites, including Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, Kolleru Lake and Krishna Sanctuary.
- **BNHS Assistant Director P. Sathiyaselvam, S. Siva Kumar and BNHS Andhra Pradesh coordinator K. Mrutyunjaya Rao** trained amateur birdwatchers on technical aspects of the bird census and challenges, enabling them to conduct the task on their own.

MP& AP become first states to complete ONOR Card reforms

- **Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh** have become the first group of states to complete three out of the four citizen-centric reforms stipulated by the **Ministry of Finance**.
- **Andhra Pradesh** will get an additional amount of **Rs.344 crore** while **Madhya Pradesh** has become entitled to receive **Rs.660 crore**.
- The two states have completed the One Nation, One Ration Card Reforms, Ease of Doing Business Reforms and Urban Local Bodies Reforms.
- Consequent upon completion of reforms in the three sectors, the Finance Ministry has decided to provide additional financial assistance amounting to **Rs.1,004 crore** to these states under the newly launched Scheme of Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure.
- This scheme was announced by the Central government in October last year as part of **Atmanirbhar Bharat package**.
- The additional financial assistance for the capital expenditure is in addition to the permission of **Rs.14,694 crore** issued to the two states for extra borrowings for completing the reforms.

Andhra Pradesh CM flagged off Door to door Delivery Vehicles

- In Andhra Pradesh, **Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy** flagged off Mobile Dispensing Units/ Door to door Delivery Vehicles in Vijayawada.
- As many as **9,260** of such vehicles will supply ration with quality rice at the door steps of ration card beneficiaries across the state.
- The State Government has come forward with the door delivery programme with a view to supply quality rice and also other essential commodities.
- As promised in his Padayatra, Mr Reddy has taken up this initiative to supply quality rice to the BPL people.
- The mobile vehicles were purchased at a cost of Rs 539 crore and these vehicles were provided by the government at **60% subsidy** to eligible beneficiaries through various corporations under the Employment Guarantee Scheme for unemployed youth.
- The value of each vehicle is **Rs 5,81,000, of which Rs 3,48,600** was provided as subsidy from various Corporations and Civil Supplies Corporation.

Assam

Assam assembly passes Bill to abolish all government-run Madrassas

- The **Assam Legislative Assembly** passed the repeal provincialisation of Madrassa Bill, 2020 to abolish all government-run Madrassas in the state and convert them to general schools.
- The new act will come into effect from **April 1, 2021**. The Bill was tabled in the assembly by the state government on December 28, 2020.
- Assam, the state government has decided to make '**education secular**' and **198 high madrasas and 542 other madrasas in the state** will operate as any other general educational institute and will not give admission to students for theological studies.

Gujarat

Chief of Naval Staff visits INS Dwarka in Gujarat

- **Admiral Karambir Singh, the Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS)** visited **INS Dwarka**, Indian Navy's forward operating base at Okha, Gujarat, on new year's eve.
- The CNS was briefed by the **Flag Officer** Commanding Gujarat, Daman and Diu on maritime operations and security aspects relevant to Gujarat, Daman & Diu (GD&D) Naval Area.
- He also took stock of coastal surveillance initiatives by **GD&D Area** and interacted with personnel from Naval Station Okha and other units.

Gujarat CM announces to create new Bagasara Prant in Amreli district

- Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has decided to create a new Bagasara Prant in Amreli district.
- This will take the state's revenue services nearer to the people and provide services faster.

- The newly created Bagasara Prant would come into effect on 26th January, which includes Bagasara and Vadiya talukas in it.
- Since the districts with larger geographical areas cause inconvenience to the people, the state government has been reorganizing **smaller districts and talukas** for administrative convenience, faster development, reducing workload as well as saving the people's time.
- Now, the state government has taken up the reorganization of Prants.

Petroleum Minister Inaugurates Migrant Worker Cell in Surat

- Union Minister **Dharmendra Pradhan** has inaugurated a migrant worker cell of Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) at Udhna based **iLab in Surat**.
- Mr. Pradhan said that the migrant workers cell with linkage with the city livelihood centre will help extend all kinds of assistance and government-led benefits to them.
- **Migrant workers' Cell** has been created by Surat Municipal Corporation for the first time in the Country under the 'National Urban Livelihood Mission Scheme'.
- The city has a presence of over **15 lakh migrant workers**.
- He said that this cell will do a detailed mapping of migrant workers and classify them according to their skill.
- This will help in connecting '**Shramshakti**' to relevant industries and boost their livelihood and also ensure their dignity.

Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani announces 'Horticulture Development Mission'

- In **Gujarat**, Chief Minister **Vijay Rupani** announced the 'Horticulture Development Mission' (Bagayat Vikas Mission).
- **Aim** : this mission is to double the income of farmers involved in medicinal and horticulture farming.
- Under this mission, the waste land of the government will be given on **30-year lease** for farming of horticulture and medicinal crops.
- As per an estimate, the government has about **50,000 non-cultivated land waste lands**. The government intends to convert this land into cultivation.
- A list of land blocks for land allotment in transparent manner will be released on **I-Khedut portal**. The government will also offer priority assistance to lease owners for drip-sprinkler fountains.
- Surendranagar, Patan, Sabarkantha and Banaskantha districts in the first phase.

Gujarat govt to renames dragon fruit as kamalam

- Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has proposed to rename dragon fruit as '**Kamalam**'.
- The dragon fruit has been renamed Kamalam because of the shape of the fruit.
- This was announced at the launch of the Chief Minister Horticulture Development Mission.
- The **Horticulture Development Mission**, a new scheme to promote horticulture in the State's unproductive land parcels.

Gujarat govt. announces to set up new industrial estates

- In Gujarat, the State Government has announced to set up new industrial estates under the Gujarat **Industrial Development Corporation-GIDC**.
- It will be set up over 987 hectares of land across eight districts.
- Among these new estates, Jalotra in Banaskantha district will cover the marble cutting and polishing industry.
- Shekhpat in Jamnagar district will house brass and ceramic units, while Kadjodra in Gandhinagar district will cover food and agro industry.
- Patan will have auto ancillary units, while Nagalpar in Rajkot district will cover the medical devices industry.
- Anand and Mahisagar districts will have industrial estates for engineering industries.
- According to official sources, the new GIDC estates will provide 2,570 plots of 500 to 2,000 square meters to the MSME sector and 337 plots of 10,000 to 50,000 square metres to large industries.
- The new GIDC estates will generate nearly **20,000 employments** after its complete set up.

Himachal Pradesh

Golden jubilee statehood day celebrated by Himachal Pradesh

- **Himachal Pradesh** is celebrating its golden jubilee statehood day(Jan 25th) with full zeal across the state.
- It was on this day in 1971 Himachal Pradesh became the 18th state of India.
- **Chief Minister Jairam Thakur** stated that the 'golden jubilee' of the statehood of Himachal Pradesh would be celebrated round the year by organizing **51 programs** in various parts of the state.
- '**Swarnim Rath Yatra**' will also be carried out to showcase the development journey of the hill state as a part of golden jubilee celebrations during the year.
- A special **postal stamp** would also be released to mark the occasion.

CM Thakur launches HP"s first online youth radio station

- **Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur** launched Himachal Pradesh"s first online youth radio station "**Radio Hills-Youngistan Ka Dil**."
- The chief minister appreciated the efforts of the young entrepreneurs and said the online radio station would go a long way in promoting culture and traditions of the state besides providing an opportunity to the youth to exhibit their talents.
- **Deepika and Saurabh, co-founders** of the online radio station, informed Thakur that it would also be available on Apple and Android mobile phones.
- Developers of the online radio station Karan, Radio Jockeys Palak, Rahul and Nidhi were also present on the occasion.
- The online radio would go a long way in promoting the culture and traditions of the state, besides providing an opportunity to the youth to exhibit their talents.

Jharkhand

Jharkhand Launches Crop Relief Scheme - Kisan Fasal Rahat Yojana

- **Jharkhand** is set to replace the **Prime Minister's insurance scheme** for farmers with its own crop relief scheme - **Kisan Fasal Rahat Yojana**.
- To be launched on December 29, the scheme will take three months to come into effect.

Karnataka

Karnataka Government permitted all shops to remain open for 24x7

- All shops and commercial establishments employing ten or more people in **Karnataka** are now allowed to operate on a **24x7 basis**, the state government.
- The move is aimed at generating employment and accelerating economic growth.
- The permission is subject to the establishments which employ ten or more people.
- The state government also mandated that no employee will be made to work more than eight hours and in case of overtime the working hours should exceed ten hours a day and 48 hours in a week.
- Karnataka CM launches Avalokana software
- In Karnataka, Chief Minister **B. S. Yediyurappa** launched Avolokana software that will enable the government to access data on sanctions and expenditures incurred by **39 departments on 1,800 programmes** implemented by them.
- District Deputy Commissioners and Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officers in Bengaluru, the Chief Minister also unveiled Karnataka statistics on Development programmes for the year 2019-20.

Karnataka puts pension payments on auto-pilot

- The **Karnataka government** launched a **first-of-its-kind initiative** in the country to automatically select beneficiaries for old-age pensions that will be paid through the **direct benefit transfer (DBT) mode**.
- This model was piloted in **Udupi and Ballari districts** where officials enrolled beneficiaries for old-age pensions using the '**Navodaya**' app.
- All persons above **60 years** will be automatically selected as beneficiaries of old-age pension based on their annual income.
- The government will make use of the Aadhaar and income certificates database in selecting beneficiaries.
- **Purpose:** To enable beneficiaries to get the pension without the need of middlemen.

Kerala

India's First 'Gender Park' inaugurated in Kozhikode, Kerala

- The Kerala government's **Gender Park in Kozhikode** will become functional from next month, coinciding with the **second edition** of the **International Conference on Gender Equality (ICGE-II)**.
- Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will inaugurate the February 11-13 ICGE-II and the Gender Park.

- He will also lay the foundation of the International Women's Trade and Research Centre (IWTRC) that envisages a secure and sustained ecosystem for women entrepreneurs and a space for them to market products.
- Along with this Park, a Gender Museum, Gender Library, Convention Centre and an Amphitheatre will also be launched at the event.

Formation of 'Kerala Bank a major achievement'-CM

- Formation of **Kerala Bank** as a major event in the cooperative sector.
- "The emergence of a **cooperative scheduled bank**, currently the second largest in the state, is of immense importance to the development of the state.
- While **KIIFB finances largescale infrastructure development**, the Kerala Bank will focus on financing entrepreneurs in agro processing industries and other MSME sectors".
- The bank is also engaged in entrepreneurship development.

Kerala, MP change MoU on Responsible Tourism

- **Madhya Pradesh signed a memorandum of understanding with Kerala** for replicating the latter's pioneering Responsible Tourism (RT) initiative.
- The States signed a joint declaration underneath which Kerala will prolong a sequence of companies underneath a 16-point programme.
- The MoU was exchanged by Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran and his Madhya Pradesh counterpart Usha Thakur.
- Next week, a 13-member staff from Bhopal, led by Ms Thakur, will tour totally different elements of Kerala to assemble first-hand information about RT within the State.

India's first Labour Movement museum to come up in Kerala

- The country's first **Labour Movement Museum**, showcasing the history of world labour movement, would be launched in Kerala's houseboat tourism hub, Alappuzha.
- The museum will feature a huge repository of documents and exhibits that shaped the labour movements across the continents and impacted **Alappuzha**, the cradle of the labour movement in the country.
- The museum would be launched as part of the LDF government's second 100-day programme.
- The New Model Cooperative Society Limited, previously run by the Bombay Company, has been converted into the Labour Movement Museum.
- It will portray, through pictures, documents and other exhibits, the growth of the world labour movement and the history of Keralas labour movement"

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

- **Kerala** has become the **8th State** in the country to successfully undertake **Ease of Doing Business** reform stipulated by the **Department of Expenditure**, Ministry of Finance.

- The State has become eligible to mobilise additional financial resources of **Rs.2,373 crore** through Open Market Borrowings.
- Permission for the same was issued by the Department of Expenditure, on 12th January 2021,
- Kerala has now joined the seven other States namely, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, who have completed this reform. On completion of reforms facilitating ease of doing business, these eight States have been granted additional borrowing permission of Rs 23,149 crore.

Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh - first state to get additional funds for capital projects

- Madhya Pradesh has become the **first state to get additional funds** for capital projects for successfully carrying out reforms in various citizen-centric areas.
- The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance has allocated additional **Rs.660 crore** to the state for capital expenditure for undertaking the **One Nation, One Ration Card Reforms, Ease of Doing Business Reforms, and Urban Local Bodies Reforms**.
- The scheme of “**Special Assistance to States for capital expenditure**” was announced by the Finance Minister on 12th October last year under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat package.

WIPRO group- knowledge partner of Madhya Pradesh govt.

- In Madhya Pradesh, **WIPRO group** is all set to act as knowledge partner of the State Government.
- **Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan**, while holding a discussion with **Mr Azim Premji of WIPRO** through video conference, informed that the company has taken initiative for establishment of a university in the State.
- For this purpose, the State Government will extend all possible support to the Foundation.
- The Wipro Group will also set up a **Software Development Centre in Bhopal**.
- The Chief Minister said, such centers will go a long way in providing more opportunities to the youth in the Information Technology sector.

Madhya Pradesh Exhibition Raag-Bhopali being organized to promote Zari-Zardozi crafts of Bhopal

- **Madhya Pradesh** Government is Organizing an exhibition called **Raag-Bhopali** is being organized to promote **Zari-Zardozi crafts of Bhopal**.
- The exhibition is being organised till 30 December in Gauhar Mahal, Bhopal. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan while inaugurating the exhibition on that fading art of Zari-Zardozi will be revived.
- Different kinds of zari work
- **Zardozi**: This is a heavy and more elaborate embroidery work which uses varieties of gold threads, spangles, beads and gota.
- It is used to embellish wedding outfits, heavy coats, cushions, curtains etc.
- **Kamdani** : This is a lighter needlework which is done on lighter material like scarves, veils, and caps.
- **Mina Work**: This is thus called owing to its resemblance with enamel work. The embroidery is done in gold

Madhya Pradesh introduces 'Launch Pad Scheme' for unemployed youths

- In Madhya Pradesh, '**Launch Pad Scheme**' is being started for boys and girls coming out of child care institutions and having completed 18 years of age.
- **Objective:** Women and Child Development Department is to provide such a platform to these youth, through which they will be able to become self-reliant by continuing their education and training.
- Under the launch pad scheme, **52 districts** of the state have been divided into 5 clusters.
- Five divisional headquarters are being started in Indore, Sagar, Gwalior, Jabalpur and Bhopal.

World's largest Floating Solar Plant at Omkareshwar Dam, Madhya Pradesh

- The **World's largest Floating solar energy project** is to be constructed at **Omkareshwar dam on Narmada river** and will be operational by 2023 and an estimated cost of INR30 billion (\$409.8m).
- About the Solar Plant :
- It would be a **600 MW plant** based on utilising solar energy
- The plant would be located on Omkareshwar dam in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh
- The project is likely to begin generation of power by 2022-23
- That electricity will be produced by installing solar panels in a 2,000 hectares area of water.
- The International Finance Corporation, **World Bank and Power Grid** have agreed in principle to support the project development.
- The Madhya Pradesh power management company has signed an agreement to buy **400MW** power from the project.

Maharashtra

Maharashtra: "Period Room" set up at a public toilet

- In a bid to **help the women**, residing in congested slums, during their menstruation days, a 'period room' has been set up for women at a public toilet in Maharashtra's **Thane city**.
- The civic body had been aided by NGO **Muse Foundation** in this initiative, and now, the NGO would be taking up the task of informing the women of the slum about the existence of such a room when they hold one of their regular sessions on menstrual hygiene.
- Equipped with several basic facilities, the period room aims to facilitate menstrual hygiene among women dwelling in slums.
- The much-needed facility has been set up by the Thane Municipal Corporation in collaboration with an NGO, at a slum in **Shanti Nagar locality of Wagle Estate area in Thane**.

Nagpur's Gorewada Zoo renamed as Balasaheb Thackeray Zoological Park

- The Maharashtra government renamed Nagpur's Gorewada International Zoo as Balasaheb Thackeray Zoological Park .

- The zoological park, spread over 1,900 hectares, will be inaugurated on January 26 by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.
- Three special 40-seat capacity vehicles and an online ticket booking facility will be made available to the people as soon after the Indian safari is inaugurated,
- Aim: To protect forests and promote tourism, Prakash Javadekar, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), had announced the setting up of the 'international-standard' bio park in August 2019.
- The task was entrusted to the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra Ltd.

Uddhav Thackeray inaugurates Zoological Park in Nagpur

- In Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray inaugurated Balasaheb Thackeray Gorewada International Zoological Park in Nagpur.
- The park has been developed by the State Forest Department and Forest Development Corporation.
- It is spread across an area of 1,914 hectares and includes a wildlife sanctuary, Indian safari, and African safari biodiversity park and night safari.
- The park has been opened for the Indian safari.
- Registration can be done on the website www.wildgorewada.com.

Maharashtra launches jail tourism initiative

- **Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray** launched a '**jail tourism**' initiative of the state government from Pune's Yerawada prison, in a move to help students learn about historical experiences.
- The initiative was launched on January 26 via video conferencing.
- Yerawada jail is **150-years-old** where several freedom fighters, including Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarojini Naidu and Subhas Chandra Bose had been imprisoned under the British rule.
- The '**jail tourism**' was started to make students aware of the history.
- The jail has witnessed many historical events like the Pune-pact that was signed within the premises of this jail.
- In recent times the accused of 26/11 Mumbai blasts Ajmal Kasab was hanged here on November 21, 2012."

Manipur

Cherry Blossom Mao Festival held in Manipur

- In Manipur, the **Cherry Blossom Mao Festival** was held at **Senapati district** marking the beginning of pink season in the district.
- Manipur Chief Minister **N. Biren Singh** graced the function virtually due to the pandemic.
- The Manipur government started organizing the **festival every year from 2017 onward**.
- The virtual festival featured the picturesque landscape of Mao adorned with beautiful cherry trees, which are laden with pink flowers which have traditionally attracted visitors from across the world.

- The virtual Cherry Blossom Festival at Mao, Manipur was jointly organised by the Department of Tourism and Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), Shillong in association with the Organising Committee Flower Festival, Mao.

Meghalaya

Meghalaya selected for Special Award

- **The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Meghalaya** was selected for a Special Award for Information Technology applications in Elections by the Election Commission of India (ECI), in the **National Best Electoral Practices Awards-2020**.
- President Ram Nath Kovind virtually conferred the award to **Meghalaya CEO F.R. Kharkongor** at the National Voters' Day Award function held in New Delhi, a statement from the CEO's office informed.

Odisha

Expansion of NALCO plant in Odisha

- Union Minister of Coal and Mines Pralhad Joshi has assured that the proposed **brownfield expansion of National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO)'s smelter plant** at Angul is very much on track and will be executed on priority.
- The Navaratna PSU has planned to invest around **Rs 30,000 crore by 2027-28** on expansion and diversification.
- Around Rs 22,000 crore will be invested on the expansion of the company's aluminium smelter unit from 0.46 million tonne per annum (MTPA) to 1 MTPA and construction of a 1400-MW feeder captive power plant (CPP) in Angul.

India's first Fire Park comes up in Odisha

- Chief Minister **Naveen Patnaik** inaugurated the '**Fire Park**', a first of its kind initiative in the country, **to bring awareness on fire safety measures**.
- This Will Facilitate Demonstrations on use of first aid fire-fighting equipment, rescue and disaster operations, visit to exhibition hall, screening of films and distribution of leaflets on fire safety will be part of the activities. Students from schools and colleges will be the focus group.
- He also launched a dynamic online portal, '**AgnishamaSeva**' of Odisha Fire Service on virtual platform.
- **Odisha's famous 'Toshali National Crafts Mela' begins**
- The 15th edition of the famous '**Toshali National Crafts Mela**' began in Odisha's Bhubaneswar on January 21.
- Odisha Chief Minister **Naveen Patnaik** inaugurated the grand mela through video conferencing.
- This year, around 250 stalls have been opened at the mela.
- Mela has become one of the most popular **handlooms and handicrafts** fairs in Eastern India.
- On the occasion, the Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts Minister Padmini Dian felicitated three artisans with State Handicrafts Award- 2019.
- **Three winners** are Dilip Kumar Swain (palm leaf engraving), Divyajyoti Dehera (stone sculpting), and Priyanka Patra (terracotta).

Rajasthan

New scheme initiated in Rajasthan

- A new scheme has been initiated in Sirohi district, Rajasthan to make people aware about the importance of **nourishment of pregnant women and children**.
- The **scheme** called **Ek Paudha Suposhit Beti Ke Naam** or **A plant on the name of a well nourished daughter** has been started under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme of the union government.
- Under this Scheme on the birth of a girl child a **drumstick plant** is being distributed by district administration this nutritional plant is taken care of by **family members of girl child**.

Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu: Union Minister Giriraj Singh disburses subsidy amount

- In Tamil Nadu, Union Minister for fisheries **Giriraj Singh** disbursed subsidy amounts to three boat building yards for construction of deep sea fishing boats scheme worth
- Rs. One crore 64 lakhs under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sambadha Yojana at Kunthakkal Harbour Ramanathapuram.
- The Minister said that the Government has invested 20 thousand fifty crore for fisheries development throughout the Country.
- He said that the Centre would take up the fishermen issues with the neighbouring Srilankan Government which will provide a solution to make their livelihood a success.

Tamil Nadu CM inaugurates Jayalalithaa Memorial

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **Edappadi Palanisamy** inaugurated Jayalalithaa Memorial at Chennai.
- The **79 crore** worth grand memorial is built on a nine acre land situated on the shores of the Marina Beach.
- The phoenix shaped memorial has a statue of Jayalalithaa and MGR with an artificial waterfall.
- The building was completed within a record period of 30 months.
- Scores of AIADMK workers from all districts thronged the city to witness the event.

Telangana

Justice Hima Kohli becomes first woman Chief Justice of Telangana HC

- **Justice Hima Kohli** has become the first woman **Chief Justice of Telangana High Court** following her swearing-in.
- She will become the first woman Chief Justice of Telangana HC.
- Telangana Governor Dr Tamilsai Soundararajan has administered oath to her at a special ceremony held at the Darbar Hall of Raj Bhavan in Hyderabad.
- Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, several judges of the State High Court, Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy, several Ministers from Telangana and leaders of various political parties were among those present on this occasion.

Telangana becomes 3rd State to complete ULB reform

- Telangana has become the 3rd State in the country to successfully undertake **Urban Local Bodies, ULB reform** stipulated by the **Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance**.
- The State has become eligible to mobilize additional financial resources of **Rs 2,508 crore** through **Open Market Borrowings**.
- Permission for the same was issued by the Department of Expenditure.
- Telangana has now joined the two other States Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, who have completed this reform.
- On completion of urban local bodies reform, these three States have been granted additional borrowing permission of **Rs 7,406 crore**.

Uttarakhand

CM Rawat inaugurates Uttarakhand's first child-friendly police station

- **Uttarakhand** Chief Minister **Trivendra Singh Rawat** inaugurated the state's **first child friendly police station** describing it as a major reformative step by the police.
- **Purpose** : It is a new initiative and a major reformative step towards protection of children by the state police, Rawat said after inaugurating the Bal Mitra police station in Dalanwala area here.
- The child friendly police unit has been set up in the **Dalanwala police station** with a budget of about Rs five lakhs on the recommendation of the Child Protection Committee of Uttarakhand.
- According to the chairperson of **State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) Usha Negi**, the children who are either victims or need proper counselling or visit police stations due to other reasons should be provided with a comfortable and intimidating environment rather than keeping them in a dull and scary atmosphere.
- To keep children at ease, the walls are painted in bright colours and cartoons and the police personnel will also be dressed in casual clothes rather than their uniforms.

20-year-old Shrishti Goswami is Uttarakhand CM for a day

- To mark the **National Girl Child Day**, **Haridwar teenager Srishti Goswami** will take charge as the chief minister of Uttarakhand for one day.
- She will take part in the child assembly session in **Dehradun**.
- Goswami, a student of **BSc Agriculture**, lives in Daulatpur village of the district.
- For the **first time** in the history of Uttarakhand, a girl will become the state's chief minister.
- It has received a nod from the incumbent chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat.
- The one-day chief minister will administer from Gairsain, the summer capital of the state, and will review various schemes run by the state government that include Atal Ayushman Scheme, Smart City project, Homestay Scheme by the tourism department, and other development projects

Uttar Pradesh

UP govt to set up India's first leather park in Kanpur

- Uttar Pradesh government will establish the **first leather park** of the country in Kanpur district.
- The park is expected to provide employment to 50 thousand people directly and more than 1 lakh 50 thousand people indirectly.
- The project will be established in **268 areas of land in Ramaipur village of Kanpur district** and is expected to attract an investment of **more than 5850 crores**.
- The leather park will also have an effluent treatment plant of 20 million litre per day capacity so that it will not pollute the **Ganga river**.
- The establishment of leather park Kanpur City will be able to strengthen its position among the 10 big leather manufacturing states of the country.
- The leather park will have all the facilities for production as well as exhibition of leather products.
- It will also have fooding and lodging arrangements for the investors who will come here from all over the world.

Uttar Pradesh celebrates its statehood day

- Uttar Pradesh is celebrating its foundation day on **Jan 24**.
- Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the **Sthapna Diwas** at a gala at Awadh Shilpgram in capital city Lucknow.
- The theme of Uttar Pradesh Divas is 'Self-reliant Uttar Pradesh: Women, youths, Farmers: Development of all, Honour to All.' Sabka Vikas Sabka Samman '.
- A huge exhibition on the theme of 'One District One Product' is also being displayed at Gautam Budh Nagar in NCR.
- **An app** of MSME department '**Udhyam Sarthi** ' was launched on this occasion.

UP Govt Launches 'Kisan Kalyan Mission'; Invokes Campaign To Double Farmers' Income

- On January 6, 2021, **Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath's** government will launch an initiative named '**Kisan Kalyan Mission**'
- This is mainly for double the income of farmers of the state.
- The 3-week long campaign for the welfare of farmers will be organised in every development block of all 75 districts.
- Under the mission to be launched by the Uttar Pradesh government, many departments of the state government such as Horticulture, Mandi Parishad, animal husbandry, sugarcane food and supply, fisheries, and Panchayati Raj will be working together.

UP: CM increases stipend amount - MBBS, BDS interns

- In **Uttar Pradesh**, Chief Minister **Yogi Adityanath** has ordered to increase the stipend amount with immediate effect as a **new year gift** to students who are doing internships after completion of **MBBS and BDS course**.
- CM has decided to increase the stipend from **7,500 to 12,000 rupees**.
- This increase in allowances has come **after 10 years**.

- As per the information from Chief Minister's Office, students doing internships by qualifying MBBS or BDS examination from State Medical Colleges, institutes and universities will now get 12,000 rupees internship allowance per month.

Ministry of Minority Affairs organise Hunar Haat in Lucknow

- Ministry of Minority Affairs will organise the 24th **Hunar Haat** at Avadh Shilpgram, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh from **22nd January to 4th February** with the theme of Vocal for Local.
- Artisans and craftsmen from **31 States and Union Territories** of the country will participate in the Hunar Haat.
- About **500 artisans**, craftsmen and culinary experts from different States including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Chattisgarh, Jammu-Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Ladakh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal will display and sell their exquisite **handmade products**.
- The Ministry said, renowned artists of the country will perform cultural events on the theme of Atma Nirbhar Bharat every day at Hunar Haat.

In UP Yogi Adityanath launches Udyam Sarathi app for youth to explore self-employment

- For the **71st foundation day of Uttar Pradesh**, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched '**Udyam Sarathi**' app to help youth to explore self-employment opportunities.
- About the app :
- This application will provide all information related to self-employment and the job industry at one click.
- The app, prepared under the **ODOP scheme** and considered to be a master-key for exploring self-employment opportunities to the youth.
- Through the Udyam Sarathi app, youth would easily be able to get a varied range of business opportunities in different departments and sectors of the state and the Central government.
- Under the vision of '**Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas and Sabka Vishwas**', this App is poised to benefit the women and farmers looking for avenues of self-employment.
- It has been launched under the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme.
- The Uttar Pradesh Day celebration will run from 24 January to 26 January, 2021.
- The theme of Uttar Pradesh Day 2021 is 'Respect for self-reliant Uttar Pradesh, women young farmers, development of all'.
- Uttar Pradesh was recognised as a state of India on January 24, 1950.

West Bengal

Mamata Inaugurates 26th Kolkata International Film Festival

- **West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee** virtually inaugurated the 26th Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF).
- The inaugural ceremony was also virtually attended by Bollywood superstar and **West Bengal's brand ambassador Shah Rukh Khan** from Mumbai.

- Legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray's classic '**Apur Sansar**' will be the inaugural film of the festival in which 131 movies from 45 countries will be screened till January 13.
- Films will be screened at Rabindra Sadan, Nandan, Sisir Mancha and Rabindra Okakura Bhavan in Salt Lake.
- Six films by Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini and movies on sitarist Ravi Shankar, singer Hemanta Mukherjee and flicks of comedian Bhanu Bandyopadhyay will be screened.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands

- Andaman Lt Governor flags off electric buses
- D K Joshi, the Lieutenant Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands flagged-off a fleet of electric buses.
- The project for 40 electric buses is being executed by NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Limited(NVVN Limited), a **100% subsidiary of NTPC Limited**, a PSU under the Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- The introductions of electric buses in the Island union territory will help cut down tailpipe emissions as well as provide comfortable public transport.
- These buses will provide last mile connectivity to **NAMMA Metro network**.

Delhi

Delhi - Varanasi High Speed Rail Corridor begins from Greater Noida

- The aerial ground survey for **Delhi - Varanasi High Speed Rail Corridor** began from Greater Noida.
- Railway Ministry said, a helicopter fitted with state of art **Aerial LiDAR and imagery sensors** took the first flight and captured the data related to ground survey.
- The Ministry said LiDAR technology provides all the ground details and data in 3 to 4 months wherein this process normally takes 10 to 12 months.
- This technique uses a combination of **Laser data, GPS data, flight parameters and actual photographs** to give accurate survey data.

Jammu & Kashmir

Govt reduces age limit of J&K Administrative Services Exam aspirants

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the government has reduced the age limit of the aspirants of Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Services Exam from **37 years to 32 years**.
- **J&K Public Service Commission (J&KPSC)** has announced that the vacancies will be filled up in accordance with the provisions contained in J&K Combined Competitive Exam Rules 2018 (SRO-103).
- J&K PSC, the recruiting agency, earlier notified that the combined competitive preliminary exam KAS-2021 will be held for **257 posts** referred by the government.
- SRO 103 reduces the age of open merit aspirants from 37 to 32 years.

Farooq Khan reviews functioning of One-Stop-Centres for women

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Adviser to Lieutenant Governor Farooq Khan reviewed the functioning of **One-Stop-Centres for women** in the UT during a meeting at Civil Secretariat, Jammu.

- The Mission Director of **Integrated Child Protection Services (ICPS)** gave a detailed powerpoint presentation and apprised the Adviser about the working of the centres as well difficulties being faced by them while performing their duties.
- **Aim:** To help the women affected by violence in private and public spaces, within the family, community or at the workplace.
- **Main objective of One-Stop-Centres:** To facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services including medical, legal, psychological and counseling support under one roof to fight against any forms of violence against women.

J&K: Over 22 lakh people applied for golden card

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, **over 22 lakh people** have so far applied for the **golden card** under newly launched **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (ABPMJAY) SEHAT scheme** in various districts across the Union Territory.
- Before the launching of **SEHAT scheme**, only people in the deprived category under the socio-economic census could have availed the facility, however, under SEHAT scheme every J&K resident is being covered under **Rs 5 lakh health insurance**.
- Home Minister Amit Shah sleet CCEA approval
- **Home Minister Amit Shah** has hailed the CCEA approval to the Central Sector Scheme for Industrial Development of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Mr Shah said, Prime Minister has started development in Jammu and Kashmir by ridding it of terrorism and separatism.
- The approval of the **Rs 28,400 crore central Sector Scheme** for the industrial development of Jammu and Kashmir by the Cabinet illustrates the special place that Jammu and Kashmir holds in the heart of the Prime Minister.
- Mr. Shah said this scheme will prove to be a boon for cottage industry, handicrafts, micro, small and medium industries of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It will spur the setting up of new MSME units in the manufacturing and services sector, as well as encourage the expansion of existing units.

Manoj Sinha unveils Mobile Application 'Satark Nagrik' and Departmental Vigilance Officers Portal

- In **Jammu and Kashmir**, **LG, Manoj Sinha** launched **Mobile Application 'Satark Nagrik'** and **Departmental Vigilance Officers Portal** of J&K Anti Corruption Bureau at Civil Secretariat, Jammu.
- Speaking on the occasion, the LG observed that UT Government is taking comprehensive measures for ensuring transparent, accountable and responsive governance.
- The mobile application has been developed with a purpose to facilitate seamless flow of information about corruption and enable citizens to submit their grievances with ease and mobility.
- The LG remarked that the most effective antidote to corruption is an active, involved, and empowered citizenry.

- The **Departmental Vigilance Officers (DVO) Portal** has been designed to enable an online communication channel with the DVOs of various departments and the portal will help in quick disposal of complaints and will help to redress grievances in a systematic manner by enabling monitoring of the status of DVO matters and Citizens Grievances assigned to DVOs at ACB Central Office.

J&K LG declare Rs 28,400 cr mega Industrial Development Package

- In the **Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir**, **Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha** announced the Government of India's approval for a mega Industrial Development Package worth **Rs.28,400 crore**.
- While addressing a press conference in Jammu, the LG Sinha said that the Union Cabinet sanctioned the huge **Industrial Development Package-2021** for J&K's industrial sector that has been craving for the strong support from the Centre.
- The LG said that the package aims at providing a huge boost to the existing industrial sector, setting up new units, creating 4.5 lakh jobs and at least investments of **Rs.20,000 crore**.
- The package will remain in force for 17 years i.e. till 2037.

Ladakh

Ladakh administration organises Opening Ceremony of Archery Competition

- Archery has always been a part of every Ladakhi society.
- Nowadays, Ladakhi youth are seen focusing more on modern archery along with traditional one.
- **Under the Khelo India Ladakh Winter Games**, the Union Territory Administration has organised the Opening Ceremony of Archery Competition at Leh.
- Union Minister of State for Sports and Youth Affairs Kiren Rijiju inaugurated the competition.
- In the Leh district of UT of Ladakh, Union Minister of State for Sports and Youth Affairs Kiren Rijiju inaugurated Archery Competition-2021 under **First Khelo India** Ladakh Winter Games at NDS Sports Stadium.

Tourism Minister inaugurates IISM branch in Kargil

- In Kargil of Ladakh Union territory, the Union Tourism Minister **Mr Prahlad Singh Patel** has inaugurated a branch of **Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering (IISM)**.
- The Minister participated in various events to celebrate the National Tourism Day with **National Events of Adventure Tourism, (NEAT)** in Kargil district.
- Minister Prahlad Singh said, the Union Government is taking all measures to encourage adventure sports and snow based winter games in the region.
- He said, till now outside **sportspersons** who are using the natural advantages are supporting local talent.

Important National News

Government Extends Income Tax Returns Filing Date To January 10

- The government **extended** the deadline to file **income tax return (ITR)** for individuals by 10 days to **January 10, 2021**.

- Prior to that the deadline was **December 31, 2020**
- This is the third time that the government has extended the deadline to file ITR first from the normal deadline of July 31 to November 30, 2020, and then to December 31, 2020.
- The last date for filing ITR has been extended for those taxpayers whose filings using ITR-1 and ITR-4 forms are not required to be audited.

Government extends deadline for FASTag till February 15, 2021

- The **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** has extended the deadline for **FASTags** for all vehicles in India till **February 15, 2021**.
- Earlier, the **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** had announced to completely do away with cash transactions for paying toll charges from January 1.
- The new deadline for FASTags to be made mandatory to cross a toll plaza has been set on February 15, 2021.
- The compulsory use of FASTags will help vehicles pass through the toll plazas swiftly, preventing long queues.
- About FASTag :
- A FASTag is an **electronic toll collection system** in India, operated by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).
- It was launched in **2016** for all four-wheelers and uses radio frequency identification (RFID) technology for toll collection.
- It has now become mandatory for M and N class four-wheelers sold before December 1, 2017, under the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989.
- FASTag is a simple to use, reloadable tag which enables automatic deduction of toll charges and lets you pass through the toll plaza without stopping for the cash transaction.
- FASTag is linked to a prepaid account from which the applicable toll amount is deducted.
- The tag employs Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) technology and is affixed on the vehicle's windscreen after the tag account is active.

Union Cabinet approves Multi-Modal Logistics Hub & Multi-Modal Transport Hub (MMTH) at Greater Noida

- The government approved a **multi-modal logistics and transport hub (MMTH)** at Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh.
- For a view to making India a strong player in the global value chain. The Union Cabinet also approved a proposal to set up industrial corridor nodes at Krishnapatnam and Tumakuru under CBIC.
- The proposals have a total estimated cost of **Rs 7,725 crore** and an estimated employment generation of more than 2.8 lakh persons
- The Union Cabinet has approved proposals of Department of Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT) for construction of various trunk infrastructure components, which includes:
- **Krishnapatnam** Industrial Area in Andhra Pradesh (estimated cost of the project of Rs. 2,139.44 crore)
- Tumakuru Industrial Area in Karnataka (estimated cost of Rs. 1,701.81 crore)

- Multi Modal Logistics Hub (MMLH) and Multi Modal Transport Hub (MMTH) at Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh (estimated cost of Rs. 3,883.80 crore)

DRDO Celebrates 63rd Foundation Day of its establishment on January 01, 2021

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

Govt launches Global Pravasi Rishta portal & mobile App to connect with Indian Diaspora across the world

- Minister of State for External Affairs **V. Muraleedharan** launched the **Global Pravasi Rishta portal and mobile App**, to connect with Indian Diaspora across the world.
- About the Portal :
- The portal will act as a dynamic communication platform between our pravasis, the Ministry of External Affairs and missions abroad and will help in engaging Indian diaspora more intensively.
- The portal will also assist the Indian overseas during any crisis management and will also lend a helping hand.
- The portal will also contain useful information for the Indian diaspora such as information on passport, visa, and other consular services. It will also have the details about various events that are organized by the missions and the invites will be sent to diaspora members for greater participation.
- The dynamic nature of the portal and the app will also allow the ministry to take useful opinions of the Indian diaspora on policy issues, conducting surveys, sharing e-newsletters, etc.
- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contribution of the Overseas Indian Community in the development of India.

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

- On 1st January Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** laid the foundation stone of **Light House projects (LHPs)** under **Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC)**- at six sites across six States, through video conference.
- The projects are being undertaken under the Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC).
- The LightHouse Projects will be undertaken at Rajkot in Gujarat, Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, Indore in Madhya Pradesh, Ranchi in Jharkhand, Chennai in Tamil Nadu and Agartala in Tripura.
- The project will comprise around **1000 houses** at each location along with allied infrastructure facilities.
- It will mainly aim to deliver ready to live houses at a fastened pace within **twelve months**.
- The Chief Ministers of all six states took part in the foundation laying ceremony.
- It has been conceptualised by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

- The LightHouse Projects will showcase the best use of new-age alternate global technologies, processes and materials in the construction sector at such a large scale for the first time in the country.
- These houses will be more economical, sustainable, durable and of high quality in comparison to the conventional brick and mortar construction.

Indian Army Chief MM Naravane receives Guard of Honour at ROK Army Headquarters

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

Prime Minister lays Foundation stone of AIIMS at Rajkot in Gujarat

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** laid the foundation stone of **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)** at Rajkot in Gujarat today through video conferencing.
- Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat, Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan and Union Minister of State for Health Ashwini Kumar Choubey were also present on the occasion.
- AIIMS will play a big role in ensuring the modern health care facility reaches to the last mile in the State.
- Under AIIMS project, **201 acres** of land has been allotted near Rajkot.
- It will be built at an estimated cost of **Rs 1,195 crore** and is expected to be completed by mid of 2022.
- The state-of-the-art 750-bed hospital will also have a 30-bed AAYUSH block.
- It will have 125 MBBS seats and 60 nursing seats.

PM Modi inaugurate permanent campus of IIM Sambalpur in Odisha

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will **lay the foundation stone** of the permanent campus of the **Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Sambalpur**, on January 2 via video-conferencing.
- Odisha Governor Ganeshi Lal and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik along with Union Ministers Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', Dharmendra Pradhan and Pratap Chandra Sarangi will also be present on the occasion.
- The ceremony will be virtually attended by **more than 5,000 invitees**, including officials, industry leaders, academicians and students, alumni and faculty of IIM, Sambalpur.
- The institute also outscored all other IIMs in terms of highest gender diversity with **49 per cent girl students** in the MBA batch of **2019-21** and **43 per cent** in the **2020-22 MBA batch**.
- The proposed campus of IIM Sambalpur will be equipped with State-of-the-art infrastructure with energy efficient green features as per **GRIHA standards**.

- It will be a green campus with maximum usage of renewable energy.
- The project is scheduled to be completed by **April 2022**.

“Disability Compensation” for serving employees, if they get disabled in line of duty : Dr Jitendra Singh

- In a significant **New Year announcement**, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, **Dr. Jitendra Singh** informed of the government decision to extend **"Disability Compensation"** for **all serving employees**, if they get disabled in the line of duty while performing their service and are retained in service in spite of such disablement.
- The order will particularly provide a huge relief to young **Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel** like **CRPF, BSF, CISF, etc** since disability in performance of duties is generally reported in their case due to constraints of job requirement as well as hostile or difficult work - environment.
- Pertinent to mention that this new order will remove an anomaly in service rules, considering the hardship faced by the employees, since as per the **earlier OM dated 5/5/2009**, the provisions of disability benefits under **Central Civil Services(CCS) (EOP) Rules** did not provide such compensation to those government servants who were **appointed on or after 1.1.2004** and covered under **National Pension System (NPS)**.
- However, with the new order issued by the **Department of Pensions in the Ministry of Personnel**, the employees covered under NPS will also get benefits under Rule (9) of **Extra Ordinary Pension (EOP)**.
- Accordingly, **Rule 38 of CCS (Pension) Rules** was amended to provide Invalid Pension at **50% of the last pay**, even if the employee had not completed minimum qualifying service of **10 years**.
- In addition to above, in yet another reform in the Pension Rules, a decision was also taken to amend the rule and provide pension at enhanced rate to the family of an employee who died during service before completing the **requisite service of minimum 7 years**.
- As a result, now the family pension of **50% of the last pay** is also admissible to the family of employees who die even before completing 7 years of service.

Petroleum Minister launches missed call facility for LPG consumers in Bhubaneswar

- Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan launched the missed call facility for LPG consumers in Bhubaneswar.
- Indian Oil LPG customers can now give a missed call to **8454955555** for refill booking for all India and for new connection for Bhubaneswar city.
- The Minister also rolled out the second phase of the world class octane100 premium grade petrol, under the brand XP 100.
- The Petroleum Minister said that while about 13 crore people were given LPG connection between 1955 and 2014, now it is about to reach 30 crore, representing a quantum jump there by empowering Indian women.

- Rolling out the Indian Oil's branded XP 100 to seven more cities including Bhubaneswar, Mr Pradhan said it epitomizes the Prime Minister's vision of Purvoday.
- "In the line Modi's vision for a Digital India, the missed call facility will play a crucial role in making LPG more easily accessible to the consumers.
- The Petroleum Ministry has always strived to improve customer convenience and this facility by IndianOil will play a crucial role in making LPG more easily accessible.

'Davai bhi, kadaai bhi' - modi gives new mantra in New Year

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) at Rajkot in Gujarat through video conferencing.
- Addressing the occasion, the Prime Minister said if 2020 was the year of **health challenges**, **2021** is going to become the year of health solutions.
- He stressed, India will play a major role in the health solutions as it played in meeting the challenges of 2020.
- PM Modi said that the new year is "**coming with the hope of treatment**" He said he used to say 'jab tak davai nahi dhilai nahi' but now the mantra for 2021 should be: '**Davai bhi, kadaai bhi**'.
- Mr Modi said, his government started working holistically in the health sector focusing on preventive care as well as modern treatment facilities.
- He said, over Rs 30,000 crore of poor's money has been saved due to **Ayushman Bharat Yojana**.
- This scheme has freed the people from the struggles of good treatment due to lack of money.

Agriculture Minister inaugurates - Virtual Agri-hackathon 2020

- **Virtual Agri-hackathon Atmanirbhar Krishi** inaugurated To make Agriculture profitable and attract youth towards agriculture are challenges of the **Agri-hackathon**
- Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Shri Narendra Singh Tomar said Agri-Startups can help improve the lot of farmers
- Building Smart India with Self-Reliant Agriculture.
- The application of the hackathon was made live on **mygov.in** and will remain open till **20 January, 2021**.
- The hackathon will happen in 3 elimination rounds and the final **24 winners** will get a cash prize of **INR 1,00,000** along with incubation support, tech & business mentoring and various other benefits.
- The hackathon will accept innovations & ideas on farm mechanization, precision agriculture, supply chain & food technology, waste to wealth, green energy, etc.
- Narendra Singh Tomar said "In the light of Prime Minister's vision to introduce new-age technology and innovations in agriculture, the Agri India Hackathon is being organised.
- It is a proud moment for all of us where young minds will discuss, collaborate, and create some of the best ideas & solutions which will guide us for years to come.

- Agriculture is the backbone of our country and plans are afoot to strengthen this backbone with youth engagement, employment generation, technology & digitization".

IAF Chief, Air Marshal launches IAF e-Governance (e-Office) portal

- Indian Air Force Chief, Air Marshal R K S Bhadauria launched the IAF e-Governance (e-Office) portal in New Delhi.
- Bhadauria launched the portal at **Vayu Bhawan**
- The launch of the portal is part of **Digital India and e-governance initiative** that will transform the entire Indian Air Force into a paperless office workflow.
- It marks a major shift from the current method of correspondence, filing and documentation to a digital one.
- The platform will ensure enhanced transparency, improved efficiency, increased accountability, assured data integrity and rapidly accessible archives along with a major reduction in the use of paper.
- This project started in April and was to be completed by January 1, 2021

Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) launched

- The Central government has formed a genomic surveillance consortium for laboratory and epidemiological surveillance of circulating strains of the **SARS-CoV-2** in India.
- The Indian **SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia (INSACOG)** has been launched. Coordinated by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) along with MoH&FW, ICMR, and CSIR, the strategy and roadmap of the National SARS CoV2 Genome Sequencing Consortium (INSACOG) has been prepared.
- The genomic surveillance consortium, INSACOG, has been formed under the leadership of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), New Delhi.
- **Aim** : To monitor the genomic variations in the SARS-CoV-2 on a regular basis through a multi-laboratory network. This vital research consortium will also assist in developing potential vaccines in the future.

Govt extends benefit of RoDTEP scheme to all export goods to boost export

- Government has decided to extend the benefit of the scheme for **Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)** to all export goods to boost exports.
- The scheme will refund to exporters the **embedded Central, State and local taxes** that were so far not being given rebate or refunded.
- The refund will be credited in the exporter's ledger account with Customs and used to pay Basic Customs duty on imported goods.
- The **RoDTEP** rates will be notified shortly by the Department of Commerce, based on the recommendation of a Committee chaired by former Commerce and Home Secretary Dr. G.K. Pillai

Drug regulator gives final approval for Covid-19 vaccines of SII, Bharat Biotech

- The **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)** has formally announced the final approval for **Oxford-AstraZeneca and Bharat Biotech vaccines** against the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) for emergency use.

- CDSCO (**Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation**) accepts the subject expert committee reform rations on Serum and Bharat Biotech Covid vaccines.
- **Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) releases Data on Police Organizations**
- The Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) released Data on Police Organizations.
- The BPR&D has been publishing the Data on Police Organizations (DoPO), annually, since the year 1986.
- DoPO as on 01.01.2019 was released by the **Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah**, on 29th January, 2020.
- This is for the first time in the history of BPR&D that DoPO for a particular year has been released during the year itself.
- The number of people getting police protection across India stood at 19,467 in 2019 and 21,300 in 2018 a reduction of 1,833 (or 8.7 percent).
- The number of police personnel put on protection duty in 2018 and 2019 for ministers, MPs, MLAs, judges, bureaucrats, etc., outnumbered their sanctioned strength for the job by around 35 percent.
- West Bengal had the maximum of 3,142 people under police protection in 2019, followed by Punjab (2,594), Bihar (2,347) and Jammu and Kashmir (1,184).

Amit Shah releases 'National Police K-9 Journal'

- Home Minister **Amit Shah** released the inaugural issue of the **National Police K-9 Journal** in New Delhi.
- It is the first such publication in the country on the subject of Police Service K9s, Police Dogs.
- This is a unique initiative that will further enrich the subjects related to Police Service Dog, K-9, PSK teams in the country.
- The event was attended by Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, Directors General of Central Armed Police Forces and senior ranking Police Officers of the Forces, while CAPF personnel from all over the country attended through virtual conference.

FSSAI slashes limit for trans fat levels in foods

- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has capped the amount of **trans fatty acids (TFA)** in oils and fats to **3% for 2021** and **2% by 2022** from the current permissible limit of 5%.
- This Regulation through an amendment to the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulations.
- The revised regulation applies to edible refined oils, vanaspati (partially hydrogenated oils), margarine, bakery shortenings, and other mediums of cooking such as vegetable fat spreads and mixed fat spreads.
- India first passed the TFA limit of 10% in oils and fats in 2011.

Indian Railways to start train service connecting international airport

- **Indian Railways' South Western Railway zone** will start operating train services from Bengaluru city station to the newly built KIA, Devanahalli Railway halt station.

- According to South Western Railway, three pairs of **DEMU services** would be introduced from the Bengaluru area to the Kempegowda International Airport (KIAD) Halt Station from January 4.
- The new railway halt station is bound to benefit thousands of commuters daily

PM Modi to inaugurate Kochi-Mangaluru natural gas pipeline

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will **dedicate** the **Kochi - Mangaluru Natural Gas Pipeline to the nation** through video conference.
- The '**futuristic project**', PM Modi said, will positively impact many people.
- Modi said that it is a landmark day in India's quest for **Urja Aatmanirbharta**.
- He said, this is a futuristic project that will positively impact many people.
- The event marks an important milestone towards the creation of One Nation One Gas Grid.
- The 450 kilometre long pipeline has been built by GAIL (India) Limited.
- It has a transportation capacity of 12 Million Metric Standard Cubic Metres per day.
- It will carry natural gas from the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Regasification Terminal at Kochi, Kerala to Mangaluru, Karnataka, while passing through Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod districts.
- The total cost of the project was about **Rs.3000 crore** and its construction created over 12 lakh man-days of employment.
- **Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan**, Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyoorappa and Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan will participate in the inaugural function.

IFSCA becomes associate member of the global lobby group IOSCO

- **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)** has become an associate member of the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO).
- The IOSCO works closely with the **G20 nations and the Financial Stability Board (FSB)**, in setting up the standards for strengthening the securities markets.
- The IOSCO Objectives and Principles of Securities Regulation have been endorsed by FSB as one of the key standards for sound financial systems.
- The membership of IOSCO will provide the IFSCA a platform to exchange information at the global level, and even at the regional level, on areas of common interests.
- With this new membership, IFSCA will get the platform to exchange information at the global level and regional level on areas of common interests and help to learn from the experiences and best practices of the regulators of other well established financial centres.

India begins 40th Scientific Expedition to Antarctica

- India launched the 40th Scientific Expedition to Antarctica.
- This Indian expedition marks four decades of the country's scientific endeavour to the southern white continent.

- The 40th expedition journey will be flagged off from **Goa with 43 members onboard**.
- The chartered ice-class vessel **MV Vasiliy Golovnin** will make this journey and will reach Antarctica in 30 days.
- After leaving behind a team of **40 members**, it would return to India in April.
- On return, it will also bring back the winter team of the preceding trip.

Denmark's Oscar nominee 'Another Round' to be opening movie at 51st IFFI in Goa

- The **51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI)** will open on 16th January, with the Indian premiere of the movie 'Another Round' by Thomas Vinterberg.
- The movie starring **Cannes Best Actor Award winner Mads Mikkelsen** is among a star-studded line up of movies being showcased at IFFI. The movie is also Denmark's official entry to the Oscars.
- The festival will also witness the **World Premier of 'Mehrunisa'**.
- The film by Sandeep Kumar will premier mid-fest.

Delhi government sets up Tamil Academy

- **Delhi Government Department of Art, Culture, and Language** has set up a **Tamil Academy** to Promote the language and culture of the southern state of Tamil Nadu.
- The Delhi government has appointed former municipal councillor and current member of Delhi Tamil Sangam **N Raja** as the vice-chairman of the academy.
- The Department of Art, Culture and Language of the Delhi government has decided that the new academy will introduce various awards to promote and reward the good works of people in Tamil language and culture.
- The government will also provide language courses through this academy.
- It will also celebrate and organise cultural festivals for the people of Tamil Nadu.

5-day national folk dance festival to start in Jammu

- North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala (Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India) and **Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture & Languages**, Jammu is jointly organizing **National Folk Dance Festival** from December 26-28.
- The festival is of **five days** and for three days it will be organised at Abhinav Theatre, Jammu.
- Artists from Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Assam, Tripura, Maharashtra, Telangana and Haryana, will participate in it.
- The festival is part of our efforts to bring together tribal artists from different regions of the country. Encourage them and ensure that arts forms are showcased to the people. It's a way to preserve the great cultural traditions of India.
- This Festival was inaugurated by Former Deputy CM, Kevinder Gupta, S D Singh Jamwal and senior Journalist Sohail Kazmi was also Present.

Udyog Manthan being organized from Jan 4 to March 2

- **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade** is organizing **Udyog Manthan** - a marathon of focused sector-specific webinars for promoting Quality and Productivity in Indian Industry.
- It got underway **Jan 4** and will go on till **2nd of March**.

- Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will chair the session.
- The webinar series comprising 45 sessions will cover various major sectors in manufacturing and services. Each webinar will be a two-hour session involving discussions led by sectoral and industry experts in a particular sector.
- Participants will include representatives from industry, testing and standardization bodies.

Prasar Bharati digital channels grow 100% in 2020

- **Digital channels of Prasar Bharati** have registered more than **100 percent growth** in 2020, with Pakistan being the second highest digital audience for Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR).
- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting stated the channels across Doordarshan and Akashvani clocked over a billion digital views and over six billion digital watch minutes in the year.
- During 2020, Pakistan accounted for the second highest digital audience for DD and AIR content after domestic audience.
- During 2020, Prasar Bharati's mobile application 'NewsOnAir' added more than 2.5 million users with the platform registering over 300 million views.
- Prasar Bharati Archives and DD Kisan have been steady digital performers featuring in top 10.

Toycathon 2021 launched to promote manufacturing of indigenous toys

- Union Education Minister **Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'** and Union Minister for Textiles and Women & Child Development **Smriti Zubin Irani** jointly launched the **Toycathon 2021**.
- **Aim** : This Toycathon is aimed to conceptualize innovative toys based on the Indian value system which will inculcate the positive behaviour and good value among the children.
- The Toycathon will majorly focus on conceptualizing new and innovative toys using local material which are economical, affordable, safe and environment friendly.
- The grand finale of the event will be organized from **23rd to 25th of February**.
- There will be two categories for the Toycathon, one is for online toys and another for physical toys.
- The 'Toycathon' will have three variants of tracks Junior Level, Senior Level and Startup Level and will allow participation of students and teachers from schools, colleges and universities, apart from start-ups and toy experts.

India sets up high-level group for South Asia energy security

- The government has set up a high-level group headed by former Union power secretary **Ram Vinay Shahi** and tasked it with helping build a **South Asia-focused energy security architecture**.
- The high-level group, named the **South Asia Group for Energy (SAGE)**, has been set up under the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)-run think tank Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).
- The objective is to achieve a balanced and optimal development of energy infrastructure through mutual understanding and cooperation. SAGE will have the role of promoting, initiating and facilitating effective policy dialogue and capacity building on bilateral, sub-regional and regional basis for energy and related issues, among South Asian countries."

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal launches Freight Business Development Portal

- Railway Minister **Piyush Goyal** launched a **Freight Business Development Portal** as a one stop solution for all the needs of freight customers.
- The new portal will be a game changer in ensuring ease of doing business with Railways.
- The portal will ensure that best services are available to the clients.
- The portal has been designed to replace physical processes with online ones to minimize the need of human to human interaction.
- The portal can be accessed by logging on to Indian Railways web site <https://indianrailways.gov.in/> or <https://www.fois.indianrail.gov.in/RailSAHAY>

Centre decided to form a committee to develop Ladakh

- The Centre has decided to form a committee to protect the **language, culture and land of Ladakh** and ensure citizen's participation in the Union Territory's development.
- The Committee will be headed by the **Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy** and will include elected representatives from Ladakh, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, central government, and the Ladakh administration.
- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** met a 10-member delegation from Ladakh who expressed their views about the need to protect Ladakh's unique cultural identity.
- The delegation also spoke about the geographic location and strategic importance of Ladakh, its demographic changes and the need for generating more employment opportunities in the UT.

Govt. gave nod to form a management committee of Human-Wildlife Conflict across the country

- The Standing Committee of **National Board of Wildlife (SC-NBWL)** in its **60th meeting** has approved the advisory for management of **Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC)** in the country.
- The advisory makes important prescriptions for the States/ Union Territories for dealing with Human-Wildlife conflict situations and seeks expedited inter-departmental coordinated and effective actions.
- The advisory envisages empowering gram panchayats in dealing with the problematic wild animals as per the **section 11 (1) (b) of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.**
- Utilising add-on coverage under **the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna** for crop compensation against crop damage due to HWC and augmenting fodder and water sources within the forest areas are some key steps envisaged to reduce HWC.
- Payment of a portion of ex-gratia as interim relief within **24 hours** of the incident to the victim/family.

PM Modi to inaugurate Rewari-Madar freight corridor

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will inaugurate the **306-km New Rewari-New Madar section** of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC)

- PM Modi will also flag off the **world's first Double Stack Long Haul 1.5km** container train hauled by electric traction from Haryana's Ateli to Kishangarh in Rajasthan.

India-Germany Leaders' held a Video-Tele conference

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** held a video-teleconference with his German counterpart Federal Chancellor **Dr. Angela Merkel**.
- Mr Modi appreciated the long-standing role of Chancellor Merkel in providing stable and strong leadership at the European and global stage and thanked her for guiding the growth of the **India-Germany Strategic Partnership**.
- The two leaders discussed key issues of mutual importance including the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, bilateral ties, regional and global issues, particularly India-EU relations.
- **This year marks the 70th anniversary of setting up bilateral relations** between India and Germany and **20th anniversary of the Strategic Partnership**, the two leaders agreed to hold the sixth Inter-Governmental Consultations at an early date in 2021 and to set an ambitious agenda for the same.

Health Minister releases India report on LASI Wave-1

- Health Minister **Dr. Harsh Vardhan** released India report on **Longitudinal Ageing Study of India (LASI) Wave-1** on the virtual platform.
- LASI is a full-scale national survey of scientific investigation of the **health, economic, and social determinants and consequences of population** ageing in India.
- Highlighting the importance of the report, Dr Harsh Vardhan said, in the 2011 census, the 60 plus population accounted for 8.6 per cent of India's population, accounting for 103 million elderly people.
- Growing at around three per cent annually, the number of elderly people will rise to 319 million in 2050.
- He said, 75 per cent of the elderly people suffer from some chronic diseases.
- About 40 per cent of the elderly people have one or the other disability and 20 per cent have issues related to mental health.

Finance Minister reviews progress of NIP implementation

- Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** reviewed the progress of National Infrastructure Pipeline, NIP implementation in New Delhi.
- The agenda of the meeting was to discuss the progress of **NIP projects**, expenditure incurred so far and the initiatives taken to expedite the project implementation.
- This was the second review meeting by the Finance Minister with various Ministries and Departments to monitor and accelerate NIP project implementation.
- Despite the COVID pandemic, the NIP has managed to achieve substantial progress.
- The NIP was launched with 6,835 projects, which is now expanded to more than 7,300 projects.

CSIR-NPL celebrates its 75th Foundation Day

- The **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi** delivered the inaugural address at the **National Metrology Conclave 2021** organized by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) -National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL), New Delhi on its **75th year of inception**.
- This special day as its NPL Foundation Day Celebrations, CSIR-NPL organised a National Metrology Conclave.
- The theme of the conclave was 'Metrology for the Inclusive Growth of the Nation'.
- Dr. D.K. Aswal is Director, CSIR- National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL), New Delhi

Govt. aims to launch seaplane services with airline operators

- The project execution and implementation would be through **Sagarmala Development Company Ltd (SDCL)**, which is under the administrative control of the ministry.
- The government is in the process to launch seaplane services on several routes, including **Delhi-Ayodhya**, in collaboration with the airline operators, the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.
- The development follows the launch of a seaplane service between **Kevadia and Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad** by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 31, 2020.
- The seaplane services to facilitate faster and **hassle-free travel across the country** will prove to be a game-changer.

Karnataka CM launches Krishi Sanjeevani vans to test soil, water & suggest remedies for pest control

- On January 07, 2021, Karnataka Chief Minister **B.S. Yediyurappa** launched **Krishi Sanjeevani vans in Bengaluru**.
- This is Mainly for to help farmers in their own backyards.
- As part of this scheme, **40 mobile agro clinics** were rolled from outside the Vidhana Soudha.
- The main objective of this project is to reduce the cost of production.
- In addition to that to provide farmers with accurate information on improved agriculture production technologies, supply of quality agricultural tools and adequate use of recommended fertilisers, pest and disease management, and nutrients available in the soil.
- This initiative is part of the National Agricultural Development Scheme 2020-21. These labs will also help the government conduct surveys at all stages of crop production and inform the farmers about the possible pest attacks, disease and weed management practices.
- The state government has rolled out 40 labs, each lab for 31 districts, while some big districts like Mysuru, Bengaluru Rural and Shivamogga will get two labs.

India to chair three-key subsidiary committees of UNSC

- **Permanent Representative of India at the United Nations Security Council, TS Tirumurti** announced, India will be chairing three-key subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- The panels are: Counter-Terrorism Committee (for 2022), Taliban Sanctions Committee, and Libya Sanctions committee.
- India will chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee of **UNSC in 2022**.

- Mr Tirumurti said, chairing of this committee has a special resonance for India which has not only been at the forefront of fighting terrorism especially cross border terrorism but has also been one of its biggest victims.
- He said, Taliban Sanctions Committee has always been a high priority for India keeping in minds its strong interest and commitment to peace, security, development, and progress of Afghanistan.
- Mr Tirumurti said, India will be assuming the chair of the Libya Sanctions Committee at a critical juncture when there is an international focus on Libya and on the peace process.

EAM conclude his three-day visit to Sri Lanka

- **External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar** has concluded his three-day visit to Sri Lanka.
- The Indian Embassy in Sri Lanka thanked the Foreign Minister of the Island Nation, **Dinesh Gunawardena** for making the visit a huge success.
- Dr. Jaishankar held a productive meeting with **Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda**.
- The External Affairs Minister said, they reviewed cooperation in fisheries after the recent **Joint Working Group** session and added that they look forward to working with him closely.
- Dr. Jaishankar also met the Tamil National Alliance and the Tamil Progressive Alliance delegations.
- He discussed issues pertaining to development and devolution and the role of Provincial Councils.
- The Minister also interacted with business leaders of Lanka and appreciated their insights and suggestions on **economic cooperation**.

Centre says, over 3 crore new connections grant under Jal Jeevan Mission

- Central govt. has said that over **three crore new connections** have been provided under **Jal Jeevan Mission**.
- On reviewing a Flagship programme of jal jevan mission, **Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Rattanlal Kataria** informed that since Independence till August 2019, a total of 3.23 Crore rural households out of 18.93 crore rural households had tap water connections.
- Jal Jeevan mission has set an ambitious yet achievable target of giving piped water connections to each and every rural household with an approach ensuring - '**No one is left out**'.
- Mr Kataria informed that **Goa is the first State** to provide 100 per cent piped connection.
- He said, so far 27 Districts, 458 blocks, 33,516 Gram Panchayats, 66,210 villages have been declared to have achieved 'Har Ghar Jal'.
- Recently, **Kurukshetra became the 27th District** in India and **3rd in Haryana** to have achieved this target.
- Telangana, Gujarat, Haryana, and Puducherry are close to achieving 100 per cent coverage.
- He credited the success primarily to the people of these villages, Gram Panchayats, Paani Samitis, public health authorities and other stakeholders, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Mizoram, UT of Andaman and Nicobar.

Education Minister states that NEP-2020 is revolutionary in all aspects

- Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' has emphasized that the National Education Policy, NEP-2020, is revolutionary in all aspects.

- The Education Minister said this while inaugurating the two-day Virtual International Akhand Conference 'EDUCON 2020' through video conferencing.
- It focuses on multiple aspects of promoting mother language at primary level education, imparting vocational skills training for students at the secondary level and other innovative reforms.
- He further stated that NEP emphasizes on the inter-disciplinary studies and integrated course curriculum in higher education for wider learning opportunities, with an aim to provide value-based holistic education, development of scientific temper and imparting skill training to youngsters.

Rs 69,000 crore allocated for SC students

- Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale has said that the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has allocated Rs.69,000 crore for the Post Matric scholarship of SC students for the next five years.
- 1 crore 30 lakh SC students will be enrolled for higher education and skill training under this scheme in the next five years.
- He said, Modi government is planning to give overseas scholarships to **100 SC students every year**, whose annual family income is below 8 lakh rupees.
- Mr Athvale said that the Modi government is also running various schemes for 2 crore 67 lakh Divyang people including 32 lakh in Gujarat under the **Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan**.

Rastriya Kamdhenu Aayog announces Kamdhenu Gau-Vigyan Prachar-Prasar Exam

- **Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog (RKA)**, the government body set up for **cow welfare** has announced that it will hold a countrywide online examination on '**gau vigyan**' (**cow science**) on **February 25**.
- There will be no fee for the examination.
- The exam will be held in 12 regional languages apart from Hindi and English.
- The duration will be one hour and there will be 4 categories :
- Primary level up to 8th standard,
- Secondary level from class 9th to class 12th,
- College level after 12th+
- For the general public.
- RKA comes under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
- It was set up by the Centre in February 2019, and is aimed at "conservation, protection and development of cows and their progeny".

Sagarmala Seaplane Project Services Commenced

- **The Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways** has recently started the operations of the seaplane services, on several routes.
- It is being implemented under a **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** framework through prospective airline operators.

- The implementation and execution of the **"Sagarmala Seaplane Services (SSPS)"** would be through the SPV with the Sagarmala Development Company Ltd, SDCL, under the control of the Ministry of Shipping.
- The proposed Origin-Destination pairs under Hub and Spoke model include various islands of Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep, the Guwahati Riverfront & Umranso Reservoir in Assam, Yamuna Riverfront/Delhi (as Hub) to Ayodhya, Tehri, Srinagar (Uttarakhand), Chandigarh and many other tourist places of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.
- One such Seaplane Service is already in operation between Kevadia and Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 31, 2020.

I&B Minister launches Diary App

- Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar launched the Government's Digital Calendar and Diary App in New Delhi.
- Mr Javadekar said, paperless governance has come to offices and files are now moving as **e-files**.
- The digital calendar inaugurated and available in Hindi and English, but it will be available in **11 languages** from 15th January 2021.
- He said, the calendar has a theme for every month and it will also have all information of 100 revolutionary programmes of the government.
- The GOI Calendar and the Diary App is available for download on both **Google Play store and iOS App Store**.
- The app has been designed and developed by the Bureau of Outreach and Communication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- The app will do away with the need for a new calendar every year.

World's largest repatriation exercise Vande Bharat Mission made operational

- The **World's largest repatriation exercise Vande Bharat Mission** has brought back more than 44.7 lakh people since May 2020.
- **The Phase-9 of Vande Bharat Mission** has been made operational from 1st January and 1,495 international flights have been scheduled which will be operated from **24 countries**.
- Ministry of External Affairs Spokesman Anurag Srivastava said, it will facilitate the return of 2.8 lakh people.
- He announced 261 of these flights have been operated and facilitated the return of 49 thousand people from 19 countries.

NIXI provides free Domain in any Indian languages

- The **National Internet Exchange of India**, NIXI has announced that it will offer a free **Internationalized Domain Name, IDN** in any of the **preferred 22 official Indian language** along with every IN domain booked by the registrant.
- Applicant will also get a **free email** in local language.
- This offer has been created to stimulate the adoption of **IDN domain name** and **proliferation of local language content**.

- This offer is valid for new .in users who **register up to 31st of January**.
- This offer is also extended to those existing in users who renew their domain in the month of January 2021.

Centre merges J&K cadre officers with AGMUT

- In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the Central govt. has merged J&K cadre for all India Services - IAS, IPS and IFS officers with that of **Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram and Union Territory (AGMUT)**, also called the Union Territory cadre, through an ordinance.
- It says officers **“so borne or allocated”** on AGMUT cadre shall function in accordance with rules framed by the Centre.
- **Sub-Section (2) of Section 88 of the Act** stated that members of IAS, IPS and IFS cadres “for the existing State of Jammu and Kashmir, on and from the appointed day, shall continue to function on the existing cadres.”
- The ordinance has also made an addition in **Section 13**, inserting the words “or any other article containing reference to elected members of the Legislative Assembly of the State” after **“in Article 239A”**.

PM Modi to head panel to commemorate 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

- On Jan 09, 2021, **A high-level committee** headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was formed to commemorate the **125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose**.
- The members include 10 Union ministers and seven chief ministers who will decide on the activities to be undertaken for the year-long commemoration planned by the government.
- The committee will decide on the activities for a year-long commemoration, beginning on January 23, 2021.
- The committee will lend guidance to the commemoration activities in Delhi, Kolkata and other places associated with Netaji and the Azad Hind Fauj, both in India as well as overseas.
- The members of the committee include distinguished citizens, historians, authors, experts, family members of Subhas Chandra Bose, as well as eminent persons associated with the **Azad Hind Fauj (INA)**.

Centre provide guidelines - Migrant Children

- The **Education Ministry** has issued guidelines for identification, admission and continued education of migrant children.
- The guidelines highlight for continuation of **non-residential training** for identified out of school children through volunteers, local teachers and community participation.
- **States and UTs** to carry out proper identification of OoSC for **6 to 18 years age group** through a comprehensive door to door survey and prepare action plan for their enrolment.
- It also stressed to undertake awareness generation among parents and community for enrolling and attendance of children.
- The main features of the guidelines are identifying **out of school children, continued education for out of school children (OoSC) and children** with special needs and enrolment drives and awareness generation.
- **Union education minister:** Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'

Javadekar says nearly Rs1,200 cr to be spent for safe movement of wildlife on National Highway

- **Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar** has said that over **Rs.1,200 crore** will be spent by the **Road Transport and Highways Ministry** to create infrastructure for safe movement of wildlife on the National Highway.
- This includes construction of underpasses on the Nagpur-Jabalpur National Highway which passes through the Pench National Park and also at highways including Gadchiroli-Chandrapur and Chimur-Vadodara.

National Youth Parliament Festival 2021

- **National Youth Parliament Festival, 2021** will be held in the Central Hall of Parliament.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the Valedictory Function of **second National Youth Parliament Festival, 2021** through video conferencing.
- The first three winners will get an opportunity to speak before the Prime Minister.
- The Prime Minister will also interact with the youth on the occasion.
- **84 winners from States and Union Territories** will get an opportunity to be present in the Central Hall of Parliament before the Lok Sabha Speaker, Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha along with Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju and other dignitaries.
- **29 National winners** will get an opportunity to speak before the National Jury comprising of Rajya Sabha MP Roopa Ganguly, Lok Sabha MP Parvesh Sahib Singh and eminent journalist Prafulla Ketkar.

Govt issues guidelines for renewal of International Driving License while travelling abroad

- **The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** has issued a notification to facilitate the issuance of International Driving Permit (IDP) for Indian citizens whose IDP has expired while they are abroad.
- There was no mechanism for its renewal while citizens were abroad and their IDP expired.
- After this amendment, Indian citizens can apply for renewal through Indian Embassies and Missions abroad, from where these applications will move to the **VAHAN portal** in India, to be considered by the concerned **Road Transport Officers (RTOs)**.
- The International Driving Permit will be couriered to the citizen at his or her address abroad by the respective RTOs.
- The Ministry said that the notification also removes the conditions of a Medical Certificate and a valid visa at the time of making the request for the IDP in India.
- The idea is that a citizen who has a valid driving license should not have a requirement for another medical certificate.
- Further, there are countries where the Visa is issued on arrival or Visa is issued at the last moment and in such cases, VISA is not available when applying for the IDP in India before travel.
- Therefore, IDP applications can now be made without **VISA**.

India: Second largest manufacturer of PPE kits and suits

- **Union Minister for textile and women and child development Smriti Irani** has said that India has become the second largest manufacturer of PPE kits and suits in the world in record three months' time during the corona virus induced lockdown in March 2020.
- She was speaking after inaugurating - **Surat International Textile Expo -SITEX at Surat**, the Gujarat's first physical exhibition after Covid19.
- Speaking on this occasion, the Union Minister of state for women and child welfare **Debasree Chaudhuri** has said that industrial revolution can be brought in West Bengal, if it follows the Gujarat model.

Indian Railways attains a train speed of 130 kmph on Golden Quadrilateral - Golden Diagonal route

- Indian Railways has started the New Year by achieving a landmark to enhance the maximum speed to **130 kmph** for **1,280 km length out of 1,612 Km** in Golden Quadrilateral - Golden Diagonal route.
- This covers the entire GQ-GD route over South Central Railway, except Vijayawada - Duvvada section, where signaling up gradation work is in progress.
- This included heavier rails, laying of **260 meters** long welded rail panels, improvement of curves and gradients among others.
- **Piyush Goyal** is the Union minister for Railways and Minister of Railways and Minister of Commerce & Industry in the Government of India.

Health Minister dedicates coastal research vessel to Nation

- **Union Health Minister Dr.Harsh Vardhan** dedicates coastal research vessel to Nation at **Chennai Port Trust** and said that the Central Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been creating milestones in every field.
- Speaking at the **Sagar Anveshika** dedication function at the **Chennai Port Trust** he said that **Prime Minister's Atma Nirbhar schemes** have helped Indian scientists to formulate research activity in deep ocean research.
- **SAGAR ANVESHKA**, a very complex platform which will enable scientists to conduct various oceanographic research missions aboard, will house state of the art laboratories equipped with modern scientific instruments.
- Indian scientists were the **first in the world** to isolate the Corona virus and begin genome sequencing of the virus braving the fight against Covid in an intelligent manner.

Preeti Pant Panel to Study NFHS-5 Findings

- The **Health and Family Welfare Ministry** has set up a technical expert group to examine the adverse findings from the **National Family Health Survey-5**.
- The Union Ministry has set up the technical committee of medicine and nutrition experts under the leadership of **Joint Secretary Preeti Pant**.
- The expert group also includes State programme officers from **Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka**.

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

Japan Commits Rs 2113 Crore Support for COVID relief efforts

- **Japan** has committed **Official Development Assistance (ODA)** loan of an amount of **JPY 30 billion (about ₹2,113 crore)** to support India's efforts at providing social assistance to the poor and vulnerable households severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- This programme loan aims to support India's efforts to provide coordinated and adequate social protection to the poor and vulnerable across the country against the severe impact of Covid-19 pandemic.
- India and Japan have had a long history of bilateral development cooperation since 1958.
- In the last few years, the economic cooperation between India and Japan has grown into strategic partnership.

Home Minister Amit Shah launches 'Single Window Clearance System' for coal mines

- Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** launched the '**Single Window Clearance System**', an online platform to obtain clearances for smooth operationalisation of coal mines.
- It will be an online platform to obtain clearances for smooth operationalisation of coal mines.
- The Coal Sector has the potential to be the biggest contributor towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Vision of making India a **5 trillion dollar economy by 2024**.
- This will give the states an estimated revenue of about Rs 6500 crore per year and will also create more than 70,000 Jobs.

RS Sharma, former Trai chief, to head empowered panel for Covid-19 vaccine

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

Two-day coastal defence drill 'Sea Vigil-21' kicks off

- The second edition of the biennial pan-India coastal defence exercise 'Sea Vigil-21' will be conducted on 12-13 January 2021.

- It will involve all the 13 coastal states and Union Territories along with other maritime stakeholders.
- And That will cover the country's 7,516 km coastline and exclusive economic zone.
- The exercise is being coordinated by the Indian Navy.
- The entire coastal security set up was reorganised after the 26/11 Terror attack at Mumbai which was launched via the sea route.
- SEA VIGIL 21' will provide a realistic assessment of our strengths and weaknesses and thus will help in further strengthening maritime and national security.
- The exercise is a build up towards the major Theatre level exercise TROPEX [Theatre-level Readiness Operational Exercise] which Indian Navy conducts every two years.

Tesla Sets up India subsidiary in Bangalore

- Elon Musk-owned electric vehicle (EV) company Tesla has registered a fully-owned subsidiary in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- The firm is looking at setting up an **R&D facility** and eventually an assembly plant.
- Tesla's global senior director David Jon Feinstein, chief accounting officer Vaibhav Taneja and Bengaluru-based entrepreneur Venkatrangam Sreeram are on the board of the India unit, Tesla India Motors and Energy Pvt Ltd.
- The total paid up capital of the company is Rs 1,00,000 and authorised share capital is Rs 15 lakhs.

Aviation services launched between Chandigarh and Hisar

- **Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar** launched an air taxi service between Chandigarh and Hisar from the Chandigarh International Airport under the UDAN scheme of the central government.
- **The airline Aviation Connectivity & Infrastructure Developers Pvt. Ltd (Air Taxi)** was awarded the Hisar – Chandigarh – Hisar route under the UDAN 4 bidding process.
- The airline has become the first startup airline of the country to assist the nation with Air Taxi services.
- These UDAN flights will reduce the journey time between Hisar to Chandigarh from 4.50 hours to a comfortable 45 minutes journey that too at an affordable fare since financial incentives in the form of Viability Gap Funding (VGF) is being provided from the Centre, State governments & airport operators to selected airlines to encourage operations from unserved and underserved airports under the scheme.
- The air service will start from Hisar to Dehradun on January 18 and from Hisar to Dharamshala on January 23.

Rajnath Singh unveils India's first indigenously developed driverless metro car

- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** unveiled the country's first indigenously designed and developed Driverless Metro Car at the BEML manufacturing facility in Bengaluru.
- The indigenously designed & developed state-of-the-art **Driverless Metro trains** are being manufactured at BEML Bangalore manufacturing facility, for Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA).
- BEML bagged a total order of **576 cars** for Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA)'s MRS1 project and the supply is scheduled progressively up to January 2024.

- BEML recently opened its Depot office at Charkop Metro Depot, MMRDA, Mumbai for commissioning, testing and round-the-clock services for Driverless Metro cars.

PM Modi rolls out world's largest vaccination drive for COVID-19

- India launched the much awaited, world's largest COVID-19 vaccination programme.
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** launched the programme through video conferencing.
- A total of **3006 session sites** across all states and union territories will be virtually connected during the launch.
- In the first phase government and private sector health care workers, including Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) workers, will receive the vaccine.
- The drive aims to first inoculate millions of its healthcare and frontline workers and reach an estimated 3 crore people by the end of its first phase.

NIC and CBSE to jointly launch CollabCAD Software

- **National Informatics Centre and Central Board of Secondary Education**, CBSE will jointly launch **CollabCAD Software** to provide a total engineering solution for students and Faculty of Engineering Graphics Curriculum.
- **Aim** : To provide a great platform to students across the country to create and modify **3D digital designs with a free flow of creativity and imagination**.
- This software will also enable students to collaborate over designs across the network and concurrently access the same design data for storage and visualization.
- National Informatics Centre, NIC, CBSE, and Atal Innovation Mission will also jointly release a comprehensive e-book on CollabCAD 3D modeling.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan dedicates an Innovation Portal developed By NIF

- The Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, Health & Family Welfare **Dr. Harsh Vardhan** dedicated an Innovation Portal, developed by **National Innovation Foundation (NIF) India, an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, to the nation, in New Delhi**.
- The National Innovation Portal(NIP) is currently home to about **1.15 lakh** innovations scouted from common people of the country, covering Engineering, Agriculture, Veterinary and Human Health.
- Innovation Portal is a step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat and an excellent resource for students, entrepreneurs, **MSME's, Technology Business Incubators (TBI's)** and common people engaged in a variety of occupations.
- This Innovation Portal will help institutionalise new ideas by common people towards finding solutions to local problems.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal inaugurates the Prarambh Startup India International Summit

- The two day '**Prarambh**', Startup India International Summit began in New Delhi, with members of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) countries participating in the inaugural event.
- It was inaugurated by the union minister for railways, consumer affairs, commerce and industry Piyush Goyal.

Due to Covid-19 situation, no foreign leader as chief guest on Republic Day

- The ministry of external affairs confirmed that there will be no foreign head of state or government as the chief guest for the Republic Day event on January 26.
- This will be the first time in over five decades that the Republic Day celebrations would not have a foreign dignitary as the chief guest.
- Earlier, United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson had accepted India's invitation to attend the Republic Day event as the chief guest. However, the Britain PM cancelled his visit after the spread of the new contagious mutant strain of the novel coronavirus in his country.
- Following Johnson's decision to call off his visit, reports had started doing rounds that said that Indian-origin President of Republic of Suriname, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, would be invited as the chief guest at India's Republic Day parade this year.

PM announces Rs 1,000-crore 'Startup India Seed Fund'

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the launch of **Rs 1,000-crore 'Startup India Seed Fund'** to support startups and help budding entrepreneurs pursue innovative ideas.
- Modi stated in 2014 there were only four startups in the unicorn club, but today there are more than 30.
- This initiative will help in building up new startups and promote their growth.
- The action plan of this initiative is focussing on **three areas**:
- Simplification and Handholding.
- Funding Support and Incentives.
- Industry-Academia Partnership and Incubation.

Petroleum & Natural Gas Ministry launches SAKSHAM campaign to spread awareness about green energy

- **The Petroleum and Natural Gas** Ministry launched a month-long mass awareness campaign '**SAKSHAM**' to spread awareness about green and clean energy.
- The Secretary Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Chairman, **PCRA Shri Tarun Kapoor** launched the campaign.
- The campaign through various pan-India activities such as cyclothon, farmer workshops, seminars, painting competition, CNG vehicle driving contest, etc will spread awareness among masses about the advantages of using clean fuels.

PM flags off 8 trains to boost connectivity to Statue of Unity

- On Jan 17, 2021, Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** **flagged off eight trains** connecting different regions of the country to Kevadiya with an aim to **facilitate seamless connectivity** to the **Statue of Unity in Gujarat**.
- Gujarat chief minister **Vijay Rupani** and Union railways minister Piyush Goyal were also present on the occasion.
- These trains will connect Kevadia to Varanasi, Dadar, Ahmedabad, Hazrat Nizamuddin, Rewa, Chennai and Pratapnagar.

- PM Modi also inaugurated the Dabhoi Chandod converted broad gauge railway line, Chandod Kevadia new broad gauge rail line, newly electrified Pratapnagar Kevadia section and the new station buildings of Dabhoi, Chandod and Kevadia.

Nitin Gadkari inaugurates Road Safety Month

- Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, **Nitin Gadkari**, inaugurated **Road Safety Month** where he highlighted the Central Government's commitment towards safety.
- National Road Safety Month to be held from **January 18 to February 17, 2021** and India accounts for **11 percent of accident-related fatalities** worldwide
- The function was launched by Union Minister for Defence, Rajnath Singh and Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways & MSME, Nitin Gadkari. The Minister of State for RTH, Gen (Retd) VK Singh and CEO, NITI Aayog, Amitabh Kant also participated.
- The initiative aims to build awareness about road safety and reduce road accidents in the country. It will be held till 17 February 2021.
- Globally India is one of the worst-hit nations when it comes to road accidents. India accounts for about 5 lakh road accidents annually, one of the highest in the world, in which about 1.5 lakh people die and another 3 lakh become crippled.
- Centre is also taking several measures to reduce road accidents by Restructuring and Strengthening 4E's of Road safety, which are:
 - Engineering
 - Education
 - Enforcement
 - Emergency care Services

DRDO hands over MotorBike Ambulance Rakshita to CRPF

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation** handed over MotorBike Ambulance Rakshita to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).
- Director General of **CRPF Dr A P Maheshwari** flagged off the contingent of 21 bikes on the occasion.
- It is a bike-based casualty transport emergency vehicle.
- It was Developed by DRDO lab Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) in New Delhi.
- Rakshita is fitted with a customized reclining Casualty Evacuation Seat (CES), which can be fitted in and taken out as per requirement.
- Other major features are the head immobilizer, safety harness jacket, hand and foot straps for safety, adjustable footrest, physiological parameter measuring equipment with wireless monitoring capability and auto warning system for the driver.

Defence Secretary inaugurates Swachhata Pakhwada organised by NCC at India Gate

- **Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar** inaugurated **Swachhata Pakhwada** organised by National Cadet Corps, NCC at India Gate.
- The theme of this Swachhata Pakhwada is 'Clean India, Green India, Yeh Hai Mera Dream India'.
- It has contributed immensely towards nation building, through activities such as 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat' and Special National Integration Camps, Leadership and Personality Development and Swachhata Abhiyan Programmes.
- During the Swachhata Pakhwada the NCC cadets will keep Rajpath clean for the Republic Day Parade - 2021 by spreading awareness through displaying banners, distribution of pamphlets and showcasing Swachhata through Nukkad Nataks

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju assigned additional charge of Ministry of AYUSH

- Union Minister **Kiren Rijiju** has been assigned the additional charge of the Ministry of AYUSH.
- During the hospitalization and treatment of **AYUSH Minister Shripad Naik** following a road accident
- The President has directed that this arrangement may continue till Mr Naik resumes his work related to the Ministry of AYUSH.
- The President of India, as advised by the Prime Minister, has directed that during the hospitalization and treatment of Shripad Yesso Naik, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH); and Minister of State in Ministry of Defence, following a road accident, his portfolio related to Ministry of AYUSH, be temporarily assigned to Kiren Rijiju, Minister of State (Independent Charge) in addition to his existing portfolios."

MoRTH notifies Inter Country Transport Vehicles Rules 2021

- **The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has notified Inter Country Transport Vehicles Rules, 2021** which would facilitate and regulate the movement of passenger and goods vehicles between India and neighbouring countries.
- As per the rules, the **State Transport Authority** has been given the power to grant the Inter Country Transport Permit after thoroughly examining the application.
- The permit will remain valid for a period of one year from the date of its issue and it will be renewable for a period of five years on a yearly basis.
- The State Transport Department will take care of formalities like provisioning of tickets, debugging of bus, frisking or checking of passengers, handling of luggage before departure from the designated place. The frequency can be reviewed by the State Transport Department and it can be increased as per the demand.
- The decision has been taken considering the requests made by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to notify rules under provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act 1988 to facilitate movement of vehicles carrying goods and passengers between India and neighbouring countries.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurates LNG truck-loading unit of Shell India in Gujarat

- Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated the LNG truck-loading unit of Shell India at Hazira, Gujarat.
- The unit will boost availability of natural gas in off-grid areas where there are no gas pipelines. It will also promote the use of LNG in long-haul trucking.
- Increasing competition in the **LNG sector** will help in emergence of new markets, creating new employment opportunities, ensure cleaner fuels for industries and facilitate environment conservation.
- This is another big step towards a cleaner and greener future for India.
- The LNG sector will help in the emergence of new markets, create new employment opportunities, ensure cleaner fuels for industries and facilitate environment conservation.

Bhawana Kanth to become the 1st woman fighter pilot to take part in R Day parade

- Flight lieutenant **Bhawana Kanth** is set to become the **first woman fighter pilot** to take part in the **Republic Day parade**.
- She will be a part of the **Indian Air Force's (IAF's)** tableau that will showcase mock-ups of the light combat aircraft, light combat helicopter and the Sukhoi-30 fighter plane.
- She is currently posted at an airbase in Rajasthan where she flies the MiG-21 Bison fighter plane.
- Kanth is also one of the first women fighter pilots in the IAF.
- She, along with Avani Chaturvedi and Mohana Singh, was inducted into the IAF as the first women fighter pilots in 2016.
- Ten women have been commissioned as fighter pilots after an experimental scheme for their induction into the IAF's combat stream was introduced in 2015.

India's 2021 Republic Day parade

- The newly inducted **Rafale fighter aircraft** will feature in India's Republic Day parade on January 26 and culminate the flypast by carrying out the '**Vertical Charlie**' formation.
- A total of **38 IAF aircraft** and four planes of the Indian Army will participate in the flypast on January 26,
- The flypast will be divided into two blocks
- In the first block, there will be three formations. The first will be the '**Nishan**' formation consisting of four Mi17V5 aircraft that will carry the national flag and logos of all three services.

28 non-official members nominated to startup council

- The government has nominated 28 non-official members on the **National Startup Advisory Council**.
- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** had set up the National Startup Advisory Council a year back to advise the government on measures needed to build an ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country.
- The term of the non-official members of the council is for a period of two years.

Niti aayog releases report on faecal sludge and septage management in urban areas

- NITI Aayog released a book on faecal sludge and septage management in urban areas.
- It is Jointly developed with National Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (NFSSM) Alliance.
- The book presents 27 case studies across 10 states and various service and business models adopted by Indian cities while implementing faecal sludge and septage management (FSSM) initiatives.
- The book was released by NITI Aayog CEO Mr Amitabh Kant, MoHUA Secretary Mr Durga Shankar Mishra, and NITI Aayog Additional Secretary Dr K. Rajeswara Rao in a virtual event.
- The target of open-defecation-free, India has now moved towards becoming ODF+ and ODF++
- This book provides a timely repository of FSSM best practices that can be adapted and replicated appropriately across the country.

DRDO and Road Transport and Highways Ministry sign MoU for technical exchange on sustainable geo-hazard management

- Road Transport and Highways Ministry and Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen collaboration in the field of technical exchange and co-operation on sustainable geo-hazard management.
- The MoU was signed by Secretary Ministry of Road and Transport **Giridhar Aramane** and Secretary DRDO Dr **Satieesh Reddy**.
- It has been agreed that both will cooperate in the areas of mutual benefit including, conceptual planning of integrated avalanche and landslide protection schemes for all weather connectivity in snow bound areas of the country.
- This initiative will ensure safety of road users on National Highways in the country and safeguard them from the adverse effects of landslides and other natural calamities.

Cabinet approval - Ratle Hydro Power Project in J&K

- The Cabinet has given its approval for the investment of over **Rs.5200 crore** for **850 MW Ratle Hydro Electric (HE) Project located on river Chenab, in Kishtwar** in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- This will be a new Joint Venture Company (JVC) of **National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC)** and **Jammu and Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Ltd (JKSPDC)** with equity contribution of 51 per cent and 49 per cent respectively.
- The construction activities of the Project will provide direct and indirect employment to around **4000 persons** and will contribute immensely in the overall socio-economic development of Jammu and Kashmir.

PM Modi releases financial assistance for UP under PMAY-G

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi released financial assistance of around **Rs 2,691 crore** to over six lakh beneficiaries in Uttar Pradesh under **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G)**, through video conferencing.
- The financial assistance includes release of first installment to 5.30 lakh beneficiaries and second installment to **80 thousand beneficiaries** who have already availed first installment of assistance under PMAY-G.

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna** has moved rapidly under the present government and has helped the poorest of the poor in Uttar Pradesh.
- He stressed on the aspect of **women empowerment** in the scheme as these units are mostly in the name of women of the family.

Meghalaya, Manipur & Tripura observes Statehood Day

- **President, Vice President and Prime Minister** have greeted the people of Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura on the occasion of their Statehood Day on January 21, 2021.
- President Ram Nath Kovind said, blessed with immense natural beauty, rich history and vibrant culture, these states are fascinating.
- He extended his warm wishes as they continue to move ahead on the path of multi-faceted development.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, the **culture and warm-hearted nature** of the people of Tripura is admired across India.
- The state has achieved outstanding progress in various fields.
- He said, India is proud of Manipur's contribution to national development.
- Manipur is a powerhouse of innovation and sporting talent.
- Mr Modi said, Meghalaya is known for its remarkable kindness and spirit of brotherhood.
- Youngsters from Meghalaya are creative and enterprising.

Indian Railways renames iconic Howrah-Kalka Mail as 'Netaji Express'

- **Indian Railways** in a tribute to freedom fighter Subhas Chandra Bose who is also known as '**Netaji**' has decided to rename the Howrah-Kalka Mail as '**Netaji Express**'
- The train first operated in the year 1866 and it has been in service of the nation for more than 150 years.
- The Howrah-Kalka Mail is one of the oldest running trains at present in the Indian Railways network.
- The Howrah-Kalka Mail runs between Howrah (Eastern Railway) and Kalka (Northern Railway) via Delhi.

India's longest Road Arch Bridge inaugurated in Meghalaya

- **Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K Sangma** inaugurated India's longest road arch bridge, the Wahrew Bridge at Sohbar in East Khasi Hills district.
- The bridge has been constructed at a cost of **Rs 49.395 crore** under Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) of the DoNER ministry.
- The bridge connects Bholaganj and Sohbar to Nongjri in East Khasi Hills, bordering Bangladesh.
- The **169 metre Wahrew** suspension bridge connects Bholaganj and Sohbar to Nongjri. The project was sanctioned in 2013 while work started the following year and was completed in December, 2018.

SC upholds IBC's Section 32A

- The **Supreme Court** held that the successful bidders for a corporate debtor under the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code** (IBC) would be immune from any investigations being conducted either by any investigating agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) or other statutory bodies such as Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- Successful bidders for corporate debtors under IBC would be immune from any investigations being conducted by any investigating agencies or Enforcement Directorate (ED).

DPIIT launches regulatory compliance portal

- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** has launched a regulatory compliance portal that will act as a bridge between citizens, industries and the government to minimise burdensome compliances.
- It will also act as a first-of-its-kind central online repository of all central and state-level compliances
- **Objective** : The objective of this portal is to act as a bridge between citizens, industries and the Government in order to minimize burdensome compliances.

Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the new 4-lane Thaltej-Shilaj-Rancharda railway overbridge in Ahmedabad

- The **Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah** inaugurated the new 4-lane Thaltej-Shilaj-Rancharda railway overbridge, in Ahmedabad city of Gujarat through video conferencing from New Delhi.
- It has been built at a cost of **Rs 55 crore**.
- Several dignitaries including Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Shri Nitin Patel were present at the programme

Modi address the inaugural function of Parakram Diwas in Kolkata

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will visit West Bengal to address the inaugural function of the '**Parakram Diwas**' celebrations at Victoria Memorial in Kolkata.
- The Prime Minister said, among the various programmes being organised across the nation, one special programme is being held at **Haripura in Gujarat**.
- He said, Haripura has a special relation with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.
- It was at the historic Haripura Session of 1938 that Netaji Bose took up the Presidentship of the Congress Party.

PM interact with Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar awardees

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will interact with **Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar awardees** through video conferencing.
- **32 children** have been awarded the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar this year.
- Women and Child Development Minister **Smriti Irani** will also be present on the occasion.
- The Government has been conferring the Bal Shakti Puraskar under Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar to the **children with exceptional abilities and outstanding achievement** in the fields of **innovation, sports, arts and culture, social service and bravery**.
- The awardees are from 32 districts of 21 States and Union territories.

Center extends Ayushman Bharat health scheme to CAPF

- Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** has launched the Ayushman CAPF health scheme in Guwahati for about **28 lakh Central Armed Police Forces** and their families in all the states where Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana is operational.
- Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, MoS Home Nityananda Rai, Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla were also present on this occasion.
- Mr. Shah paid tributes to **Netaji Subhash Bose**.
- He said it was a great occasion coinciding with the Parakram Diwas to start Ayushman Bharat scheme for the Central Armed Police Forces.

Amit Shah attends first BTR Accord Day celebration

- Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** has said that due to the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a new era of development and peace has prevailed in **Bodoland Territorial Region**.
- Addressing the opening ceremony of the 1st BTR (Bodoland Territorial Region) Accord Day celebration at Kokrajhar in Assam.
- Mr. Modi is committed for the development of North East and also did all measures to put an end to the era of violence in the region.
- He said that a peaceful region is required for development.
- The Home Minister mentioned that Mr. Modi took step to step terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.
- He said that **Rs.500 crore** have been sanctioned for the road development in BTR .

Home Minister Chair the Plenary session of North Eastern Council Meeting

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah is visiting Shillong to chair the 69th Plenary Meeting of the North Eastern Council (NEC).
- The meeting would be attended by the MoS (Independent Charge), Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER) and Vice-Chairman, Dr Jitender Singh and members of the NEC comprising Governors and Chief Ministers of the eight north-eastern States.
- Senior officials from north-eastern States and Central Government Ministries are also expected to be present.
- Mr. Shah will also launch the **Ayushman Bharat programme** for central armed police forces at Guwahati in Assam this evening.
- Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan will also attend the programme.
- Mr Shah will also attend the opening ceremony of the first anniversary of the BTR Accord at Kokrajhar.

UP becomes first state to have 2 airstrips on expressways for landing, take-off of fighter planes

- In UP, a new **3300 meter long airstrip** has been constructed near Kurebhar On Purvanchal Expressway.
- Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in the country with two airstrips on expressways to facilitate emergency landing and take-off of fighter planes.

- Airstrips on expressways are designed to facilitate emergency landing and take-off of fighter planes.
- One airstrip is on Lucknow-Agra Expressway while the other is on **Purvanchal Expressway**.

Indian Railways' longest freight train 'Vasuki' sets a new record

- **Indian Railways' South Eastern Central Railway (SECR)** zone has created another record when it operated the longest freight train on the Indian Railways network.
- The total length of the freight train was around **3.5 kilometers** after joining the five rakes and it was named 'Vasuki'.
- The distance between Bhilai to Korba is 224 kilometers and the long-haul freight train named 'Vasuki' covered the whole distance with **five rakes of a freight train**.
- SECR on 22 January operated the long haul rake of five freight trains named 'Vasuki' With the help of one loco pilot, one assistant loco pilot, and one guard.
- The train took around seven hours to cover the distance from Bhilai D cabin to Korba railway station.
- The Vasuki, comprising 300 wagons of long haul rakes of five goods trains, ran with the help of one pilot, one assistant Loco pilot and a guard.

Bharat Parv begins on virtual platform showcasing glory of nation

- **Bharat Parv 2021, a festival** to celebrate the spirit of India has begun on Jan 26, 2021.
- The festival is being organised on a virtual platform **www.bharatparv2021.com** this year from Jan 26 to till 31st of January.
- The mega event envisages generating patriotic fervour and showcases the rich and varied cultural diversity of the country.
- The Ministry of Tourism organizes **Bharat Parv** every year since 2016 in front of the ramparts of the Red Fort on the occasion of Republic Day Celebrations.
- Prasar Bharati has set up its virtual stall which will showcase its efforts towards promoting Ek Bharat-Shrestha Bharat.

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

- **India** has announced a pledge of **\$150,000** to activities of the **Peacebuilding Fund** this year and said that 2021 provides the international community with an opportunity to look at peace-building in a more focused manner.
- India's Permanent Representative to the **UN Ambassador T S Tirumurti**.
- The Peacebuilding Fund has put forth a comprehensive scenario covering a horizon of five years. The Fund requires **1.5 billion dollars for 2020-2024**.
- The recently concluded 2020 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture provides a framework to strengthen peace building collectively.

PM chairs meeting of PRAGATI

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the meeting of 35th edition of PRAGATI**, the ICT based multi-modal platform for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation, involving Central and State governments.

- In the meeting, **ten agenda** items were taken for review including nine projects and one program.
- Among the **nine projects**, three projects were from the Ministry of Railways, three from Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and one project each from Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Power Ministry and Ministry of External Affairs.
- These **nine projects** have a cumulative cost of **54 thousand 675 crore rupees** concerning the **15 States**.
- **The States** are Odisha, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Jharkhand, Bihar, Telangana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal, Haryana, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh.

Prime Minister marks NCC rally in New Delhi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the rally of the **National Cadet Corps at Cariappa Ground in Delhi**.
- Defence Minister, Chief of Defence Staff and the three armed services Chiefs will also be present on the occasion.
- The Prime Minister will inspect the Guard of Honour, review March Past by NCC contingents and witness cultural performance during the event.

NSA Ajit Doval speaks with US counterpart

- National Security Adviser **Ajit Doval** had a telephone call with his US counterpart, **Jake Sullivan**.
- The External Affairs Ministry said NSA Doval conveyed his best wishes to NSA Sullivan on his appointment as National Security Advisor.
- Mr. Doval underscored that as leading democracies, with an abiding faith in an open and inclusive world order, **India and the US** were uniquely positioned to work closely on regional and international issues.
- These issues include combating the scourge of terrorism, maritime security, cyber security and peace and stability in the **Indo-Pacific region and beyond**.

Finance Minister inaugurates Chennai Bench of NCLAT

- Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs **Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman** inaugurated the **Chennai Bench of National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)** through virtual mode.
- The inaugural ceremony was held in the presence of Shri. Justice Bansi Lal Bhat, Acting Chairperson, NCLAT, Shri Rajesh Verma, Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, other members of NCLAT and the National Company Law Tribunals, officers of Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Finance as well as members of the Bar.
- The New Delhi Bench of NCLAT is the Principal Bench of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal established in **2016**.
- Five new Benches of NCLT have been announced at **Jaipur, Cuttack, Kochi, Indore and Amaravati**, bringing the total number of Benches to 16 (including the Principal Bench). The NCLAT now functions at a strength of 5 courts, 4 at the Principal Bench in New Delhi and the 5th at NCLAT, Chennai.
- The Chennai Bench of NCLAT shall have jurisdiction to hear the Appeals arising out of the orders passed by the benches of NCLT having jurisdiction of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Lakshadweep and Puducherry.

- Two Members of NCLAT, New Delhi, Hon'ble Shri. Balvinder Singh, Member (Technical) and Hon'ble. Shri. Justice Venugopal M. have taken charge of the newly constituted Chennai Bench of the NCLAT.

Conservationist joins SC panel on elephant corridor case

- The **Supreme Court** on January 27 appointed conservationist **Nandita Hazarika** as Member of a Technical Committee constituted by it on October 14 last year to hear complaints by landowners against the action taken by the Nilgris Collector, which included sealing of their buildings and allegations about the “arbitrary variance in acreage of the elephant corridor.”
- On October 14, the top court upheld the Tamil Nadu government's authority to notify an 'elephant corridor' and protect the migratory path of the animals through the Nilgiri biosphere reserve.
- The corridor is situated in the ecologically fragile Sigur plateau, which connects the Western and the Eastern Ghats and sustains elephant populations and their genetic diversity.

EC rolls out digital voter I-cards

- The **Election Commission** rolled out the electronic version of the voters' **photo identity card** on the **National Voters' Day**.
- The electronic voter ID cards can be stored on mobile phones and downloaded on personal computers.
- The e-voter card, available in the **PDF format** which cannot be edited, can be self-printed and laminated by the voter when required.
- With its formal launch, electors in poll-bound West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry can use e-voter cards on polling days. Elections are due in these states and the union territory in April-May.
- The e-electoral photo identity card is a non-editable digital version of the electoral photo identity card and can be saved in facilities such as a digital locker as well as can be printed in the PDF format.
- The physical card takes time to print and reach the voter, and the idea is to provide faster delivery and easy accessibility to the document.
- Apart from voter ID cards, Aadhaar card, permanent account number (PAN) card and driving licence are also available in digital mode.

Cabinet approves MSP of copra at Rs 10,335 per quintal for 2021 season

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved **Minimum Support Price (MSP) of copra at Rs 10,335 per quintal for 2021** season which is an increase of Rs 375 over 2020 rates.
- The approval is based on recommendations of the **CACP**.
- Briefing the media in Delhi, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said this will benefit millions of farmers engaged in copra farming and impact the farmers of 12 coastal states.
- The MSP for ball copra has increased by Rs.300, to Rs. 10,600 per quintal for the 2021 season from 10,300 per quintal in 2020.

National Marine Turtle Action Plan launched.

- A conservation paradigm for marine mega fauna and marine turtles, the **Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)** has released '**Marine MegaFauna Stranding Guidelines**' and 'National Marine Turtle Action Plan' in New Delhi.
- The documents launched contain ways and means to not only promote inter-sectoral action for conservation but also guide improved coordination amongst the government, civil society and all relevant stakeholders on the response to cases of stranding, entanglement, injury or mortality of marine mammals and also conservation of marine turtles.
- These two documents highlight actions to be taken for handling stranded animals on shore, stranded or entangled animals in the sea or on a boat, management actions for improved coordination, reducing threats to marine species and their habitats, rehabilitation of degraded habitats, enhancing people's participation, advance scientific research and exchange of information on marine mammals and marine turtles and their habitats.

Govt. nods release of Rs 1,751 cr to Assam, Arunachal, Odisha, Telangana & UP

- **The High-Level Committee under the Chairmanship of Home Minister Amit Shah** approved Additional Central Assistance of over **one thousand seven hundred 51 crore rupees** under the National Disaster Response Fund, NDRF to five states, which were affected by floods, landslides during **South-West Monsoon-2020** and **hailstorm during Rabi 2019-20**.
- While approving the Additional Central Assistance, Mr Shah said, the Union Government under the leadership of **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has resolved to help people of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh who braved these natural disasters.

External affairs Minister discuss his US counterpart

- **External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar** has had a telephonic conversation with US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken.
- **Dr Jaishankar warmly congratulated Secretary Blinken** on his appointment and wished him success in his new responsibilities.
- Both leaders expressed their commitment to consolidate and expand the multi-faceted strategic partnership.
- They appreciated the robust defence and security ties, growing economic engagement, productive health-care collaboration and strong **people-to-people linkages** as its important pillars.

India's GDP - 11 per cent next fiscal - V-Shaped recovery

- The government has said that the country is witnessing a **V-Shaped Economic Recovery** which is a testimony to the resilience and intrinsic strength of its economy.
- It happened due to **Mega Vaccination Drive, Robust Recovery** in the Services Sector and Robust Growth in Consumption and Investment.
- The Economic Survey tabled in the Parliament projects India's real GDP to record an 11 per cent growth in Financial Year 2021-22 and nominal GDP to grow by 15.4 per cent, the highest since independence.

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	Piyush Goyal (Additional charge)	Rajya Sabha
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	Narendra Singh Tomar (Additional charge)	Morena
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	Pralhat Singh 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

India set to begin its two-year tenure in UNSC

- India will begin its two-year tenure as a non-permanent member of the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**.
- India will sit in the **15-nation UNSC** for the **2021-22** term as a non-permanent member — the eighth time that the country has had a seat on the powerful horseshoe table.
- On January 1, India, Norway, Kenya, Ireland and Mexico will join non-permanent members Estonia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Vietnam and the five permanent members China, France, Russia, U.K. and the U.S.
- India will be **UNSC President** in **August 2021** and will preside over the council again for a month in 2022.

Australia changes word in national anthem

- On New Year eve, Australia has changed one word in its national anthem to reflect “**the spirit of unity**” and the country’s Indigenous population.
- **Prime Minister of Australia Scott Morrison** announced that the second line of the anthem, Advance Australia Fair, has been changed from for we are young and free to for we are one and free.
- Minister for Indigenous Australians **Ken Wyatt**, who is also the first Indigenous Australian elected to the federal Parliament’s lower house, has given his support to the change.
- He said that the one-word change was small in nature but significant in purpose.

US Congress passes 'Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act' for Pakistani women

- The **US Congress** has passed the **Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act** which will expand the number of scholarships available to **Pakistani women to receive higher education under a merit and needs-based programme**.
- The bill was passed by the United States Senate by a voice vote on **January 1**.
- The bill now heads to the White House for **US President Donald Trump** to sign into law.

India sends relief materials to Fiji

- India has sent over six tons of relief material to Fiji for its **cyclone-affected people**, reflecting its close ties with the **island nation in the South Pacific**.
- Fiji was hit by **cyclone Yasa** on December 17 and 18 that caused extensive damage and destruction of critical infrastructure.
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Management is an important pillar of India’s **Indo-Pacific Oceans’ Initiative** announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2019.
- The **Ministry of External Affairs** said, India remains committed to extend full support to Fiji’s efforts to restore livelihoods of the affected communities and to build resilient infrastructure.

Argentine filmmaker Pablo Cesar to head 51st IFFI's International Jury

- The **51st edition of International Film Festival of India (IFFI)** will be held in Goa from January 16 to January 24, 2021.

- The Information and Broadcasting Ministry stated that the Jury will comprise Pablo Cesar of Argentina as Chairman, Prasanna Vithanage of Sri Lanka, Abu Bakr Shawky of Austria, Priyadarshan of India and Rubaiyat Hossain of Bangladesh.
- IFFI takes place in Goa from November 20-28 every year, but has been postponed due to the Covid-19.
- A total of 224 films will be screened at the 51st IFFI under different sections.

Germany passes a bill - large companies to appoint women in executive boards is mandatory

- German-listed companies must include women on their executive boards as part of a landmark bill agreed by the country's coalition government on Wednesday after voluntary efforts failed to close a gender gap.
- The law sends "a very strong signal", Justice Minister Christine Lambrecht said, urging corporations to "take advantage of the opportunity presented by highly qualified women".

Boris Johnson cancels Republic Day visit as UK locks down

- British Prime Minister **Boris Johnson** cancelled his Republic Day visit to India later this month, citing the need to oversee the Covid-19 pandemic response at home. The development comes as Britain began its third Covid-19 lockdown.
- Mr Johnson's government has announced a complete lockdown for England's 56 million people, which could last until mid-February.
- Johnson would have been the sixth leader from the UK to be Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations. The last British leader to be Chief Guest was Prime Minister John Major in 1993.

Japan to launch the first wood-based satellite by 2023

- The first ever **wooden satellite** could be launched from Japan in 2023.
- The Japanese firm Sumitomo Forestry and Kyoto University have joined forces in the aim of developing a wooden satellite that would burn up more readily as its lifespan ends, without leaving debris or waste behind.
- The project involves researching wood-based materials and coatings capable of withstanding the extreme conditions of space.
- Currently, the initiative is in the nascent stage as several wooden materials are being tested by the research team to find a suitable one for space missions.
- It is also reported that the team is also working towards developing wooden materials extremely resistant to temperature changes and sunlight.
- According to the **European Space Agency (ESA)** statistical model, there are more than 130 million pieces of anthropogenic space debris waste residue due to human activities smaller than a millimeter around our planet.
- The debris can travel at a speed of more than 22,300 mph and can impact other satellites.

2020 was 8th warmest year since 1901: IMD

- **The year 2020 was the eighth warmest year** on record since nation-wide records commenced in 1901, the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

- However, the past year was substantially lower than the highest warming recorded in 2016.
- As per the IMD, the five warmest years on record in order were 2016, 2009, 2017, 2010 and 2015.
- Past two decades (2001-2010 and 2011-2020) were also the warmest on record with anomalies of 0.23 degree Celsius /0.34 degree Celsius.

India calls for self-observation within UNSC over lack of representation of African countries

- India has called for introspection within **UN Security Council** over the lack of representation of African countries among its permanent members.
- **Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla** said, even though more than half of the issues on the agenda of the Security Council are related to Africa, the African continent does not even have a single voice amongst the permanent membership to defend its own interests.
- He said, the world body needs to correct this historical anomaly, and collectively support the **Ezulwini consensus**.

India and France - Strategic Dialogue in New Delhi

- **India and France** are scheduled to hold their annual Strategic Dialogue in **New Delhi**.
- At the dialogue, the Indian side will be **led by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval**.
- **The French side** will be represented by **Emmanuel Bonne**, diplomatic advisor to French President Emmanuel Macron.
- "The two sides will hold discussions on wide-ranging bilateral and global issues. Emmanuel Bonne will also call on other Indian dignitaries," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a release.
- Indo-French Strategic Dialogue was last held in February last year in Paris.
- Bonne is arriving in India on a two-day visit – the first by a foreign dignitary in 2021.
- The visit comes on the back of an uptick in bilateral relations between India and France.
- French Defence Minister Florence Parly was in India in September last year for the induction ceremony of first of Rafale fighter jets, which India has acquired from France's Dassault Aviation.

AI Based survey - African elephants

- A new approach for **surveying African elephants using satellite imagery and artificial intelligence (AI)** could help in solving some of the present challenges in the conservation of the species.
- The survey method was developed by an international team of **researchers led by University of Oxford**.
- The team detailed their work in a paper titled 'Using very high-resolution satellite imagery and deep learning to detect and count African elephants in heterogeneous landscapes', published in the academic journal Remote Sensing in Ecology and Conservation.

World Bank reported Bangladesh to grow at 1.6 percent in 2020-21

- The **World Bank** has projected an economic growth rate of **1.6 percent** for Bangladesh for the FY 2020-21.
- In its latest report on **Global Economic Prospects** released, the Bank has noted that the world economy is likely to grow by **4 percent in 2021**.

- The report points out that in Bangladesh, which had been one of the fastest growing emerging market and developing economies prior to the pandemic, growth is estimated to have decelerated to 2% in FY 2019/20.

Joe Biden Picks Centrist Judge Merrick Garland As US Attorney General

- President-elect **Joe Biden confirmed** he will nominate **Merrick Garland**, a centrist judge that Republicans denied a seat on the Supreme Court five years ago to be US attorney general.
- About Garland :
- Garland, a judge on the Washington federal appeals court, has a record as a moderate liberal and is not aligned with either political party.
- Garland, 68, has had a long career as a private sector lawyer and a federal prosecutor.
- In 1993, he was named deputy assistant attorney general in the Department of Justice, handling important national security cases including the Oklahoma City and Atlanta Olympics bombings.
- In 1997, president Bill Clinton named him to the Washington appeals court, and he received broad support from Democratic and Republican senators in his confirmation.
- He became chief judge of that court in 2013 and, in March 2016, was picked by Obama to fill a seat on the Supreme Court after Antonin Scalia died.

Elon Musk world's wealthiest person: US media

- US media reported that **Tesla CEO Elon Musk** now world's wealthiest person.
- Elon Musk, the outspoken and envelope-pushing chief executive of Tesla, overtook **Amazon boss Jeff Bezos** to become the world's wealthiest person, US media reported.
- Musk is a major shareholder of the electric car company and has benefited from Tesla's surging share price over the last year.
- CNBC estimated Musk's wealth at \$185 billion.

Face book & YouTube removes videos about TRUMP

- Facebook bans Trump 'indefinitely', YouTube removes videos from US President's channel.
- Chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said Facebook banned President Donald Trump from the platform "indefinitely" due to the US leader's efforts to incite the violence in the US capital.
- This is because of Trump's "use of our platform to incite violent insurrection against a democratically elected government."
- Meanwhile, YouTube too has removed several videos that US President Donald Trump has posted on his channel and warned that any channel found to be posting three times within 90 days with false claims on US election results will be permanently removed from the Google-owned video platform.

Japan PM release confidence that Olympic Games – despite state of emergency in Tokyo

- **Japan Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga** has exuded confidence that the Olympic Games will be staged this summer despite a **state of emergency in Tokyo** following the surge in coronavirus cases.

- The Japanese Government said, organizers are sparing no effort to realize **Tokyo Olympic Games** that are safe and secure so as to prove that humanity has defeated the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pakistan Successfully Test Fires Indigenously Developed Rocket System : Fatah-1

- On Jan 08, 2021, **The Pakistan Army** successfully conducted the test flight of an indigenously developed Guided **Multi Launch Rocket System, Fatah-1**.
- The Fatah-1 weapon system can hit targets up to a range of 140 km.
- The Weapon System will give Pakistan Army capability of precision target engagement deep in enemy territory.

French President Advisor meets PM Modi

- **Emmanuel Bonne, the Diplomatic Advisor to the French President**, called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and discussed wide-ranging bilateral as well as global issues.
- On a visit to India for the annual strategic dialogue between **Paris and New Delhi**, the diplomatic advisor to **French President Emmanuel Macron** had held talks with **National Security Advisor Ajit Doval**.
- The Prime Minister expressed satisfaction on the progress both countries have made on key aspects of the **India-France Strategic Partnership**, including counter-terrorism, cyber-security, defence and strategic cooperation.

PM 16th inaugurates Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention

- Addressing the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention through virtual mode, Prime Minister Narendra Modi **urged the youth to use technology** to take forward India's pride and culture across the globe.
- He said the internet has connected people from various corners of the world but our hearts are connected with our mutual love for the country.
- He said, in the past years, Non-Resident Indians have strengthened their identity by showing their commitment for the betterment of the society.
- Mr Modi said, he feels proud to hear heartwarming stories of NRIs coming forward and helping those in need.
- The **Chief Guest** of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention, **President of Suriname Chandrika Persad Santokhi** said, Suriname shares deep bonds with India and both the countries have managed to maintain their heritage, culture and customs.
- He said, the two countries should increase their business to strengthen the bond.
- The President said, **India and Suriname** are bonded on many levels historically, religiously and culturally.

Indonesian plane crashed

- A passenger plane of **Indonesia's Sriwijaya Air** carrying more than 50 people on board crashed into waters off Jakarta.
- A passenger plane of Indonesia's Sriwijaya Air carrying more than 50 people on board crashed into waters off Jakarta.
- A statement released by the Sriwijaya Air, said the Boeing **737-500** was on an estimated 90-minute flight from Jakarta to Pontianak, capital of West Kalimantan province on Indonesia's Borneo Island.

- Indonesian authorities located the **black boxes of the Sriwijaya Air jet** that crashed into the sea soon after taking off from the capital Jakarta.

US President-elect Joe Biden names two Indian Americans in National Security Council of White House

- In the United States, the **President-elect Joe Biden** has appointed two Indian-Americans to the National Security Council of the White House.
- Biden has named Indian-American **Sumona Guha** as senior director for South Asia and **Tarun Chhabra** as senior director for Technology and National Security.
- Sumona Guha was co-chair of the South Asia foreign policy working group during the Biden-Harris campaign.
- During the Obama-Biden administration, Chhabra had also served on the National Security Council staff as director for Strategic Planning and director for Human Rights and National Security Issues.
- **Biden has also named Shanthi Kalathil** as Coordinator for Democracy and Human Rights in his National Security Council. She is currently senior director of the International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy.

Bangladesh to be country of focus at 51st International Film Festival of India

- Bangladesh has been chosen as the 'Country in Focus' for the 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI) starting at Goa on January 16.
- The country of focus section will include Jibandhuli directed by Tanvir Mokammel, Meghmallar directed by Zahidur Rahman Anjan, Under Construction by Rubaiyat Hossain and Sincerely Yours, Dhaka by Nuhash Humanyun, Syed Ahmed Shawki and 9 other individual directors.
- The International Film Festival of India (IFFI), founded in 1952, is one of the most significant film festivals in Asia.
- The festival aims at providing a common platform for the cinemas of the world to project the excellence of the film art, contributing to the understanding and appreciation of film cultures of different nations in the context of their social and cultural ethos, and promoting friendship and cooperation among people of the world.
- The festival is conducted jointly by the Directorate of Film Festivals (under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting) and the state Government of Goa
- The festival will conclude on 24th January.

Twitter deletes new Donald Trump's tweets on @POTUS handle, suspends campaign account

- **Twitter Inc.** on January 8 deleted new tweets posted by **US President Donald Trump** on the official government account **@POTUS** and suspended the account of his presidential campaign, after booting his personal account off the platform permanently.
- **@POTUS** government account, has **33.4 million followers**.
- Twitter had permanently suspended the president's go-to megaphone, his **@realDonaldTrump** personal account.

- Twitter shut down his @TeamTrump campaign account shortly after it sent out a tweet with a "statement from President Trump" accusing Twitter of "banning free speech" and coordinating with "the Democrats and the Radical Left" to silence him.

19th Dhaka International Film Festival to pay tribute to Satyajit Ray

- The **19th Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF)** will be inaugurated on 16th January. The film festival this year is dedicated to the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- The Festival that will Screen **225 films from 73 countries** will be screened during the 9 day long festival between 16-24 January.
- The festival will have 10 categories including Cinema of the world, Children's Film, Women Film Maker's section, Spiritual Films, Bangladesh Panorama, Tribute and Retrospective among others.
- Spring Blossom, a film from France, directed by Suzanne Lindon will be the opening film of the festival.
- The tribute section of the festival will be dedicated to the legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray to commemorate his birth centenary.
- The festival will also hold seminars and discussions around the work and life of Satyajit Ray.
- The section will showcase Pather Panchali, Aparajito, Jalsaghar, Sonar Kella and Hirok Rajar Deshe directed by Satyajit Ray.

Donald Trump becomes first US President to be impeached twice

- **Donald Trump** became the first US president in history to be impeached twice.
- The House of Representatives voted to charge him with inciting last week's mob attack on Congress.
- He was impeached by historic 232-197 vote, making Trump the only U.S. president to be impeached twice, a little more than a year since his first. It was supported by all Democrats and 10 Republicans, including Liz Cheney, the third-ranking GOP leader in the House.

US designates UAE, Bahrain as 'major strategic partners'

- The **United States** has designated the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** and **Bahrain** as its major strategic partners of the Country.
- The announcement was made by White House **Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany** here.
- A new level of partnership between the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and the Kingdom Bahrain, and represents an enduring commitment to economic and security cooperation.
- It also reflects their extraordinary courage, determination, and leadership in entering into the Abraham Accords.
- In addition to that, Both of the countries have been designated for their commitment to countering violent extremism across the region, exceptional security partnership and exemplified by their hosting thousands of US airmen, soldiers, marines and sailors.

Pakistan PM Imran Khan special permit for Dubai royals to hunt houbara bustard

- The **Pakistan government** has issued at least **seven special permits** to Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and six other members of the ruling family to hunt the internationally protected bird houbara bustard during the 2020-21 hunting season.
- After the Permission, eleven members of the UAE royal family reached the Panjgur district in Balochistan, Pakistan for hunting the highly vulnerable and internationally protected houbara bustard under Pakistan's foreign ministry license.

Nepali climbers make history, become first to scale world's second highest mountain K2 in winter

- A team of **10 Nepali climbers** made history by becoming the first to scale in winter the world's second highest mountain K2, considered as the world's most dangerous and challenging peak.
- K2 with its daunting 8,611 meters height is located in **Gilgit-Baltistan side of the Karakoram range**.
- It was the only among **8,000-meter high peaks** that was never scaled in winter.
- The achievement was the result of a collaborative effort between the climbers affiliated with multiple teams: one led by Nirmal Purja and the other by Mingma Gyalje Sherpa.

UK sets out new laws to protect historic statues, monuments

- The **UK government** unveiled **new laws to protect England's cultural and historic heritage** in the form of statues and monuments to ensure they are not removed at a whim.
- The move comes in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests in the country last year targeting several historic monuments, including with graffiti on Mahatma Gandhi's statue in Parliament Square in London.
- New legal protections mean that historic statues should be retained and explained for future generations and individuals who want to remove any historic statue, whether protected with a listed status or not, will now require listed building consent or planning permission.

Netherlands PM Mark Rutte and his entire cabinet quits over welfare scandal

- Dutch Prime Minister **Mark Rutte** and his entire Cabinet resigned **to take political responsibility for a scandal involving investigations** into child welfare payments that wrongly labeled thousands of parents as fraudsters.
- Mr. Rutte and his cabinet will continue running the government in a caretaker capacity, with general elections already scheduled for **March 2021**.
- The resignation brings to an end a decade in office for Rutte, although his party is expected to win the election, putting him first in line to begin talks to form the next government. If he succeeds in forming a new coalition, Rutte would most likely again become prime minister.

Prakash Javadekar Launches 2021 as Indo-French Year of the Environment

- Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, **Shri Prakash Javadekar** and **Ms Barbara Pompili**, the French Minister for Ecological Transition launched the **Indo-French Year of the Environment in New Delhi**.

- The basic objective is to **strengthen Indo-French cooperation in sustainable development, increase the effectiveness of actions in favor of global environment protection and give them greater visibility.**
- The Indo-French Year of the Environment over the period 2021-2022 would be based on **five main themes:** environmental protection, climate change, biodiversity conservation, sustainable urban development, and the development of renewable energies and energy efficiency.
- It is also a platform for engaging in discussions on critical areas of collaboration relating to the environment and allied areas.
- From the French side, it will be held under the aegis of the Ministry of Ecological Transition, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs with the support of the Embassy of France in Delhi and its partners.
- From the Indian side, it will be coordinated by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** along with the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and other concerned Ministries/Departments/Organisations.
- A joint screening committee will also be set up to finalise the calendar of the events for the Indo-French Year of the Environment.

India and EU virtually held first maritime security dialogue

- **India and the EU** have held their first maritime security dialogue in a virtual format.
- The consultations involved exchanges on developments in maritime security environment, regional cooperation activities, developments of mutual interest and opportunities for cooperation between India and the EU.
- The **EU-India Maritime Dialogue** was chaired by Director Joanneke Balfoort on the European Union External Action Service side and Joint Secretary Sandeep Arya on the Indian side.
- It seeks to develop mutual understanding and cooperation opportunities between India and the EU in the maritime security domain as another factor of the strategic partnership between the two sides consistent with the India-EU Roadmap to 2025.

Republic Day parade - 122 Bangladesh Armed Forces personnel participate

- For the first time ever, a **122 member** strong contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces will participate in the Republic Day parade.
- Sources said the contingent will be led by contingent commander Lieutenant Colonel Abu Mohammed Shahnoor Shawon and his deputies Lieutenant Farhan Ishraq and Flight Lieutenant Sibat Rahman.
- The contingent comprises soldiers of the Bangladesh Army, sailors of the Bangladesh Navy and air warriors of the Bangladesh Air Force.
- This year India and Bangladesh celebrate 50 years of the establishment of diplomatic ties and Bangladesh celebrates 50 years of its independence.
- Both sides have agreed to hold commemorative events in several other countries and also jointly organize events throughout the year.

India- Bangladesh: Joint Steering Committee meeting

- **19th meeting of the Joint Steering Committee** on India Bangladesh cooperation in the energy sector was held in **Dhaka**.
- The steering committee took stock of the progress of implementation of the decisions taken during the last meeting of the **Joint Working Group (JWG)** and Joint Steering Committee (JSC).
- According to the press release issued by the High Commission of India in Dhaka, the meeting also discussed the status of **1320 MW Maitree Super Thermal Power Project at Rampal**.
- Detailed discussions were held on power trade between **India and Bangladesh** through various interconnections.
- The meeting discussed ways for further enhancing the cooperation in the energy sector.
- Indian delegation was led by the Power Secretary Sanjiv Nandan Sahai while Power Secretary **Md. Habibur Rahman** represented the Bangladesh side at the meeting.

Dhaka International Film Festival concluded

- The 19th Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF) concluded.
- During the 9-day long festival which started on **16 January, 226 films from 73 countries** were shown.
- Kyrgyz film **'The Road to Eden'** jointly directed by Bakyt Mukul and Dastan Zhapar won the best film award at the festival.
- The film tells the struggle of an old writer who wishes to promote literature to bring enlightenment to his people.
- In the Asian competition section, the Best Director award was given to Ksenia Langutina for the film Farida.
- The film is jointly produced by Azerbaijan and Russia.
- Masud Hasan Ujjal won the Best Film Award in the Bangladesh Panorama section for his film 'Unponchash Batash'.
- The Best Audience award was won by the film 'Gondi' directed by the Bangladeshi director Arefeen Khan.
- Information Minister of Bangladesh Dr. Hasan Mehmud was the Chief Guest at the closing ceremony.
- The State Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chief Patron of the Dhaka International Film Festival expressed happiness at the successful organising of the festival.
- The Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF) had introduced a new section this year on the 'World Leaders who changed society' under which films on Mahatma Gandhi, Lenin, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were shown during the festival.
- The DIFF 2021 was dedicated to the centenary year of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Austin wins Senate confirmation as America's first Black Pentagon chief

- **Lloyd J. Austin**, a West Point graduate who rose to the Army's elite ranks and marched through racial barriers in a 41-year career, won Senate confirmation to become the **nation's first Black secretary of defense**.
- The 93-2 vote gave President Joe Biden his second Cabinet member.
- Avril Haines was confirmed as the first woman to serve as director of national intelligence.

- Biden is expected to win approval for others on his national security team in coming days, including Antony Blinken as secretary of state.

China overtakes Germany with largest current account surplus-Ifo

- **China** overtook **Germany** to become the country with the **world's largest current account surplus** in the year 2020, as per a survey by the **Munich-based Ifo institute**.
- About Ifo :
- **Ifo (Information and Forschung)** is a Institute for **Economic Research** is a research institution based in Munich, Germany, which analyses economic policy .
- China's current account surplus, which measures the flow of goods, services and investments, more than doubled to \$310 billion last year.
- While the current account surplus of Germany shrank for the fifth year in a row in 2020 to \$261 billion.
- Germany's current account surplus shrank to \$261 billion in 2020 as demand for cars, machinery and equipment fell in many of its key export markets, the survey showed.
- Japan came in third with a current account surplus of \$158 billion.

Mongolia PM Khurelsukh Ukhnaa Quits, blames president over Covid protests

- **Mongolia's** Prime Minister **Khurelsukh Ukhnaa** submitted his **resignation** to parliament after protests in the capital **Ulaanbaatar** over the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, the state news agency Montsame reported.
- The 52-year-old served as the Prime Minister of Mongolia from 4 October 2017 to 21 January 2021.
- Prime Minister Khurelsukh Ukhnaa submitted his resignation and a proposal to dissolve his government Thursday after hundreds gathered outside the parliament building to demonstrate against the policies.
- Parliament, which is controlled by Khurelsukh's Mongolian People's Party, voted overwhelmingly Thursday to accept his resignation.

SpaceX breaks India's record by launching 143 satellites on a single rocket

- On 24 Jan 2021, **SpaceX** created a unique world record of launching **143 satellites on a single vehicle**.
- The firm broke the record previously held by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**, which launched 104 satellites in 2017.
- In this launch, SpaceX broke the record set by ISRO in February 2017 for deploying **104 satellites onboard PSLV in a single mission**.
- The US-based space company launched 143 satellites through its **Falcon 9 rocket**.
- The launch vehicle for the SpaceX record-breaking flight was the Falcon 9 and the mission was designated as Transporter-1.
- With these satellites, SpaceX aims to provide near-global broadband internet coverage all over the world by 2021.
- The 143 satellites included 133 commercial and government satellites and 10 Starlink satellites of SpaceX

China beat US as largest recipient of FDI, received \$163 billion in 2020

- **China** climbed to the No.1 ranking globally attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) of \$163 billion in 2020.
- The report was released by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
- China's \$163 billion in inflows last year, compared to \$134 billion attracted by the United States.
- In 2019, the United States had received \$251 billion in inflows and China received \$140 billion.
- China's gross domestic product grew 2.3% in 2020, official data showed last week, making China the only major economy in the world to avoid a contraction last year.
- The world's second-largest economy has surprised many with the speed of its recovery from the coronavirus jolt, especially as policymakers have also had to navigate tense U.S.-China relations on trade and other fronts.
- Overall, global FDI had collapsed in 2020, falling by 42% to an estimated \$859 billion, from \$1.5 trillion in 2019.

Liberation War fighter from Bangladesh awarded Padma Shree

- Bangladesh Liberation War fighter **Lt. Col. (Retd.) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir** and well known musicologist, **Rabindra Sangeet** exponent and academic **Sanjida Khatun** from Bangladesh has been awarded the **Padma Shri** for the year 2021.
- Padma awards are one of the highest civilian awards of the country.
- The awards were announced on the eve of the **Republic Day of India**.
- According to the official press release, **7 Padma Vibhushan, 10 Padma Bhushan and 102 Padma Shri awards** have been conferred on people for their distinguished work in various fields.

Kaja Kallas becomes Estonia's first female prime minister

- Kaja Kallas, the leader of the Reform Party, has become Estonia's first female prime minister.
- Estonia would thus currently become the only country in the world where both the president and the prime minister are women.
- Kaja Kallas was nominated to form the government by the Estonian president, Kersti Kaljulaid, on 14 January
- The Reform Party, led by Kallas, won the 2019 parliamentary election in Estonia with 34 MPs in the country's 101-seat parliament, Riigikogu.

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigns

- **Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigned** on Jan 26 after a key coalition ally pulled his party's support over the prime minister's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, setting the stage for consultations this week to determine if he can form a third government.
- Conte tendered his resignation to **President Sergio Mattarella**, who held off on any immediate decision other than asking Conte to keep the government running in the near-term.
- Italy was the first European country to face the full force of the Covid-19 pandemic and has since suffered badly, with the economy plunged into recession and deaths still rising by around 400 a day.

India and World Bank sign 500 million dollar Programme

- The Government of India and the World Bank signed a **500-million** US dollar **Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Programme (STARS)** to improve the quality and governance of school education in **six Indian states**.
- These include Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan.
- Some 250 million students (between the age of six and 17) in 1.5 million schools and over 10 million teachers will benefit from the programme.
- The STARS programme builds on the long partnership between India and the World Bank (since 1994), for strengthening public school education and to support the country's goal of providing Education for All.
- Prior to STARS, the Bank had provided a total assistance of more than three billion US dollars towards this goal.

Revision Points

Country	Capital	Currency	Head
Bangladesh	Dhaka	Taka	Abdul Hamid
France	Paris	Euro	Emmanuel Macron
UK	London	Pound Sterling	Boris Johnson
UAE	Abu Dhabi	Dirham	Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan
USA	Washington D.C	Dollar	Joe Biden
Nepal	Kathmandu	Rupee	K. P. Sharma Oli
China	Beijing	Renminbi	Xi Jinping
Russia	Moscow	Ruble	Mikhail Mishustin
Italy	Rome	Euro	Giuseppe Conte
Japan	Tokyo	Yen	Yoshihide Suga
Australia	Canberra	Dollar	Scott Morrison
Fiji	Suva	Dollar	Jioji Konorote
Argentina	Buenos Aires	Peso	Alberto Fernandez
Indonesia	Jakarta	Indonesian Rupiah	Joko Widod
Netherland	Amsterdam	Euro	Mark Rutte
Mangolia	Ulaanbaatar	Mangolian Togrog	Khaltmaagiin Battulga
Estonia	Tallin	Euro	Kersti Kaljulaid
Pakistan	Islamabad	Rupee	Imran Khan

Important Appointments

National Appointments

Name of the Person	Designation	Predecessor/Others
K Sivan	ISRO chairman	He gets one-year extension up to January 14, 2022 as Department of Space secretary
P Ravi Kumar	Karnataka Chief Secretary	He will replace TM Vijay Bhaskar
Suneet Sharma	Chairman & CEO of Railway Board	Prior to this, Suneet Sharma worked as General Manager, Eastern Railway.
Soma Mondal	SAIL Chairman	She replaces Anil Kumar Chaudhary
Umesh Sinha	Deputy Election Commissioner	
Justice S Muralidhar Takes	Chief Justice of Orissa High Court	
Pankaj Mithal	chief justice of J&K and Ladakh high court	
Ashish Pethe	Chairman of All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC)	
Saiyam Mehra	vice chairman of India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC)	
Sanjay Kapoor	All India Chess Federation president	
Lt Gen Shantanu Dayal	Deputy Chief of Staff	He will take the place of Lt Gen SS Hasabnis
Hemant Nagrale	Maharashtra DGP	
PK Purwar	CMD of Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL)	MTNL Board of Directors re-appoints PK Purwar as its CMD
Sudhanshu Dhulia	Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court	
Subodh Jaiswal	Director General (DG) of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).	
Pradipt Kapoor	Chief Information Officer of Airtel	Kapoor takes over from Harmeena Mehta
Jay Shah	BCCI's representative on ICC Board	He will replace BCCI president Sourav Ganguly
PM Narendra Modi	chairman of Somnath temple trust	
Vishwavir Ahuja	CEO of RBL Bank	The re-appointment is with effect from June 30, 2021, to June 29, 2024
Sanjeev Kumar	Chairman & Managing Director	

	(CMD) of Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL) .	
Rajiv Lochan	Managing Director of Sundaram Finance	
A L Jarhad	secretary to the chief minister Uddhav Thackeray	
Shivan	MD and CEO of Dhanlaxmi Bank	
Siddhartha Mohanty	Managing Director of LIC	Mohanty will be replacing TC Suseel Kumar
Chandi Prasad Mohanty	vice-chief of Army Staff	
R S Sharma	CEO of Ayushman Bharat Scheme	
Shri U P Singh	Secretary in Textiles Ministry	

Chief Justices and judges of High Courts transferred

S.No	Name Of The Judge S/Shri Justice	High Court	
		From	To
1	Raghvendra Singh Chauhan, Chief Justice	Telangana	Uttarakhand
2	Jitendra Kumar Maheshwari, Chief Justice	Andhra Pradesh	Sikkim
3	Mohammad Rafiq, Chief Justice	Orissa	Madhya Pradesh
4	Arup Kumar Goswami, Chief Justice	Sikkim	Andhra Pradesh
5	Sanjay Yadav, Judge	Madhya Pradesh	Allahabad
6	Rajesh Bindal, Judge	Rajesh Bindal, Judge	Calcutta
7	Vineet Kothari, Judge	Madras	Gujarat
8	Joymalyabagchi, Judge	Calcutta	Andhra Pradesh
9	Satish Chandra Sharma, Judge	Madhya Pradesh	Karnataka
10	Ravi Vijaykumarmalimath, Judge	Uttarakhand	Himachal Pradesh

International Appointments

Name of the Person	Designation	Predecessor/Others
Alex Ellis	British high commissioner to India	He will succeed Sir Philip Barton
Raj Iyer	US Army's first Chief Information Officer	Currently Iyer serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary of the Army.

Faustin-Archange Touadera	Central African Republic President	He is re-elected president of central africa
Sadyr Japarov	President, Kyrgyzstan	Sooronbay Jeenbekov.
Pat Gelsinger	CEO of Intel	He will succeed Bob Swan.
Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw	one of US-India Business Council's vice-chair	Biocon Executive Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw
Yoweri Museveni	President of Uganda	Uganda's Museveni wins sixth term
Joe Biden	46th President of the United States of America	
Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa	Portuguese President	won a landslide reelection
Kamala Harris	49th Vice-President of the United States	

Important Awards and Honours

Winner	Prize	Awarded By/Theme/Purpose
Shri V.K.Yadav	Eminent Engineer Award	The award is given by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET)
Pt Satish Vyas	Tansen Samman	Tansen Music Festival began in Gwalior
Abhinav Kala Parishad	Raja Mansingh Tomar award	Tansen Music Festival
Hemant Kumar Pandey	'Scientist of the Year' award	Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO)
Dr Shailla Cannie	National Florence Nightingale Award 2020	Conferred by President of India.
Biswajit Chatterjee	'Indian Personality of the Year'	IFFI
Bilkis dadi and Harsh Mander	Quaide Milleth Award	Bilkis Dadi, and an eminent social activist and writer Harsh Mander of "Karwan -e- Mohabbat" were presented the Quaide Milleth Award.
Karuna Sagar IPS	Bharat Gaurav Award	
Nikhil Srivastava	Michael and Sheila	Two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison-

	Held Prize	Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs.
Shyam Srinivasan	Business Standard Banker of the Year	Shyam Srinivasan , managing director and chief executive officer (CEO) of Federal Bank
Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir and Sanjida Khatun	Padma Shri for the year 2021.	Liberation War fighter from Bangladesh
Uttar Pradesh's Ram Temple tableau	First prize among all tableaux.	Republic Day parade
AR Rahman and social activist from Saidapet Hari Krishnan	Good Samaritans	Alert Being Awards 2020 by the NGO ALERT
Hariharan	J C Daniel Award	International Film Festival of Kerala
Dr Krishna Mohan Pathi	2021 Padma Awards	Odisha's octogenarian doctor
'Nanda Mastre'	2021 Padma Awards	Odisha teacher centenarian Nanda Prusty of Kantira in Sukinda block
Manjamma Jogathi	Padma Shri	Transgender from Karnataka
Purnamasi Jani	Padma Awards	76-year-old tribal poetess

[Mother Teresa Memorial Awards For Social Justice 2020 Announced](#)

- On December 27, 2020, Harmony Foundation hosted the Mother Teresa Memorial Awards for Social Justice.
- The Awards in its 16th year is the only award endorsed by Sister Prema, the Superior General of the Missionaries of Charity, the organization started by Mother Teresa.
- **The theme for this year's awards was, Celebrating Compassion In Times Of Covid**
- **Dr Anthony Fauci** (USA) is the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, USA. He and his task force were among the first ones to realize the seriousness of this pandemic.
- **Fr Fabio Stevenazzi** (Milan, Italy) decision to return to medical practice in order to help those infected with COVID 19 has thrust him to be the modern day example of St Charles Borromeo who in 1576 during the Great Plague that hit the city of Milan and cut the population by half, stayed behind to nurse the sick and renovate hospitals.
- **Dr Pradeep Kumar** (Chennai) took it upon himself to give a befitting burial to his colleague with the help of two ward boys, at a cemetery in the city in the middle of the night.
- **Cristian Fracassi and Alessandro Romaioli (Italy)** CEO and Founder of ISINNOVA along with his teammate and engineer Alessandro Romaioli built prototypes on Isinnova's 3D printers, to create the parts of the use-and-throw

valves for ventilators which were desperately needed in Italy and provided it to them for free helped many patients survive the terrors of this pandemic.

- **Sanjay Pandey**, IPS (DG Home Guards, Maharashtra) went beyond the call of duty as a police officer to open the first relief camp in the Mumbai city suburbs for migrant workers whose livelihood were disrupted by the lockdown to contain the pandemic.
- **Vikas Khanna** (Manhattan, USA) heart still moves to serve the lonely and underprivileged here in India.
- **KK Shailaja** (Minister of Health, Kerala) Her extraordinary efforts and proactiveness in dealing with the pandemic by following experts and scientific advice helped countless Keralites survive the terrors of this pandemic, serving as an example for governments of other states & countries to follow.

Bihar cops, including three IPS officers won national awards

- Three officers of Indian Police Service (IPS), besides three junior cops, have been selected this year also to be awarded with the Internal Security Service Medals and the Home Minister's Medals respectively for outstanding services in duty.
- **Rakesh Rathi**, The Inspector General of Police of Magadh range, present Lakhisarai **SP Sushil Kumar** and Jamui ASP (operation) **Sudhansu Kumar** are the IPS officers, who would be awarded with the Internal Security Service Medals.
- The other **three policemen** selected for the **Home Minister Medal** this year for outstanding services are havaladar Bhogendra Mishra of Police Academy at **Rajgir** and constables **Anuranjan Kumar** and **Vipin Kumar Singh** of CTC at Nathnagar in Bhagalpur.

Maha Vir Chakra awarded to Col Santosh Babu posthumously

- President has approved awards of **455 Gallantry** and other Defence decorations to Armed Forces personnel and others.
- **Galwan valley hero Colonel B Santosh Babu**, the Commanding Officer of 16 Bihar Regiment, who lost his life during the Galwan Valley clash last year, will be **posthumously** awarded with **Maha Vir Chakra**.
- Subedar Sanjiv Kumar of 4th Battalion Parachute Regiment, CRPF Inspector Pintu Kumar Singh, CRPF Head Constable Shyam Narayan Singh Yadav, CRPF Constable Vinod Kumar will be posthumously awarded with **Kirti Chakra**.
- Deputy Commandant CRPF Rahul Mathur will be awarded **Kirti Chakra**.
- Naib Subedar Nuduram Soren of 16 Bihar Regiment, Havildar K Palani of 81 Field Regiment, Naik Deepak Singh of Army Medical Corps 16 Bihar Regiment and Sepoy Gurtej Singh of 3rd Battalion Punjab Regiment will be awarded **Vir Chakra posthumously**.
- Havildar Tejinder Singh of 3 Medium Regiment will be awarded **Vir Chakra**.

- Major Anuj Sood of 21st Battalion Rashtriya Rifles, Jammu and Kashmir police inspector Arshad Khan, J&K police Selection Grade Constable GH Mustafa Barah, J&K police Constable Naseer Ahmed Kolie and J&K Special Police Officer Bilal Ahmed Magray will be **posthumously** awarded with **Shaurya Chakra**.
- Rifleman Pranab Jyoti Das of 6th Battalion Assam Rifles and Paratrooper Sonam Tshering Tamang will be awarded **Shaurya Chakra**.
- These include one Mahavir Chakra, 5 Kirti Chakras, 5 Vir Chakras, 7 Shaurya Chakras, 4 Bar to Sena Medal (Gallantry), 130 Sena Medal (Gallantry), one Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry), 4 Vayu Sena Medal (Gallantry), 30 Param Vishisht Seva Medal, 4 Uttam Yudh Seva Medal, 51 Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, 11 Yudh Seva Medal, 3 Bar to Sena Medal (Devotion to Duty), 43 Sena Medal (Devotion to Duty) including 2 COVID Warriors, 8 Nao Sena Medal (Devotion to Duty), 14 Vayu Sena Medal (Devotion to Duty), 3 Bar to Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM) including one COVID Warrior and 131 Vishisht Seva Medal including 12 COVID Warriors.

Padma Awards 2021 announced

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** announced the **Padma Awards 2021** - one of the highest civilian Awards of the country - on the eve of 72nd Republic Day.
- These awards are conferred by the President of India at ceremonial functions which are held at **Rashtrapati Bhawan** usually around March/ April every year.
- This year the President has approved the conferment of **119 Padma Awards**.
- The list comprises **7 Padma Vibhushan, 10 Padma Bhushan and 102 Padma Shri Awards**.
- 29 of the awardees are women and the list also includes 10 persons from the category of Foreigners/NRI/PIO/OCI, 16 Posthumous awardees and one transgender awardee.
- Former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe and singer SP Balasubramaniam were among the Padma Vibhushan recipients.

Padma Vibhushan (7)

Name	Field	State/Country
Shri Shinzo Abe	Public Affairs	Japan
Shri S P Balasubramaniam (Posthumous)	Art	Tamil Nadu
Dr. Belle Monappa Hegde	Medicine	Karnataka
Shri Narinder Singh Kapany (Posthumous)	Science and Engineering	United States of America
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan	Others- Spiritualism	Delhi
Shri B. B. Lal	Others- Archaeology	Delhi

Shri Sudarshan Sahoo	Art	Odisha
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Padma Bhushan (10)

Ms. Krishnan Nair Shantakumari Chithra	Art	Kerala
Shri Tarun Gogoi (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Assam
Shri Chandrashekhar Kambara	Literature and Education	Karnataka
Ms. Sumitra Mahajan	Public Affairs	Madhya Pradesh
Shri Nripendra Misra	Civil Service	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Ram Vilas Paswan (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Bihar
Shri Keshubhai Patel (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Gujarat
Shri Kalbe Sadiq (Posthumous)	Others-Spiritualism	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Rajnikant Devidas Shroff	Trade and Industry	Maharashtra
Shri Tarlochan Singh	Public Affairs	Haryana

51st IFFI concludes with grand closing ceremony

- The closing ceremony of the **51st edition of the International Film Festival of India** was held in the **Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Stadium in Goa**.
- Due to the COVID-19 the festival was held in hybrid mode, there was physical and virtual screening of 50 films out of 224 films across various categories.
- Bangladesh was the country focus of the festival. Four films of Bangladesh were included in the 'country of focus' section.
- **The winners of the IFFI awards are listed below**
- Golden Peacock Award for Best Film– Into the Darkness
- Silver Peacock Award for Best Actor – Male – Tzu-Chuan Liu, The Silent Forest
- Silver Peacock Award for Best Actor – Female – Zofia Stafiej, I Never Cry
- Silver Peacock Award for Best Director – Chen-Nien Ko, The Silent Forest
- Best Debut Director Award – Cássio Pereira dos Santos, Valentina
- Special Mention Award – Kripal Kalita, Bridge

- Special Jury Award – Kamin Kaley, February
- ICFT UNESCO Gandhi Award – Ameen Nayfeh's 200 Meters
- Indian Personality of the Year Award – Biswajit Chatterjee
- Lifetime Achievement – Vittorio Storaro (Italian cinematographer)

Govt announces Subhash Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2021

- **Rajendra Kumar Bhandari**, who laid the foundation of scientific studies on geo hazards, was selected for the **Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar for 2021** for his work in **disaster management**.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs said while Bhandari has been selected in the individual category of the award, the **Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS)** has been picked for the award in the institutional category for the year.
- The award is announced every year on January 23, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The award carries a cash prize of ₹51 lakh and a certificate in case of an institution and ₹five lakh and a certificate in case of an individual.
- The award is given to recognise and honour the invaluable contribution and selfless service rendered by individuals and organisations in India in the field of disaster management by the central government

Important MOU's & Agreements

J&K UT Administration signed MoU with NAFED

- In Jammu and Kashmir, the Union Territory Administration signed a **historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (**NAFED**), an apex organization of marketing cooperatives for agricultural produce.
- The MoU with NAFED is seen as a game changer for the **Horticulture sector** in Jammu and Kashmir.
- High Density plantation of Apple, Walnut, Cherry, Flowers etc has potential to increase the income of farmers by 3 to 4 times.
- After signing of the MoU, NAFED to cover **5500 Hectares at a cost of Rs.1700 Crore** in the next five years with major focus on Apple, Walnut, Cherry, Pear and other significant horticulture produce. NAFED will also set up **20 Farmer-Producer Organizations**, one in each district, in the next three months.
- The **NAFED** will set up three cold storage clusters, one each in North Kashmir, South Kashmir and Kathua at a cost of **Rs.500 Crore**, besides ensuring **Geographical Indications tags (GI Tags)** for all premium/niche horticulture produce, branding and marketing of fruit crops like Apple, Walnut, Cherry, Olive, Litchi etc.

MoU signed between NBCC & JKIT in Jammu, Srinagar

- In an effort to bring about reforms in the Information Technology (IT) sector in Jammu and Kashmir, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between **National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC)** and **JK IT Infrastructure Development Company** for establishing **IT towers** in the cities of Jammu and Srinagar.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of **Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha**.

- The IT towers would be established at a cost of **Rs 50 crore each**.

KVIC signs MoU with ITBP

- **Khadi and Village Industries Commission** signed MoU with **Indo-Tibetan Border Police, ITBP** for supply of **1,72,000** cotton durries every year.
- The total value of these durries is eight crore **74 lakh**.
- The agreement has been signed for one year which will be renewed thereafter.
- The development comes after Home Minister Amit Shah gave instructions to the paramilitary forces to encourage local products to support the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- **KVIC Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena** termed the development as "historic" saying this would not only encourage the use of Swadeshi products in our forces but also create large-scale additional employment for Khadi artisans.
- "Providing the best quality products to our jawans and timely delivery of consignment will be the top priority of KVIC.
- The purchase orders from the CAPFs are also a matter of pride for Khadi artisans who are serving the country's jawans in their own ways," Saxena said.

Memorandum of Cooperation between India, Japan - 'Specified Skilled Worker'

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the signing of a **Memorandum of Cooperation between the Government of India and Government of Japan**, on a Basic Framework for Partnership for Proper Operation of the System Pertaining to "**Specified Skilled Worker**".
- The Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) would enhance **people-to -people contacts**, foster mobility of workers and skilled professionals from India to Japan.

Agriculture department of LAHDC Kargil signs MoU with Sikkim State Organic Certification Agency

- In Ladakh, **Executive Councillor LAHDC Kargil for Agriculture Mohammad Ali Chandan** signed a Memorandum of Understanding for organic farming and its certification with Sikkim State Organic Certification Agency.
- The MOU was signed during a meeting organized by the **Mission Director, Union Territory of Ladakh for interaction, deliberation and confirmation of the Agriculture Sector** in Kargil under Organic Certification.

IAF signs MoU with IDSR

- **Indian Air Force and Institute of Defence Studies and Research - IDSR**- an autonomous Institution of Gujarat University have signed a Memorandum of Understanding.
- This will enable the Officers of IAF to undertake Doctoral Research, Post-Graduate Programme and Post Graduate Diploma.
- These courses will cover various areas of interest that include Defence studies, Defence Management, National Security, Aerospace & Aviation Science and other areas of Defence Technology.

Samagra Shiksha MOU with HUL distributes 1.5 lakh soaps to different schools in J&K

- In Jammu and Kashmir, the **Samagra Shiksha** in partnership with Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), has distributed **1.5 lakh soaps** to different schools of the Union Territory to support the government's response to COVID-19.

- The soaps were distributed in **22,000 schools** across J&K, aiming to reach over 1 million children as part of its safe school reopening measures in view of COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Dr. Arun Manhas, Project Director Samagra Shiksha** said that the department has been on the forefront for the fight against COVID-19 and ensured that soaps are distributed to all schools across all districts for use by children.
- Samagra Shiksha has launched a comprehensive school safety pilot programme in **50 schools** of districts of Kupwara, Baramulla, Jammu and Doda under the '**WASH in Schools**' programme.

LAHDC Kargil sign MoU to Kargil Lower Plateau

- In a historic development, a MoU was signed between the **LAHDC Kargil and the Army** to evacuate the Kargil Lower Plateau.
- The MoU was signed between the Deputy Commissioner and CEO, LAHDC, Kargil Baseer ul Haq Choudhary on behalf of the LAHDC, Kargil and Brigade Commander, 121 Infantry Division Brigadier Vivek Bakshi on behalf of the Army in presence of the Chairman and Chief Executive Councilor, LAHDC, Kargil, Feroz Ahmad Khan and the General Officer Commanding (GOC), 8 Mountain Division Major General Praveen Kumar Airy, AVSM.
- As per the MoU, substitute land shall be provided to the Army near Maratha Unit Kurbathang and Mulbekh area.

IREDA signs MoU with NHPC

- **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited, IREDA** under administrative control of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy today signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** with NHPC Limited, the PSU under Ministry of Power for providing its technical expertise in developing renewable energy projects.
- Under the MoU, IREDA will undertake **Techno-Financial** due diligence of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency and conservation projects for NHPC.
- **IREDA will assist NHPC** in developing an action plan to create and acquire Renewable Energy projects for the next five years.
- The MoU was signed through virtual mode by **Chairman-cum-Managing Director, IREDA Pradip Kumar Das and CMD, NHPC Limited Abhay Kumar Singh**.

India and Japan inks MoU to Enhance Cooperation in the Field of ICT

- **India and Japan** signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in the field of **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**, including **5G standardisation**.
- The MoU was signed between Ravi Shankar Prasad, Minister for Communications, Electronics and IT and the Japanese Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications Takeda Ryota, through a video conference.
- As per the agreement, both the countries will enhance mutual cooperation in the field of 5G technologies, telecom security, submarine optical fibre cable system to islands of India, spectrum management, smart cities, high-altitude platform for broadband in unconnected areas, disaster management and public safety.
- The new agreement will bring the cooperation between Japan and India in the field of ICT to another level, which has already been close under the Japan-India ICT Comprehensive Cooperation Framework of 2014

Indian Army signs a \$20 million contract with ideaForge to buy SWITCH drones

- The **Indian Army** has signed an approximately **\$20 million** contract for undisclosed quantities of a high-altitude variant of ideaForge's **SWITCH UAV** which will be delivered over a period of 1 year.
- IdeaForge has been awarded this contract after it emerged as the only vendor that qualified the operational requirements in an evaluation done in real-world conditions, for a fast-track procurement.
- The contract marks a strategic shift in the Indian defence procurement process as the Indian Army goes on an aggressive modernization drive. It has also cemented ideaForge's position as India's largest manufacturer of drones for defence, homeland security and industrial applications.

Kerala, MP change MoU on Responsible Tourism

- **Madhya Pradesh** signed a memorandum of understanding with Kerala for replicating the latter's pioneering **Responsible Tourism (RT) initiative**.
- The States signed a joint declaration underneath which Kerala will prolong a sequence of companies underneath a **16-point programme**.
- The MoU was exchanged by Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran and his Madhya Pradesh counterpart Usha Thakur.
- Next week, a **13-member staff from Bhopal**, led by Ms Thakur, will tour totally different elements of Kerala to assemble first-hand information about RT within the State.

DRDO and Road Transport and Highways Ministry sign MoU for technical exchange on sustainable geo-hazard management

- **Road Transport and Highways Ministry and Defence Research and Development Organisation**, DRDO signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen collaboration in the field of technical exchange and co-operation on sustainable geo-hazard management.
- The MoU was signed by Secretary Ministry of Road and Transport Giridhar Aramane and Secretary DRDO Dr Satieesh Reddy.
- It has been agreed that both will cooperate in the areas of mutual benefit including, conceptual planning of integrated avalanche and landslide protection schemes for all weather connectivity in snow bound areas of the country.
- This initiative will ensure safety of road users on **National Highways** in the country and safeguard them from the adverse effects of landslides and other natural calamities.

Ministry of Road Transport & Highways signed MOU with IIT Roorkee

- **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Roorkee** signed an MoU in New Delhi for continuation of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways Professorial Chair focusing on research and development, teaching and training in the area of Development of Highway Infrastructure.
- The MoU was signed by **Indresh Kumar Pandey**, Special Secretary and Director General Road Development and **Prof. Manoranjan Parida**, Deputy Director and Professor of Civil Engineering, IIT Roorkee.

- Secretary in the Ministry Giridhar Aramane presided over the MoU signing ceremony.

Textiles Committee signed MoU with Japanese Nissenken Quality Evaluation Centre

- The **Textiles Committee of the Ministry of Textiles** has signed a **Memorandum of Understanding- MoU with Nissenken Quality Evaluation Centre, Japan** to boost export of Textile and Apparel to Japanese market.
- The MoU signing ceremony was held through video conferencing which was presided over by Minister of Textiles Smriti Irani and State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan Yasumasa Nagasaka.
- The main objective of the MoU is to provide required support to textile's trade and industry for ensuring quality as per the requirement of Japanese buyers.
- The MoU will strengthen the bilateral trade by enhancing India's export of Textile and Apparels to Japan, which is the third largest export destination of the world.

India to be a co-chair of regional forum to conserve wildlife habitats - Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP)

- **India** has been chosen as the IUCN-supported **Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP)** for **3 years** and it could, on this capability, help different Asian nations in managing their protected areas.
- **About APAP :**
- The APAP is a regional platform to assist governments and different stakeholders to collaborate for more practical administration of protected areas (PA) within the region.
- The APAP presently consists of **21 members from 17 nations** together with China, Japan, South Korea, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
- The APAP, formally launched at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Australia in 2014, is chaired by IUCN Asia and co-chaired by an APAP nation member.
- India will substitute South Korea which held this place for 3 years until November, 2020.
- Currently there are 21 members from 17 international locations.

Tata Power teams up with SIDBI to provide solar financing to MSMEs

- **Tata Power** announced its partnership with SIDBI to provide a finance scheme to the **MSME players** in the rooftop solar segment.
- This Scheme is easy financing and has been one of the barriers for penetration of solar in the MSME sector.
- That will empower MSMEs to adopt sustainable energy for their business and promote greener.
- Tata Power and SIDBI have joined hands to design a solar financing solution to help MSME players with financial aid without any collateral at an interest of less than 10 percent.
- The scheme will also be complimented with a sanction time of seven days and disbursal of money in four days.
- The benefits of the scheme can be availed by both off-grid and on-grid solar connections.

FSS and India Post Payments Bank AePS Partnership Advances Financial Inclusion in India

- **FSS (Financial Software and Systems)**, a leading global payment processor and provider of integrated payment products, announced partnering with **India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)** to promote financial inclusion among underserved and unbanked segments.
- As part of the collaboration, IPPB will use **FSS' Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS)** to deliver interoperable and affordable doorstep banking services to customers across India.
- This strategic partnership offers significant opportunities to bring millions of unbanked customers into the financial mainstream.
- IPPB has been set up with the vision to build the most accessible, affordable, and trusted bank for the common man in India to deliver banking at the customer's doorstep.

Flipkart, Niti Aayog collaborate to enhance Women Entrepreneurship Platform

- Walmart-owned Flipkart has partnered with Niti Aayog to launch the revamped Women Entrepreneurship Platform.
- The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is a first of its kind, unified access portal which brings together women from different parts of India to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations.
- The idea of the platform was first mooted by Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog who announced the setting-up of a Women Entrepreneurship Platform in NITI Aayog at the conclusion of the 8th Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) held in Hyderabad in 2017, with an overarching theme of 'Women first, prosperity for all'.

India and Japan Sign Agreement to Promote movement of Skilled Workers

- **India and Japan** have signed a **Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC)** on a basic partnership framework for operation of the '**specified skilled worker**' (SSW) system under which the Japanese government accepts foreign nationals who have a certain level of expertise and skill.
- The memorandum was signed by **Japanese Ambassador to India Suzuki Satoki** and **Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla**
- There are **14 specified industry fields** that fall under SSW and workers and professionals in those sectors could be eligible,
- These are: nursing care (caregiving); building-cleaning management; machine parts and tooling industries; industrial machinery industry; electric, electronics and information industries; construction industry; shipbuilding and ship machinery industry; automobile repair and maintenance; aviation industry; accommodation industry; agriculture, fishery & aquaculture; manufacture of food and beverages; and food service industry.

CCI approves Flipkart's 7.8% acquisition of Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail

- The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** approves acquisition of a minority stake in **Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Limited (ABFRL)** by Flipkart Investments Private Limited (FIPL).
- About FIPL :

- FIPL is a newly incorporated company and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Flipkart Private Limited (FPL). FPL belongs to the Walmart Group, which comprises Walmart Inc. (Walmart) and its affiliates.
- The Walmart Group undertakes various business activities in India, such as wholesale trading of products, providing e-commerce marketplace services and digital payments services.
- The proposed combination relates to acquisition by FIPL of a minority shareholding of 7.8%, on a fully diluted basis in ABFRL, by way of subscription equity shares.

India Inks Strategic Partnership With International Energy Agency

- **India and the International Energy Agency (IEA)** signed a framework for a strategic partnership to strengthen mutual trust and cooperation and to enhance global energy security, stability and sustainability.
- This partnership will lead to an extensive exchange of knowledge and would be a stepping stone towards India becoming a full member of the Paris-based IEA.
- The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by **Sanjiv Nandan Sahai**, Secretary (Power) and Dr. Fatih Birol, IEA Executive Director.
- Dr Birol termed the signing of the agreement as a historic moment and a huge step forward for global energy governance.

Important Summit & Conference

Dr. Harsh Vardhan digitally inaugurates the 7th NHM National Summit on Good, Replicable Practices through a video conference

- **Dr. Harsh Vardhan**, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare digitally inaugurated the 7th **National Summit on Good, Replicable Practices** through a video conference.
- Dr. Vardhan also launched New **Health Management Information System (HMIS)** along with the Operational Guidelines for TB services at AB-HWCs and the Operational Guidelines 2020 on Active Case Detection and Regular Surveillance for Leprosy.
- Main Objective : to recognize, showcase and document various best practices and innovations in public healthcare system
- While the first one was held in 2013 at Srinagar .

Defence Secretary co-chairs 13th India-Vietnam Defence Security Dialogue with his Vietnamese counterpart

- Defence Secretary **Dr Ajay Kumar** co-chaired the **13th India-Vietnam Defence Security** Dialogue along with his Vietnamese co-chair Sr Lt Gen Nguyen Chi Vinh, Deputy Defence Minister of Vietnam.
- During virtual interaction, both of them expressed satisfaction at the ongoing defence cooperation between the two countries in spite of the limitations imposed by COVID 19.
- During the interaction, the Defence Secretary and the Deputy Defence Minister exchanged views on the plan of action that has emanated from the recently concluded Virtual Summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Xuan Phuc in December 2020.

France hosts 4th One Planet Summit in cooperation with UN and World Bank

- The Government of France, in cooperation with the UN and the World Bank, the 'One Planet Summit' for biodiversity on January 11 aims to advance the protection of nature.
- French President Emmanuel Macron, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, and World Bank Group President David Malpass are organising the fourth 'One Planet Summit' which will focus on biodiversity to mobilise commitments to protect ecosystems and make links to human health.
- The theme of the Summit was "Let's act together for nature!"

The summit programme will focus on

- Biodiversity preservation
- The protection of terrestrial and marine ecosystems
- The promotion of agroecology,
- The mobilisation of funding for biodiversity
- The link between deforestation, species and human health.
- The event will be in a hybrid format with the participation of leaders in person in Paris and via video-teleconferencing. It will be live-streamed on webtv.un.org.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal inaugurates the Prarambh Startup India International Summit

- **The two day 'Prarambh', Startup India International Summit** began in New Delhi, with members of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) countries participating in the inaugural event.
- It was inaugurated by the union minister for railways, consumer affairs, commerce and industry **Piyush Goyal**.
- **15th India Digital Summit 2021**
- The **India Digital Summit**, the flagship event of the **Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)** is one of the biggest conferences for the digital industry scheduled on **January 19 and 20, 2021**.
- Honourable Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & IT and Law & Justice, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, who is the chief guest, will deliver the inaugural address at the Summit.

About the Summit :

- The summit, in its **15th year**, will bring thought leadership on various digital initiatives that will cover Policies, Business, Investment, Advertising, Digital Commerce, Start-ups Ecosystem, Emerging Tech, and other Digital Trends.
- The **theme** for this year's summit, which is being held virtually is 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat – Start of New Decade' in line with the government's 'Make for the World' Initiatives.
- The staggering increase in the total number of internet users in rural India recently presents us with the unique opportunity to establish India as a global powerhouse of Digital Growth.

- With an eye to empowering the nation's growing digital economy and bolstering Government of India's commitment to transform a connected nation by creating a new digital ecosystem, the 15th India Digital Summit (IDS) will be the platform for thought leaders to pursue the goal.

India, Singapore sign pact on submarine rescue support

- **India and Singapore** signed an implementing agreement on submarine rescue support and cooperation between their navies during the **5th Defence Minister's Dialogue** held over video conference,
- Both ministers were pleased to witness the signing of the implementing agreement on submarine rescue support and cooperation between the two navies.
- Rajnath Singh and his Singaporean counterpart **Ng Eng Hen** conveyed their full support towards early conclusion of agreements to "facilitate conduct of live firings and to establish reciprocal arrangements for the cross-attendance of military courses"

Important Defence News

Navy, DRDO conduct maiden trial of 1st indigenous air-droppable container

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** along with the Indian Navy conducted the successful maiden test trial of '**SAHAYAK-NG**' India's first indigenously designed and developed Air Dropped Container from IL 38SD aircraft (Indian Navy) off the coast of Goa.
- The trial was conducted by the Indian Navy to enhance its operational logistics capabilities and provide critical engineering stores to ships that are deployed more than 2000 kilometers from the coast.
- **SAHAYAK-NG** is an advanced version of **SAHAYAK Mk I**.
- The newly developed GPS aided air dropped container is having the capability to carry a payload that weighs up to 50 kilograms and can be dropped from heavy aircraft.
- SAHAYAK-NG container was developed by two DRDO laboratories i.e. NSTL, Visakhapatnam and ADRDE, Agra along with Avantel for GPS integration.

BEL signs contract with Indian Navy for Initial Supply of indigenously developed Laser Dazzlers

- **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)** has signed a contract with Indian Navy for initially supplying **20 Light Amplification** by Stimulated Emission of Radiation Dazzlers (Laser Dazzlers) in New Delhi.
- The BEL had earlier this month won the contract beating global Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) in the global category.
- These would be manufactured by **BEL, Pune plant**.
- Laser dazzler technology was developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- This unique product is indigenously designed and developed for the first time for the Armed Forces.

Indian Army inks pact with Goa Shipyard to get 12 fast patrol boats for Pangong Tso lake by May

- **Indian Army** has inked a contract with M/s Goa Shipyard Limited for **12 Fast Patrol Boats** for surveillance and patrolling of large water bodies, including those in high altitude areas. Delivery would commence from May 2021.
- Indian Army would soon be getting high-powered and bigger capacity boats to meet the strength of the Chinese vessels.
- It is the Pangong lake that's been the sticking point with the Chinese troops occupying areas on the northern bank of the lake that had been in India's control.
- The indigenously built strong boats will have better anti-ramming capabilities and an enhanced capacity to accommodate additional troops.
- The new boats will be stronger with more capacity and are being manufactured in India," said an official privy to the developments.
- The need to upgrade boats used to patrol the Pangong Tso lake was felt in the wake of the military tussle between the Indian and the Chinese troops, and the continued standoff across the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**.

GRSE delivers eighth landing craft utility ship to Indian Navy

- On December 31, 2020, Kolkata-based, Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), delivered the last ship of the **MK IV Landing Craft Utility (LCU)** class vessel '**IN LCU L-58**' (Yard 2099) to the Indian Navy.
- The amphibious ships, to be based in the strategic location of Andaman and Nicobar Islands which is close to various routes leading to the South China Sea.
- **LCU L-58** is the eighth and final ship in the series of 8 LCUs manufactured by GRSE for the Indian Navy.

India, Israel successfully test MRSAM air and missile defence system

- **India and Israel** successfully tested a Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) defence system.
- The missile has been jointly developed by **IAI and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- This has been done in a partnership with other defence companies in Israel and India.

Harsh Vardhan inaugurates Coastal Research Vessel 'Sagar Anveshika'

- Union Minister of Earth Sciences, **Dr Harsh Vardhan** on January 09 inaugurated Coastal Research Vessel (CRV) '**Sagar Anveshika**' at Chennai Port Trust.
- It will be used for research purposes by the **National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)** and has been built by Titagarh Wagons, Kolkata, West Bengal.
- The vehicle will be used to carry out environment indexing and bathymetric (mapping underwater features) in both coastal and offshore waters.
- NIOT already has 6 Research Vessels – Sagar Kanya, Sagar Sampada, Sagar Nidhi, Sagar Manusha, & Sagar Tara.

Cabinet clears purchase of 83 Tejas fighter jets for Indian Air Force

- Government has approved procurement of **83 Light Combat Aircraft, LCA, Tejas** worth about 48 thousand crore rupees from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited for Indian Air Force.
- The Cabinet Committee on Security, CCS chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.
- The procurement of **73 LCA Tejas Mk-1A fighter aircrafts** and **10 LCA Tejas Mk-1 Trainer aircrafts** at the cost of Rs. 45,696 crore along with Design and Development of Infrastructure sanctions worth Rs.1,202 crore has been approved by the Cabinet under the PM Modi.
- Light Combat Aircraft Mk-1A variant is an indigenously designed, developed and manufactured state-of-the-art modern 4+ generation fighter aircraft.
- This aircraft is equipped with critical operational capabilities of Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) Radar, Beyond Visual Range (BVR) Missile, Electronic Warfare (EW) Suite and Air to Air Refuelling (AAR).

Five day Indo-French Air exercise, Ex Desert Knight-21 begins in Jodhpur

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

Andaman and Nicobar Command to conduct Indian Armed forces' joint military exercise 'Kavach'

- A large-scale joint military exercise '**Excercise Kavach**' will be conducted in the coming week under the aegis of **Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC)**, the only Joint Forces Command of India.
- The joint military exercise Kavach will involve the **Indian Navy, Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Indian Coast Guard**.
- **Aim** : The tri-services exercise aims to fine-tune joint war-fighting capabilities and SOPs towards enhancing operational synergy.
- During the exercise, the joint force will implement high-density offensive and defensive measures in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. In addition, they will carry out amphibious landing operations, with helicopters transporting maritime special forces, and finally tactical follow-up operations on land.
- In addition to the Kavach exercise, a joint intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) exercise will also be held. ISR will verify the intelligence gathering capabilities. In addition, it will verify information sharing capabilities from space, land, air and sea.

BSF launches Operation 'Sard Hawa' at Rajasthan border

- **Border Security Force (BSF)** launched Operation **Sard Hawa** on the western international border of Rajasthan.
- It aims to increase security on the borders in Jaisalmer.
- This operation will continue till January 27 with an aim that there is no intrusion.
- It was launched on 21 January 2021, and will continue till 27 January 2021, keeping in view Republic Day of India.

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

- A large-scale tri-service joint amphibious exercise **AMPHEX – 21** was conducted in the **Andaman & Nicobar group of islands from 21 – 25 Jan 2021**.
- The exercise involved participation of **Naval ships**, amphibious troops of the Army and different types of aircraft from the Air force.
- The exercise was aimed at **validating India's capabilities to safeguard the territorial integrity of its island territories**.
- It also sought to enhance operational synergy and joint warfighting capabilities amongst the three Services.
- The exercise involved multi-faceted maritime operations by synergised employment of amphibious assault ships, surveillance platforms, execution of maritime air strikes and complex manoeuvres at sea.
- Airborne insertion of Marine Commandos of Navy and Special Forces of the Army, naval gunfire support, amphibious landing of forces and follow-on operations also formed part of the exercise.
- Ex KAVACH for defence of Andaman & Nicobar Islands formed a part of AMPHEX – 21.

DRDO's successful flight test of Smart Anti Airfield Weapon

- **The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** conducted a successful trial of the indigenously developed Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW) off the **Odisha** coast from the Hawk-I jet of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- The smart weapon was successfully test fired from **Indian Hawk-Mk132 of HAL**.
- It was a text book launch, which met all mission objectives.
- This was the ninth successful test of the system conducted over the last five years.
- SAAW is indigenously designed and developed by DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI) Hyderabad.
- This is a 125-kilogram class smart weapon, capable of engaging ground enemy airfield assets such as radars, bunkers, taxi tracks, and runways, up to a range of 100 kilometres.

DRDO conducts maiden launch of Akash missile at integrated test range in Odisha

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully conducted the **maiden launch** of the new generation of **surface-to-air Akash missile** from integrated test range off the coast of Odisha.
- The new generation missile is designed for use by the **Indian Air Force (IAF)** in order to intercept high maneuvering aerial threats.

- The test launch at Odisha was carried off in presence of DRDO, BDL (Bharat Dynamics Ltd), the ammunition and missile system manufacturer and BEL (Bharat Electronics Ltd.), the public aerospace company. Representatives from the IAF were also present at the test launch site.

Venkaiah Naidu inaugurates integrated weapons design centre

- Vice President **M Venkaiah Naidu** inaugurated the Integrated Weapons System Design Centre at DRDO's Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Missile complex in Hyderabad.
- The facility would enhance the capability in design and development of command and control systems for **surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems** and **ballistic missile defence (BMD) systems**,
- The DRDO officials briefed Naidu on the various ongoing projects and technological developments of missile complex laboratories Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL) and Research Centre Imarat (RCI).
- The exposition will display missile technologies and weapon systems and the centre will be the backbone for outreach activities.

Important Science and Technology News

India's First Testbed for Autonomous Navigation Systems launched at IIT Hyderabad : TiHAN

- Union Minister of Education **Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank** virtually laid the foundation stone of 'TiHAN-IIT Hyderabad, India's first Testbed for Autonomous Navigation Systems (Terrestrial and Aerial) at IIT Hyderabad.
- The **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**, Government of India, has sanctioned Rs. **135 crores** to IIT Hyderabad under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS) to set up a Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation and Data Acquisition Systems.
- The Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation Systems for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and Remotely Operated Vehicles at IIT Hyderabad, known as 'TiHAN Foundation' has been incorporated as a Section-8 company by the institute in June 2020.

BARC-developed plaque therapy successfully used on eye cancer patients in AIIMS

- The **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Mumbai** has developed an eye cancer therapy in the form of the first indigenous Ruthenium **106 Plaque** for the treatment of ocular tumours.
- The handling of plaque is very convenient for surgeons and it has been acknowledged to be at par with international standards.

ISRO to launch first satellite developed entirely by Brazil's space agency

- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro)** is set to launch **Amazonia-1**, the first satellite to have been developed completely in **Brazil** by the **National Institute for Space Research (INPE)**, the Latin American nation's apex space research body.
- Emirates SkyCargo, the freight division of Emirates airline, has executed a cargo charter to transport Amazonia-1 from Sao Jose dos Campos, Brazil to Chennai. This is the first time that Emirates SkyCargo has transported a space satellite from South America.

- The satellite is due to be sent to space in **February 2021** from the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre** on the East coast of India.
- India and Brazil signed a Framework Agreement for cooperation in the field of outer space in January 2004. Apart from this, an agreement on the programme of cooperation between the two space agencies was also signed. Under this, Brazil received data from ISRO's remote sensing satellite ResourceSAT-1.
- The two countries, in July 2014, also signed an agreement on cooperation to alter a Brazilian earth station to receive and process data from the Indian Remote Sensing satellites (IRS) series.

IAF Chief, Air Marshal R K S Bhaduria launches IAF e-Governance (e-Office) portal in New Delhi

- **Indian Air Force Chief, Air Marshal R K S Bhaduria** formally launched the IAF e-Governance (e-Office) portal in Vayu Bhavan, New Delhi.
- The launch of the portal is part of **Digital India and e-governance initiative** that will transform the entire Indian Air Force into a paperless office workflow.
- The platform will ensure enhanced transparency, improved efficiency, increased accountability, assured data integrity and rapidly accessible archives along with a major reduction in the use of paper.

Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurates the new entity CSIR-NIScPR in New Delhi

- The Union Minister of Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Health & Family Welfare **Dr. Harsh Vardhan** inaugurated a new institute of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (CSIR-NIScPR), in New Delhi.
- The new institute has been established consequent to the merger of two prestigious institutes of CSIR namely, CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (CSIR-NISCAIR) and CSIR-National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies (CSIR-NISTADS) which work at the interface of S&T and Society; and Science Communication and Policy Research.
- The purpose of this merger is to combine the strength of the two institutes in a synergistic way with a VISION to become a globally respected Think Tank and Resource Centre for understanding Science, Technology & Innovation (STI) Policy Research and Communication.

ICT Grand Challenge for development of 'smart water supply measurement and monitoring system' underway

- An ICT Grand Challenge for development of a '**smart water supply measurement and monitoring system**' is underway.
- It was launched on the **15th of September, 2020** by National Jal Jeevan Mission in partnership with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- Jal Jeevan Mission would be the user agent of the Grand Challenge and C-DAC, Bangalore is the implementing agency, providing technical support for the challenge.
- Currently, 10 applicants which were selected are developing prototypes.

- They will be evaluated in the last week of January wherein best four techno-economically viable prototypes will be selected for product development.
- Jal Jeevan Mission is a flagship programme of the Union Government which aims to provide tap water connection to every rural household by 2024. Announced by the Prime Minister on 15th August 2019, the Mission so far has provided 3.13 crore household tap connections in rural areas.

DRDO develops India's first indigenous 9mm machine pistol ASMI

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has developed the country's first indigenous machine pistol ASMI.
- The pistol which is developed by DRDO along with the help of Indian Army is set to replace the 9mm pistols in the defence forces. It was displayed at an event of the Indian Army.
- DRDO's Pune-based facility **Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE)** and the Infantry School designed and developed this weapon utilising their respective areas of expertise in a record time of four months.

NASA targets final test of 'world's most powerful rocket'

- **The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** is looking to carry out the eighth and final test in its "Green Run" test series on January 17.
- This eighth stage, termed hot fire will bring to an end a series of tests which, NASA says, will gradually bring together the core stage of the Space Launch System (SLS) to life for the very first time.
- The core stage of the SLS will form the backbone of what NASA says will be the "most powerful rocket in the world" and will power its next-generation human Moon Missions

Infosys gets Google Cloud Partner status

- **Infosys** has accredited with the **Google Cloud Partner** Specialisation within the information and analytics area.
- It is among the many high world system integrators to be accredited with this specialisation, claimed the corporation.
- Infosys has achieved this recognition by efficiently demonstrating end-to-end capabilities on Google Cloud together with information ingestion and warehousing on the cloud, as per the agency.
- It has showcased technical proficiency, sturdy methodology, robust business experience, and success in specialised information and analytics options and repair areas.
- These information and analytics choices, a part of Infosys Cobalt.
- Along with AI capabilities assist migrate workloads to Google Cloud, modernise information landscapes, and optimise prices paving the best way for AI and cloud-native digital transformation for enterprises, Infosys additionally mentioned.

MeiTY and AWS announced Quantum Computing Applications Lab in India

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY)** has announced the establishment of a Quantum Computing Applications Lab in partnership with Amazon Web Services (AWS).

- The move will give select researchers, scientists access to **Amazon's Braket cloud-based quantum computing service**.
- The Quantum Computing Application Lab in collaboration with AWS is the first lab on AWS that's aligned to a government mission.
- It is to be implemented by the Department of Science and Technology operating under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- The MeitY Quantum Computing Applications Lab will provide quantum computing as a service to government ministries and departments, researchers, scientists, academia, and developers, to enable advances in areas such as manufacturing, healthcare, agriculture, and aerospace engineering.
- The Union Budget 2020-21 had proposed to spend Rs. 8000 crores on the National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications.

IT minister to launch 'Work from Anywhere' portal, Tejas Virtual Intelligence tool at NICSI event

- **IT and Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad** will launch virtual intelligence tool Tejas and 'Work from Anywhere' portal.
- The **National Informatics Centre Services Inc (NICSI)**, a public sector enterprise under the National Informatics Centre (NIC), will celebrate 25 years of its establishment at an event.
- Tejas, a virtual intelligence tool that extracts critical information from data to make its meaningful information for policy decisions and improving efficiency in government services and citizen delivery.
- It will also launch '**e-Auction India**' to cater to electronic forward and reverse auction requirements of the government organisations serving **online 24x7**.
- Also launch '**Work from Anywhere**' portal, a virtual environment that enables employees to "access routine applications like e-office, calendar, mail, and other departmental applications and communicate across through VC ensuring safety during this pandemic with social distancing and work assurance from anywhere.

Important Rankings and Indexes

World's Most Powerful Passports 2021 List: India On No. 85

- **Henley and Partners Passport Index of 2021 has revealed the list of the world's most powerful passports and India has been ranked 85th on it.**
- India's passport got a visa-free score of 58, which means Indian passport holders can visit 58 countries without prior visa. India shares the no. 85 rank with Tajikistan.
- Japan tops the list of being the most powerful passport in the world for the year 2021, according to the latest report by the Henley Passport Index released on January 5.
- Singapore is in second place (with a score of 190) and South Korea ties with Germany in third place (with a score of 189).

- Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan continue to be the countries with the 'worst passports to hold' at the bottom of the list with a passport score of 29, 28 and 26 respectively.

Most Powerful Passports in 2021 are:

1. Japan (191 destinations)
2. Singapore (190)
3. South Korea, Germany (189)
4. Italy, Finland, Spain, Luxembourg (188)
5. Denmark, Austria (187)
6. Sweden, France, Portugal, Netherlands, Ireland (186)
7. Switzerland, United States, United Kingdom, Norway, Belgium, New Zealand (185)
8. Greece, Malta, Czech Republic, Australia (184)
9. Canada (183)
10. Hungary (181)

Worst Passports to Hold :

Several countries around the world have visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to fewer than 40 countries. These include the following.

103. North Korea (39 destinations)
104. Libya, Nepal (38)
105. Palestinian territories (37)
106. Somalia, Yemen (33)
107. Pakistan (32)
108. Syria (29)
109. Iraq (28)
110. Afghanistan (26)

NITI Aayog releases 2nd edition of India Innovation Index-2020

- **NITI Aayog** released the second edition of the **India Innovation Index-2020**.
- The index demonstrates the government's continued commitment towards transforming the country into an innovation-driven economy.
- The report examines the innovation capabilities and performance of the states and union territories.
- The India Innovation Index aims to create an extensive framework for the continual evaluation of India's innovation environment. The index aims to rank states and UTs based on their scores, recognize opportunities and challenges, and assist in tailoring government policies to foster innovation.
- The innovation inputs were measured through five enabler parameters, and the output through two performance parameters. While 'Human Capital', 'Investment', 'Knowledge Workers', 'Business Environment', 'Safety and Legal

Environment Were identified as enabler parameters, 'Knowledge Output' and 'Knowledge Diffusion' Were chosen as the performance parameters.

- In the 'Major States' category, Karnataka continued to occupy the top position, while Maharashtra moved past Tamil Nadu to reach the second place. Telangana
- In Union Territory and city states category, Delhi topped followed by Chandigarh.
- Under the 'North-Eastern/Hill States' category, Himachal Pradesh moved up from the second position to emerge as the top ranker this year.

The Global Risks Report 2021, 16th Edition

- Infectious diseases topped the global risks chart, displacing climate change, in a report by the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**.
- In the Global Risks Report 2021, we share the results of the latest **Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS)**, followed by analysis of growing social, economic and industrial divisions, their interconnections, and their implications on our ability to resolve major global risks requiring societal cohesion and global cooperation.
- The report is being released before WEF upcoming virtual Davos Agenda scheduled to be held between **January 25 to 29, 2021**.
- The Main objective behind the publishing of the report is to enable better preparation by Government & other International Communities during the times of crisis.

TCS is third most valued IT services brand globally: Brand Finance

- **Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. (TCS)** is now the **world's third most-valued IT services brand**, only behind industry heavyweights Accenture Plc and International Business Machines Corp. (IBM), according to a report.
- Four Indian IT services companies **TCS, Infosys Ltd. (4), HCL Technologies Ltd. (7) and Wipro Ltd. (9) have secured spots in the Top-10 global rankings.**
- The brand value of HDFC Bank is recorded **at USD 15 billion.**
- Accenture retained the title of world's most valuable and strongest IT services brand with a record brand value of \$26 billion, while IBM continued at the second place with brand value of \$16.1 billion.

Climate risk Index India Ranks in 7th

- **India is among the top 10 most affected countries in the Global Climate Risk Index 2021** published by the Bonn-based environmental think tank **Germanwatch**.
- India ranked as the Seventh worst hit country in terms of climate change in 2019.
- It is the 16th edition of the report and has taken into account the data available for 2019 and from 2000 to 2019.
- It caused catastrophic damage and a humanitarian crisis, making Mozambique and Zimbabwe the two most affected countries in 2019.
- In the past 20 years (2000-2019), Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Haiti were the countries most affected by the impacts of such weather events.

India ranks 86th in corruption perception index 2020

- **India's rank has slipped six places to 86th among 180 countries** in corruption perception index (CPI) in 2020.
- For 2020, **Transparency International (TI)'s Corruption Perception Index (CPI)** was released.
- The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and business people, uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.
- India's rank is 86 out of 180 nations with a score of 40.
- This year, New Zealand and Denmark rank at first position with scores of 88. Somalia and South Sudan rank lowest at 179th position with scores of 12.
- India is sharing its position jointly with Burkina Faso, Morocco, East Timor, Trinidad and Tobago and Turkey.

India ranks 10th in Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index

- **India ranked 10th out of 11 Asia Pacific countries** in a newly-launched health index to measure the progress towards personalised healthcare.
- Overall, Singapore has topped the index. It is followed by **Taiwan (2nd), Japan (3rd) and Australia (4th)**.

Important Books and Authors

Authors/ Released by	Books
Authored by R. Kaushik	India's 71-Year Test
R Giridharan	Right Under our Nose'
published by Maneesh Media	Modi India Calling - 2021
Najma Heptulla virtually released	Making of a General A Himalayan Echo
Pramod Sawant released the book	'Manohar Parrikar - Off the Record'

Important Sports News

Leon Mendonca becomes India's 67th chess Grandmaster

- Goa's 14-year-old **Leon Mendonca** has become India's **67th chess GrandMaster (GM)** by winning the third and final norm at a tournament in Italy.
- Mendonca, who achieved the feat at 14 years, 9 months and 17 days, is the second GM from the Coastal State.
- The **All India Chess Federation (AICF)** acknowledged the development. Leon is the second Indian to become GM this year after G. Akash.
- He achieved his first GM norm at the Rigo Chess GM Round Robin in October while the second came at the first Saturday in Budapest in November. His final GM norm came at the Vergani Cup in Italy that ended on December 30.
- GM is a title awarded by FIDE (International Chess Federation). It is the highest title a chess player can obtain apart from World Champion.

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

- **Australia's Claire Polosak** is set to become the first female match official in a men's Test match when she takes up the fourth umpire's role in the third Test between India and Australia.
- The 32-year-old from New South Wales has already earned the distinction of being the first woman on-field umpire in a men's ODI match in **ICC's Division 2 league** between Namibia and Oman played at the Windhoek in 2019.

Khelo India Ice Hockey tournament begins in Chiktan, Kargil

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

First ever Ice climbing festival celebrated in Nubra valley

- In Leh, the primary ever **Ice climbing festival** was celebrated in **Nubra valley**.
- The Seven Day occasion was organized by **Nubra Adventure Club**.
- Ice Climbing is a Popular Winter sport abroad and that will attract adventure tourists.
- The motive to conduct the **Ice festival** is to promote tourism in the region.
- 18 participants across Nubra valley including 4 women, have taken part in Ice climbing.
- Three trainers Rigzin tsewang, Tsewang Namgyal and Kran Kowshik imparted ice climbing skills.

In Ladakh Khelo India 1st Zaskar Winter Sports Festival begins

- In Ladakh, **Khelo India 1st Zaskar Winter Sports Festival** began On Jan 18, 2021.
- Aim : Engaging the Youth and opening new vistas of tourism in Zaskar are the main aims of the festival.
- Ladakh MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal inaugurated Chadar Trek to kick start and set the tone for 13- Day Zaskar Winter Sports Festival from the confluence of Indus and Zaskar rivers near Sangam, Leh.
- On 21st January Union Youth Affairs & Sports Minister Kirren Rijju will be inaugurating the Zaskar Winter festival.
- A series of snow based activities are scheduled for next 13 days in the Snow bound, picturesque remote Zaskar.
- The first ever Zaskar winter festival would definitely open a new arena in Ladakh for adventure and Nature loving tourists and a boost for local Youth to hone up their skills in winter sports to represent India.

Sporting facilities to be named after renowned athletes

- **Sports Ministry** has decided to name all upcoming and upgraded sporting facilities of the Sports Authority of India, after renowned athletes, who have contributed to sports in India

- At First, the newly built air-conditioned wrestling hall and the learners swimming pool in the **National Centre of Excellence, NOCE** in Lucknow, the 100-bedded hostel in **NCOE Bhopal**, the multipurpose hall and Girls' hostel in **NCOE Sonepat** will be named after local star sportspersons.
- Sports Minister : Kiren Rijiju

Axelsen And Marin Win Titles At Yonex Thailand Open

- **Denmark's Viktor Axelsen and Spain's Carolina Marin** have won the men's and women's singles titles at the **Badminton World Federation (BWF) Yonex Thailand** in Bangkok, the first of three competitions in the Thai capital.
- It was held from 12 January 2021 to 17 January 2021.
- It was the first badminton tournament of 2021 by Badminton World Federation (BWF).

India defeat Australia by 3 wickets to win Border-Gavaskar Trophy

- **Ajinkya Rahane**-led India defeated Australia by three wickets in the final fourth Test of the **Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2020-21**.
- To clinch the series and bring an end to **Australia's** 32-year-long unbeaten streak at The Gabba.
- Australia's last defeat in Brisbane came against West Indies in 1988.
- They were undefeated at The Gabba in their last 31 games having won 24 and drawn seven matches.
- In that Man of the match is Rishabh Pant.

ITBP wins IHAI National Ice Hockey Championship in Gulmarg

- **The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)** has won the **10th National Ice Hockey Championship** organised by the Ice Hockey Association of India, after defeating Ladakh with five goals to one.
- The match was held at **Gulmarg Ice Rink**.
- On behalf of ITBP, Ugyan and Tashi scored two goals each while Punchuk scored one goal.
- The championship, which concluded on Friday, was held at an altitude of 8,694-feet and temperatures below freezing point.
- Top eight teams of ice hockey in India participated in the event.
- Ladakh has been considered as the capital of ice hockey in India where local men and women play this game with great enthusiasm.

Syed Mustaq Ali Trophy 2020-21 to be played in Ahmedabad

- **Syed Mustaq Ali Trophy 2020-21** will be played from 26-31 January, at Sardar Patel Stadium, Ahmedabad.
- As per schedule, four quarter finals will be played from 26-27 January, two semi finals on January 29, with the final scheduled on January 31.
- The **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** has conducted a fresh round of Covid tests on the players who will be taking part in the knockouts of the Syed Mushtaq Ali National Twenty20 championship.
- The eight teams which have qualified for the knockouts - Karnataka, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Baroda, Bihar and Rajasthan.

2022 AFC Women's Asia Cup in India

- **2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup**, set to be held in India, has been confirmed by the continental governing body.
- The marquee women's football event will start on **January 20, 2022**, and will finish on **February 6, 2022**.
- The tournament has also been expanded to feature 12 of the best teams on the continent. It must be noted that the previous edition of the Women's Asian Cup, which was held in Jordan, had featured only eight teams.
- The **12 teams** will be divided into three groups of four and eight teams will qualify to the quarter-finals, including two third-placed teams.
- A total of 25 matches will be played across 18 days during the tournament.
- The 2022 Women's Asian Cup will also serve as a qualification tournament for the 2023 Women's World Cup which will be held in Australia (affiliated to the AFC) and New Zealand (affiliated to the OFC).
- The best four teams from the 2022 Women's Asian Cup, along with Australia, will take part in the 2023 Women's World Cup.

Ranji Trophy cancelled for the first time in 87 years

- The **BCCI** will not be conducting its premier first-class domestic tournament Ranji Trophy for the first time in 87 years as the parent body opted for the **Vijay Hazare Trophy**.
- The BCCI will also host the **U-19 National One Day tournament** for the Vinoo Mankad Trophy and the Women's national 50-over tournament as per a letter sent by BCCI secretary Jay Shah to the state units.

Jay Shah takes over as Asian Cricket Council President

- **BCCI secretary Jay Shah** was unanimously elected as the president of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) at its Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- The 32-year-old replaces Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief **Najmul Hasan Papon**.
- Pakistan was to originally host the tournament but the tournament is now expected to be held in either Sri Lanka or Bangladesh.

Important Obituaries

Name	Field
Indira Joseph Venniyor	Veteran broadcaster
John Fulton Reid	New Zealand cricketer
Col Narendra 'Bull' Kumar	Ace mountaineer Colonel
Buta Singh	Former Union minister and Congress leader
Shantanu Mohapatra	Legendary Odia music director
Vilas Patil Undalkar	Former Maharashtra minister
Michael Kindo	Olympic bronze and World Cup winner hockey player
Anil Panachooran	Malayalam poet and lyricist

Modibo Keita	Mali ex-PM
Bob Brett	coach to Grand Slam tennis champions
Alan Burgess	Oldest living first-class cricketer
Ramachandran	Former Kerala minister and Congress leader
Satya Paul	Indian Fashion designer
A. Madhavan	Tamil Writer & Sahitya Akademi winner
Chitra Ghosh	Veteran Professor& Niece of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose
Madhavsinh Solanki	Veteran Congress leader and former Gujarat Chief Minister
Turlapati Kutumba Rao	Veteran journalist & Padma Awardee
Neil Sheehan	American Journalist
D Prakash Rao	Social Activist
Kamal Morarka	Former Union Minister
Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan	Legendary musician
Phil Spector	Phil Spector
Dr V Shanta	Indian oncologist
Mata Prasad	Former Arunachal Pradesh Governor
Unnikrishnan Namboothiri	Malayalam actor
Gajendra Singh Shaktawat	Congress MLA from Vallabh Nagar
Narendra Chanchal	Popular Singer
Larry King	legendary talk show host
Narendra Luther	Civil servant, historian, author, poet and chronicler
Prasanta Dora	Former India and Mohun Bagan goalkeeper
Cloris Leachman	Oscar And Emmy-Winning Actor
Paul Crutzen	Nobel Prize-winning chemist