
MANTHAN

A General Awareness Weekly

1st February to 7th February, 2021

PREFACE

Dear Students,

The 'Current Affairs' section is an integral part of any examination. This edition of Manthan has been developed by our team to help you cover all the important events of the Week. This comprehensive bulletin will help you prepare the section in a vivid manner. We hope that our sincere efforts will serve you in a better way to fulfill aspirations.

Happy Reading

Team CL



Career
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National



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Chauri Chaura centenary celebrations

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Chauri Chaura Centenary Celebrations at Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh via video conferencing on 4 February 2021.** The Prime Minister also released a postal stamp dedicated to the Chauri Chaura centenary during the event.
- **“Incident of Chauri Chaura was not limited to a police station being set on fire.** The message of the incident was huge. Due to various reasons, it was treated as a minor incident, but we should see it in context. The fire was not just in the station but in the hearts of people,” PM Modi said.
- **Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath was also present on the occasion. The centenary celebrations and various events planned by the State government began in all 75 districts of the state. The Uttar Pradesh government has planned to develop the ‘Chauri Chaura Shaheed Memorial’ in Gorakhpur as a heritage tourist spot ahead as the state government decides to hold yearlong celebrations to mark 100 years of the ‘Chauri Chaura’ incident.**
- **On 5 February 1922, participants of the Non-cooperation movement clashed with police resulting in the deaths of about 22 policemen and 3 civilians at Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district in the United Provinces (present-day Uttar Pradesh).**

On 1 August, 1920, Mahatma Gandhi had launched the Non-Cooperation Movement against the British government. It involved using swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods, especially machine made cloth, and legal, educational and administrative institutions, “refusing to assist a ruler who misrules”. On 4 February, about 2500 people marched towards the Chauri Chaura market in order to picket a shop selling liquor. One of their leaders was arrested. A group of people then marched towards the police station demanding the release of the arrested leader. The police fired into the crowd killing some people and injuring many volunteers. In retaliation, the crowd proceeded to set the police station on fire. Some of the policemen who tried to escape were caught and battered to death. A lot of police property, including weapons, was destroyed. Mahatma Gandhi condemned the crime of the policemen’s killing. The volunteer groups in nearby villages were disbanded, and a Chauri Chaura Support Fund was set up to demonstrate “genuine sympathy” and seek atonement. Gandhi decided to stop the Non-Cooperation Movement, which he saw as having been tainted by unforgivable violence. He bent the Congress Working Committee to his will, and on 12th February, 1922, the satyagraha (movement) was formally suspended. Other leaders like Motilal Nehru and CR Das recorded their dismay at Gandhi’s decision and decided to establish the Swaraj Party.

VP M Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated National Tribal Festival ‘Aadi Mahotsav’ in Delhi

- **Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated Aadi Mahotsav, a National Tribal Festival at Dilli Haat in INA in the National Capital. It will continue till 15th of this month. The Tribal Affairs Ministry said, the Aadi Mahotsav - A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Crafts, Cuisine and Commerce is a successful annual initiative that was commenced in 2017. The festival was an attempt to familiarise the people with the rich and diverse craft, culture of the tribal communities across the country, in one place.**

- **The festival at Dilli Haat in INA will comprise display and sale of tribal art and craft, medicine, cuisine and folk performances.** Around one thousand tribal artisans, artists and chefs from more than 20 States of the country will participate and provide a glimpse of their rich traditional culture.
- **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED), as the nodal agency under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, has been working to improve the income and livelihoods of the tribal people, while preserving their way of life and traditions.**

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) launched Van Dhan Samajik Doori Jagrookta Abhiyaan, which is aimed at educating Tribals engaged in gathering Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in forest areas, on covid-19 response, key preventive behaviour like social distancing, home quarantine, and hygiene tips. Van Dhan Kendras, established under the scheme initiated by TRIFED, Ministry of Tribal Affairs are leading the way in helping tribals generate their livelihood in these distressed times. TRIFED is a national level cooperative body under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. It was established under the Multi-state co-operative societies act 1984 under the former Ministry of Welfare. Arjun Munda is the current Minister of Tribal Affairs.

Uttar Pradesh: Varanasi receives second cruise boat under PRASAD scheme

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's parliamentary constituency, Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, received the second cruise boat under the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) scheme of the Central Government.**
- **This two-tier cruise boat will run in waters of Ganga River and show the tourists the spectacular view of 84 ghats of Kashi. The cruise named UP tourism ferry reached through waterways from Goa to Varanasi via Kolkata, Odisha, Patna and Ghazipur in more than two months and hundreds of localites gathered at Ramnagar terminal to get the first look of it.**

Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India as well as the most populous country subdivision in the world. It was created on 1 April 1937 as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh during British rule, and was renamed Uttar Pradesh in 1950, giving the acronym UP. The state is divided into 18 divisions and 75 districts with the capital being Lucknow. On 9 November 2000, a new state, Uttarakhand, was carved out from the state's Himalayan hill region. The two major rivers of the state, the Ganges and Yamuna, join at Allahabad and flow further east as Ganges. The state contributes 80 seats to the lower house of the Indian Parliament, Lok Sabha and 31 seats to the upper house of the Indian Parliament, Rajya Sabha.

Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' addresses inaugural ceremony of ASEAN India Hackathon

- **Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' addressed the inaugural ceremony of the ASEAN India Hackathon. Hackathon will provide a unique opportunity to India and ASEAN broad themes of "Blue Economy" and "Education".**
- **ASEAN-INDIA Hackathon is an initiative taken by the Ministry of Education. The ASEAN India Hackathon is being organized online from 1st -3rd February 2021 and prize distribution will take place on 4th February 2021. This unique hackathon offers opportunities for all the 10 ASEAN countries and India to forward their economic and cultural ties through collaboration in education, science and technology.**
- **The ASEAN-INDIA Hackathon is an initiative taken by Ministry of Education on the clarion call of Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi. This unique hackathon offers opportunities for all the 10 ASEAN countries and India to forward their economic and cultural ties through collaboration in education, science and technology.**

The Ministry of Education (MoE), previously the Ministry of Human Resource Development (1985-2020), is responsible for the implementation and formulation of the National Policy on Education approved by Union cabinet of India and to ensure that it is implemented in letter and spirit. The Ministry is held currently by Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank. He represents the Haridwar Parliamentary constituency of Uttarakhand in the 17th Lok Sabha. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is the First Minister of Education in the Indian. He is commonly remembered as Maulana Azad; the word Maulana is an honorific meaning 'Our Master' and he had adopted Azad (Free) as his pen name.

Defence Minister inaugurated Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's second LCA production line

- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's second LCA production line in Bengaluru.** The indigenously designed 4.5 generation Light Combat Aircraft, **Tejas is the lightest and smallest fly by wire multirole combat aircraft.** The inauguration of a second plant for LCA will enable HAL to produce 16 aircraft annually.
- **The Defence Minister will be felicitated by the state Government for clearing the proposal of procuring 83 LCA Mk 1A aircraft from HAL. 48000 crore rupees deal will generate jobs in the state and also support the aerospace industries in Karnataka.**

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is charged with coordinating and supervising all agencies and functions of the government relating directly to national security and the Indian armed forces. The President of India is the ceremonial commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the country. The Indian Armed Forces (including Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and Indian Navy) and Indian Coast Guard under the Ministry of Defences are primarily responsible for ensuring the territorial integrity of the nation. A military department was created by the supreme government of the British East India Company at Kolkata in the year 1776. **Rajnath Singh is currently serving as the Defence Minister of India.** He has been **Member of parliament, Lok Sabha two times from Lucknow (Lok Sabha constituency)** and once from Ghaziabad (Lok Sabha constituency).

Agricultural credit target enhanced to 16.5 lakh crore rupees in the next fiscal

- **To provide adequate credit to farmers, the government has enhanced the agricultural credit target to 16.5 lakh crore rupees in next fiscal with focus on ensuring increased credit flows to animal husbandry, dairy, and fisheries.**
- Government has also enhanced the allocation to the **Rural Infrastructure Development Fund from 30,000 to 40,000 crore rupees.** It has **enlarged the scope of Operation Green Scheme to include 22 perishable products besides tomatoes, onions, and potatoes.** Government has also decided to integrate **1,000 more mandis with e-NAM to ensure transparency and competitiveness in the agricultural market.**
- **The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund will be made available to APMCs for augmenting their infrastructure facilities. Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban) will be launched to provide universal water supply in all 4,378 Urban Local Bodies with 2.86 crore household tap connections to be implemented over 5 years, with an outlay of 2 lakh 87 thousand crores.**

The agriculture contribution in India's GDP in 2019 is 15.96 percent. According to latest report, **agriculture is primary source of livelihood for 58% population in India.** The Primary sector of the economy includes any industry involved in the extraction and production of raw materials, such as farming, logging, hunting, fishing, and mining. India is a global agricultural powerhouse. It is the **world's largest producer of milk, pulses, and spices, and has the world's largest cattle herd (buffaloes), as well as the largest area under wheat, rice and cotton.** It is the second largest producer of rice, wheat, cotton, sugarcane, farmed fish, sheep & goat meat, fruit, vegetables and tea. **Narendra Singh Tomar is the Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Minister of Rural Development in the Second Modi ministry.** He is a member of the 17th Lok Sabha from Morena, Madhya Pradesh.

137 gigawatt of renewable energy capacity installed in country, says RK Singh

- **The New and Renewable Energy Ministry said that around 137 gigawatt of renewable energy capacity has been installed in the country which is 36.48 per cent of the total installed electricity generation capacity in the country.**
- **Foreign Direct Investment up to 100 per cent under the automatic route has been permitted by the government and Project Development Cell has been set up for attracting and facilitating investment. India has committed that 40 per cent of its installed power generation capacity shall be from non-fossil fuel by the end of 2030 as a part of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions as per Paris Accord.**

Raj Kumar Singh is the current Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Power, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Minister of State in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. He is a **Member of the Indian Parliament for Arrah, Bihar.**

2021 to be Indo-French Year of the Environment

- **The Union environment ministry launched the Indo-French Year of the Environment** along with Barbara Pompili, the French Minister for Ecological Transition.
- **The Indo-French Year of the Environment over the period 2021-2022** would be based on five main themes including environmental protection, climate change, biodiversity conservation, sustainable urban development, renewable energy and energy efficiency according to a statement by the ministry.
- From the French side, it will be **implemented by the Ministry of Ecological Transition along with the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs**. From the India, the projects will be coordinated by MoEFCC along with the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

World Environment Day, hosted by Colombia this 2020, is the most renowned day for environmental action. **Since 1974, it has been celebrated every year on 5 June**: engaging governments, businesses, celebrities and citizens to focus their efforts on a pressing environmental issue. **This year, the theme is biodiversity** – a concern that is both urgent and existential. **Recent events, from bushfires in Brazil, the United States, and Australia to locust infestations across East Africa** – and now, a global disease pandemic – demonstrate the interdependence of humans and the webs of life, in which they exist.

India's first wetland conservation centre comes up in Chennai

- **Coinciding with the World Wetland Day, India got its first specialised institution - Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM) - in Chennai** which will work as a knowledge hub for various stakeholders for conserving wetlands that occupy 4.6% of the country's total land area. **The new governmental centre** was announced by the Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Babul Supriyo on **World Wetland Day on 2 February 2021**.
- It will **address specific research needs and knowledge gaps to address wetlands and their management and bring capacity development and cutting-edge research to wetlands in India**. It is also positioned to apply integrated approaches for conservation, management and wise **use of India's 42 globally-significant 'Ramsar' wetland sites**.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. It is also known as the **Convention on Wetlands**. It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the convention was signed in 1971. Ramsar convention is an **inter-governmental environmental treaty established by UNESCO and came into force in 1975**. A Ramsar site is a wetland site **designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention**.

India hosts Indian Ocean Region Defence Ministers' Conclave

- **India hosted Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Defence Ministers' Conclave on the sidelines of Aero India 2021**. The broad **theme of the conclave is 'Enhanced Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Indian Ocean'**.
- There is **total confirmed physical participation from 18 countries including Defence Ministers of four countries -Maldives, Comoros, Iran and Madagascar**. The conclave is an initiative to promote dialogue in an institutional, economic and cooperative environment that can **foster the development of peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean region**.
- It will also address Information-sharing towards increased maritime domain awareness, maritime surveillance and co-operation, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Marine Pollution Response activities, Development of technologies and capabilities for harnessing marine resources.
- **India is geographically central to the Indian Ocean and has a vast coastline of 7,500 kms. India's vision for Security and Growth for All (SAGAR), as articulated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, cannot be realised without close cooperation and engagements amongst countries in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.

Indian Ocean is the **third-largest of the world's oceanic divisions**, covering 70,560,000 km² or 19.8% of the water on Earth's surface. It is **bounded by Asia to the north, Africa to the west and Australia to the east**.

'Swarnim Vijay Varsh' victory flame received at Air Force Station Adampur

- As part of 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh' celebration commemorating 50 years of the 1971 war triumph against Pakistan, one of the victory flames was received at Air Force Station Adampur.
- The flame was received in a grand reception by Air Commodore GKJ Reddy. On the occasion many Air veterans were felicitated for their invaluable contribution towards the nation. The ceremony was also attended by next of kin of Late Flying Officer Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon.
- Indian Armed Forces Veterans Day is being observed. This day is celebrated on 14th of January every year to honour services rendered by veterans of the Army. This year is being celebrated as Swarnim Vijay Varsh. It marks 50th Anniversary of 1971 Indo-Pak War. The Army Chief said, this entire year will be celebrated as Swarnim Vijay Varsh to mark 1971 war victory.

Indian Army is the land-based branch and the largest component of the Indian Armed Forces. The President of India is the Supreme Commander of the Indian Army, and its professional head is the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), who is a four-star general. Two officers have been conferred with the rank of field marshal, a five-star rank, which is a ceremonial position of great honour. General Manoj Mukund Naravane is a Four Star general of the Indian Army and the 28th Chief of the Army Staff (COAS).

Punjab CM launches 'Har Ghar Pani, Har Ghar Safai' mission

- Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh virtually launched the 'Har Ghar Pani, Har Ghar Safai' mission as part of the government's campaign to accomplish the goal of 100 per cent potable piped water supply in all rural households by March next year.
- The Chief Minister also inaugurated one Mega Surface Water Supply Scheme covering 85 villages in the Moga district, 144 new water supply schemes for 172 villages, 121 Arsenic, and Iron removal plants.

The state capital of Punjab is Chandigarh, a Union Territory and also the capital of the neighboring state of Haryana. The five rivers from which the region took its name were Sutlej, Ravi, Beas, Chenab and Jhelum; Sutlej, Ravi and Beas are part of the Indian Punjab. Captain Amarinder Singh is currently the 26th Chief Minister of Punjab and Vijayendrapal Singh Badnore is the current Governor of Punjab.

Uttar Pradesh Shrawasti tops Niti Aayog aspirational district ranking in December

- Shrawasti in Uttar Pradesh has topped in the ranking of aspirational districts by government think tank Niti Aayog in December 2020. Dhalai (Tripura) and Garhwa (Jharkhand) have been placed at the second and the third positions, respectively, Niti Aayog said.
- Baksa (Assam) and Bokaro (Jharkhand) have been ranked fourth and fifth, respectively. The delta rankings took into account incremental progress made by over 112 aspirational districts across six developmental areas in December 2020.
- Health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion, skill development and basic infrastructure were the development areas that were taken into consideration for the ranking.
- Aspirational districts programme, launched in January 2018, aims to transform districts that have shown relatively lesser progress in key social areas and have emerged as pockets of under-development. The ranking of aspirational districts is done every month.

The National Institution for Transforming India, also called NITI Aayog, was formed via a resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015. It was established to replace the Planning Commission which followed a top-down model. NITI Aayog is the premier policy 'Think Tank' of the Government of India, providing both directional and policy inputs. The current chairman of NITI Aayog is Shri Narendra Modi, current vice chairman is Dr. Rajiv Kumar and the current chief executive officer is Shri Amitabh Kant.

CM Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurates first heliport of Assam in Majuli district

- Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated the first heliport of the state in Majuli district.

- The heliport having facility for simultaneous landing of **three helicopters** was constructed at an expenditure of **Rs 50 lakh**. Chief Minister Mr. Sonowal said that the heliport was built with an aim to boost tourism in Majuli, which has a distinct identity as the world's largest river island.

Jagdish Mukhi is the current Governor of Assam and Assam is known for Assam tea and Assam silk. **Dispur** is the capital of the state of Assam. **Guwahati** is the largest city of Assam and Northeastern India. **Sarbananda Sonowal** is current the Chief Minister of Assam. In 1874, on the formation of Assam as the Chief Commissioner's Province, it was chosen as the headquarters of the new administration because of its convenient location between the Brahmaputra and Surma valleys and more so because the climate of Shillong was much cooler than tropical India. **Shillong** remained the capital of undivided Assam until the creation of the new state of Meghalaya on 21 January 1972, when Shillong became the capital of Meghalaya, and Assam moved its capital to Dispur in Guwahati.

Himachal Pradesh becomes first State to implement e-cabinet

- **Himachal Pradesh** has become first State in the country to make the end to end processing of the cabinet paperless by implementing e-cabinet application. Chief Minister **Jai Ram Thakur** inaugurated first e-cabinet at Shimla.
- The entire process from initiation of a cabinet memo, approval of the cabinet memo through concerned Secretary, Chief Secretary, concerned Minister and finally by Chief Minister to place in the cabinet has been made online.
- It will also be possible to monitor the status of implementation of cabinet decision more effectively through this application. The date of cabinet meeting will also be notified through this system after the approval of Chief Minister. The cabinet proceedings and recording of the cabinet decisions on respective agenda items and further issuance of advice to the concerned departments will also be done through the e-cabinet application.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh declared **Dharamshala** as the second capital of the state after Shimla, making it the third Indian state to have more than one capital. The winter capital of Uttarakhand is **Dehradun**, the largest city of the state, which is a rail head. **Gairsain**, a town in Chamoli district is the summer capital of Uttarakhand. The High Court of the state is located in **Nainital**. While **Maharashtra** has **Mumbai** and **Nagpur** as its capitals, **Srinagar** and **Jammu** are the respective summer and winter capitals of Union Territory of **Jammu and Kashmir**.

India & Bahrain join hands for Renewable Energy

- **India and Bahrain** have agreed to forge deeper engagement in the field of renewable energy. The Joint Working Group in the field of Renewable Energy which held its first meeting in virtual format underscored the importance of renewable energy to meet climate change goals.
- The two sides presented the initiatives taken, progress made and future targets set by their governments. A **Memorandum of Understanding** was signed in **July 2018** between **India and Bahrain** for promoting bilateral cooperation in the field of Renewable Energy.

Bahrain is a sovereign state in the Persian Gulf. **Manama** is the capital and largest city of Bahrain. **Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa** is the heir apparent and first deputy Prime Minister of the Bahrain. The **dinar** is the currency of Bahrain. The kingdom shares maritime borders with **Iran, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia**.

Kejriwal Launches 'Switch Delhi' Campaign, Plans Electric Vehicle Adoption to Fight Air Pollution

- **Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal** launched 'Switch Delhi', an electric vehicle mass awareness campaign, to sensitize citizens about the benefits of switching to electric vehicles. Delhi government has rolled out incentives on the purchase of electric vehicles (EVs) among all the states.
- "Our vision is that by 2024, 25 per cent of new vehicles must be electric. Approximately **Rs 30,000** subsidies are to be given for 2/3-wheelers while **Rs 1.5 lakh** for 4-wheelers. We are starting the 'Switch Delhi' campaign to make people aware of clean vehicles".

Delhi bordered by Haryana on three sides and by Uttar Pradesh to the east. According to the 2011 census, Delhi city proper's population was over 11 million, the second-highest in India after Mumbai. Anil Bajjal is the current & 21st Lieutenant Governor of Delhi. Arvind Kejriwal is the current and 7th Chief Minister of Delhi. The Constitution (Sixty-ninth Amendment) Act, 1991 declared the Union Territory of Delhi to be formally known as the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

Gujarat to set up Indian Institute of Skills in Gandhinagar

- In Gujarat, the State Government has asked the Tata group to start the work on setting up Indian Institute of Skills- IIS. IIS is being set up by the Labour and Employment Department of Gujarat along with Tata Group at Nasmed village of Gandhinagar. The State Government has allotted around 20 acres of land for Tatas to start Indian Institute of Skills.
- The foundation stone for the proposed IIS at Nasmed was performed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah who is also Lok Sabha Member from Gandhinagar constituency in Gujarat. Proposed IIS at Nasmed is located in Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency.
- The institute is being developed on a Not-for-profit Public Private Partnership mode by the Tata Group along with the state's Labour and Employment Department. While the State Government has provided land for the Institute, Tata Education Development Trust is contributing the capital investment. In addition to Ahmedabad, the Centre has also approved Indian Institutes of Skills in Mumbai and Kanpur.

Gujarat is a state on the western coast of India with a longest coastline of India 1,600 km (990 mi). Its capital city is Gandhinagar, while its largest city is Ahmedabad. Gujarat International Finance Tec-City is a business district promoted by the Government of Gujarat through a joint venture company. GIFT City is India's first operational smart city in the Ahmedabad and international financial services centre. Acharya Devvrat is Governor of Gujarat and Vijay Rupani is the current Chief Minister of Gujarat. Gujarat has become the first state to implement newly-introduced 10 per cent reservations in government jobs and higher education for the economically weaker sections in the general category and followed by Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh.

India falls to 53rd position in EIU's Democracy Index

- India slipped two places to 53rd position in the 2020 Democracy Index's global ranking, according to The Economist Intelligence Unit, which said the "democratic backsliding" by authorities and "crackdowns" on civil liberties has led to a further decline in the country's ranking.
- However, India is ranked higher than most of its neighbouring countries. India's overall score fell from 6.9 in 2019 to 6.61 in the Index that provides a snapshot of the current state of democracy worldwide for 167 countries.
- "With mounting pressure on India's democratic norms, India's score fell from a peak of 7.92 in 2014 to 6.61 in 2020 and its global ranking slipped from 27th (in 2014) to 53rd as a result of democratic backsliding" under the current regime. The EIU report said that in India and Thailand, "democratic backsliding by the authorities and crackdowns on civil liberties led to a further decline in their global rankings".
- Norway topped The Economist Intelligence Unit's latest Democracy Index report titled "Democracy in sickness and in health?" with Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand and Canada making up the top five.
- Out of 167 countries, the Democracy Index classifies 23 countries as full democracies, 52 as flawed democracies, 35 as hybrid regimes, and 57 as authoritarian regimes. India has been classified as a "flawed democracy" along with countries such as the US, France, Belgium, and Brazil.
- Among India's neighbours, while Sri Lanka, at 68th rank, is classified as a flawed democracy, Bangladesh (76), Bhutan (84), and Pakistan (105) are classified in the "hybrid regime" category. Afghanistan is ranked 139th and classified as an "authoritarian regime" in the index.
- The Asia and Australasia region includes top-scoring New Zealand, which retained its fourth position in the global ranking (out of 167 countries), and persistent laggard North Korea at the bottom of the global ranking in 167th place, the EIU said in a statement.
- The region's overall score fell in 2020, but it now has five "full democracies" with Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan moving up the rankings compared with 2019.

Move to declare Kaliveli wetlands a sanctuary: first declaration issued

- In a major push to **declare Kaliveli wetlands**, the **second-largest brackish water lake in South India after Pulicat Lake**, a bird sanctuary, the Villupuram district administration has issued the **first declaration under the Section 18 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- The decision is seen as a big win for Forest Department officials and conservationists, and their efforts to **protect this wetland that remains a safe haven for diverse flora and fauna**. The **Kaliveli wetland in Tamil Nadu is ecologically important** and the decision is expected to enhance the conservation activities in the biodiversity hotspot.

As per the 2004 report by the Indian Bird Conservation Network and Bird Life International, the Kaliveli wetlands supports around 20,000 birds every year. The lake also works as a feeding ground for long-distance migrants who migrates from the cold subarctic Central Asia and Siberia. Some of the migratory birds include Black-tailed Godwits, White Stork, Eurasian Curlew, Ruff and Dublin. This is why; there is a demand to convert the wetlands into a bird sanctuary.

Pact signed to establish India's first geothermal field development project in Leh

- A historic tripartite agreement for establishing India's first-ever geothermal field development project has been signed, with Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur terming it a step towards achieving the goal of carbon-neutral Ladakh.
- The pact was signed between Union Territory Administration Ladakh, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC)-Leh and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Energy Centre in presence of Mr. Mathur and MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal on the sidelines of the first developmental conclave.
- "The signing of the MoU with ONGC for the first geothermal project in India is a promising initiative towards innovative and sustainable development of Ladakh and also a step towards achieving the goal of carbon-neutral Ladakh."

Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 re-constituted the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, with effect from 31 October 2019. Girish Chandra Murmu is the first lieutenant governor of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Manoj Sinha is the second and current Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. Ladakh is a region administered by India as a union territory; Radha Krishna Mathur is the first Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh.

First ever Digital Budget 2021-22 presented

- The Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Smt Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2021-22 in Parliament, which is the first budget of this new decade and also a digital one in the backdrop of unprecedented COVID-19 crisis. Laying a vision for AatmaNirbhar Bharat, she said this is an expression of 130 crore Indians who have full confidence in their capabilities and skills. She said that Budget proposals will further strengthen the **Sankalp of Nation First, Doubling Farmer's Income, Strong Infrastructure, Healthy India, Good Governance**, Opportunities for youth, Education for All, Women Empowerment, and Inclusive Development among others. Additionally, also on the path to fast-implementation are the 13 promises of Budget 2015-16-which were to materialize during the AmrutMahotsav of 2022, on the 75th year of our Independence.
- The key highlights of the Union Budget 2021-22 are as follows: **6 pillars of the Union Budget 2021-22:**
 1. Health and Wellbeing
 2. Physical & Financial Capital, and Infrastructure
 3. Inclusive Development for Aspirational India
 4. Reinvigorating Human Capital
 5. Innovation and R&D
 6. Minimum Government and Maximum Governance

- **1. Health and Wellbeing**
- There is substantial increase in investment in Health Infrastructure and the **Budget outlay for Health and Wellbeing is Rs 2,23,846 crore in BE 2021-22 as against this year's BE of Rs 94,452 crore, an increase of 137 percentage.** The Finance Minister announced that a new centrally sponsored scheme, **PM AatmaNirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana**, will be **launched with an outlay of about Rs 64, 180 crore over 6 years.** This will develop capacities of primary, secondary, and tertiary care Health Systems, strengthen existing national institutions, and create new institutions, to cater to detection and cure of new and emerging diseases.
- **Provision of Rs 35,000 crore made for Covid-19 vaccine in BE 2021-22. The Pneumococcal Vaccine, a Made in India product, presently limited to only 5 states, will be rolled out across the country aimed at averting 50,000 child deaths annually.**
- **2. Physical and Financial Capital and Infrastructure: AatmaNirbhar Bharat-Production Linked Incentive Scheme**
- Finance Minister said that for a **USD 5 trillion economy, our manufacturing sector has to grow in double digits on a sustained basis.** Our manufacturing companies need to become an integral part of global supply chains, possess core competence and cutting-edge technology. **To achieve all of the above, PLI schemes to create manufacturing global champions for an AatmaNirbhar Bharat have been announced for 13 sectors.** For this, the government has **committed nearly Rs.1.97 lakh crore in the next 5 years starting FY 2021-22.**
- **The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) which the Finance Minister announced in December 2019 is the first-of-its-kind, whole-of-government exercise ever undertaken. The NIP was launched with 6835 projects; the project pipeline has now expanded to 7,400 projects. Around 217 projects worth Rs 1.10 lakh crore under some key infrastructure Ministries have been completed.**
- **3. Inclusive Development for Aspirational India**
- Under the pillar of Inclusive Development for Aspirational India, the Finance Minister **announced to cover Agriculture and Allied sectors, farmers' welfare and rural India, migrant workers and labour, and financial inclusion.**
- Dwelling on agriculture, she said that the Government is committed to the welfare of farmers. **The MSP regime has undergone a sea change to assure price that is at least 1.5 times the cost of production across all commodities.** The procurement has also continued to increase at a steady pace. This has resulted in increase in payment to farmers substantially.
- **4. Reinvigorating Human Capital**
- The Finance Minister said that the **National Education Policy (NEP) announced recently has had good reception, while adding that more than 15,000 schools will be qualitatively strengthened to include all components of the National Education Policy.** She also **announced that 100 new Sainik Schools will be set up in partnership with NGOs/private schools/states.** She also **proposed to set up a Higher Education Commission of India, as an umbrella body having 4 separate vehicles for standard-setting, accreditation, regulation, and funding.** For accessible higher education in Ladakh, Government proposed to set up a **Central University in Leh.**
- According to the Finance Minister's speech, **for 2021-22 a total amount of Rs 93,224 crore will be allocated for the Ministry of Education.** This consists of Rs 54,874 crore for Department of School Education and Literacy and Rs 38,350 crore for the Department of Higher Education. **The allocation for 2021-22 in respect to Education is 6.13% less than the allocation made by the Union Government in 2020-21.** In 2020-21, the budgeted estimate for the Ministry of Education was Rs 99,312 crore, which was revised to Rs 85,089 crore (Revised Estimate).
- **5. Innovation and R&D**
- The Finance Minister said that in her Budget Speech of July 2019, She had announced the **National Research Foundation and added that the NRF outlay will be of Rs. 50,000 crore, over 5 years.** It will ensure that the overall research ecosystem of the country is strengthened with focus on identified national-priority thrust areas.

- **Government will undertake a new initiative – National Language Translation Mission (NTLM).** This will enable the wealth of governance-and-policy related knowledge on the Internet being made available in major Indian languages.
- **The New Space India Limited (NSIL), a PSU under the Department of Space will execute the PSLV-CS51 launch,** carrying the Amazonia Satellite from Brazil, along with a few smaller Indian satellites.
- **As part of the Gaganyaan mission activities, four Indian astronauts are being trained on Generic Space Flight aspects, in Russia.** The first unmanned launch is slated for December 2021.
- **6. Minimum Government, Maximum Governance**
- Dwelling on the last of the six pillars of the Budget, the Finance Minister proposed to take a number of steps to bring reforms in Tribunals in the last few years for speedy delivery of justice and proposes to take further measures to rationalised the functioning of Tribunals. **Government has introduced the National Commission for Allied Healthcare Professionals Bill in Parliament,** with a view to ensure transparent and efficient regulation of the 56 allied healthcare professions. She also announced that the forthcoming Census could be the first digital census in the history of India and for this monumental and milestone-marking task, Rs. 3,768 crore allocated in the year 2021-2022.
- On Fiscal position, she underlined that the pandemic’s impact on the economy resulted in a weak revenue inflow. Once the health situation stabilised, and the lockdown was being slowly lifted, Government spending was ramped up so as to revive domestic demand. **As a result, against an original BE expenditure of Rs. 30.42 lakh crore for 2020-2021, RE estimates are Rs. 34.50 lakh crore and quality of expenditure was maintained. The capital expenditure, estimated in RE is Rs. 4.39 lakh crore in 2020-2021 as against Rs. 4.12 lakh crore in BE 2020-21.**
- **The Finance Minister said fiscal deficit in RE 2020-21 is pegged at 9.5% of GDP and it has been funded through Government borrowings, multilateral borrowings, Small Saving Funds and short term borrowings.** She added that the Government would need another Rs 80,000 crore for which it would be approaching the markets in these 2 months. The fiscal deficit in BE 2021-2022 is estimated to be 6.8% of GDP. The gross borrowing from the market for the next year would be around 12 lakh crore.
- Smt Sitharaman announced that the Government plan to **continue the path of fiscal consolidation, and intend to reach a fiscal deficit level below 4.5% of GDP by 2025-2026** with a fairly steady decline over the period. “We hope to achieve the consolidation by first, increasing the buoyancy of tax revenue through improved compliance, and secondly, by increased receipts from monetisation of assets, including Public Sector Enterprises and land”, she said.
- **In accordance with the views of the 15th Finance Commission, Government is allowing a normal ceiling of net borrowing for the states at 4% of GSDP for the year 2021-2022.**
- **The FRBM Act mandates fiscal deficit of 3% of GDP to be achieved by 31st March 2020-2021. The effect of this year’s unforeseen and unprecedented circumstances has necessitated the submission of a deviation statement under Sections 4 (5) and 7 (3) (b) of the FRBM Act which the Finance Minister laid on the Table of the House as part of the FRBM Documents.**
- **On 9th December 2020, the 15th Finance Commission submitted its final report,** covering the period 2021-2026 to the Rashtrapatiiji. The Government has laid the Commission’s report, along with the explanatory memorandum retaining the vertical shares of the states at 41%. On the Commission’s recommendation, the Budget provided Rs. 1,18,452 crore as revenue deficit grant to 17 states in 2021-22.
- **Part-B**
- **The Budget seeks to reduce compliance burden on senior citizens who are of 75 years of age and above. Such senior citizens having only pension and interest income will be exempted from filing their income tax return.**
- **The Budget proposes to notify rules for removing the hardship of non-Resident Indians returning to India on the issue of their accrued incomes in their foreign retirement account. The Budget proposes to make dividend payment to REIT/InvIT exempt from TDS. For Foreign Portfolio Investors, the Budget proposes**

deduction of tax on dividend income at lower treaty rate. The Budget provides that **advanced tax liability on dividend income shall arise only after the declaration or payment of dividend.**

- Stating the resolve of the Government to reduce litigation in the taxation system, the Finance Minister said that the **Direct Tax Vivad se Vishwas Scheme announced by the Government** has been received well. **Until 30th January, 2021, over one lakh ten thousand tax payers have opted to settle tax dispute of over Rs. 85 thousand crores under the Scheme.** To further reduce litigation of small tax payers, she proposed to constitute a Dispute Resolution Committee. **Anyone with a taxable income upto Rs. 50 lakh and disputed income upto Rs. 10 lakh shall be eligible to approach the Committee.** She also announced setting up of National Faceless Income Tax Appellate Tribunal Centre.
- The Finance Minister proposed to **extend the eligibility period for claim of additional deduction for interest of Rs. 1.5 lakh paid for loan taken for purchase of an affordable house to 31st March, 2022.**
- To incentivize digital transaction and to reduce the compliance burden of the person who is carrying almost all of the transactions digitally, the **Budget proposes to increase the limit for tax audit for persons who are undertaking 95 per cent of their transaction digitally from Rs. 5 Crore to Rs. 10 Crore.**
- **In order to promote International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in GIFT City, the Budget proposes more tax incentives.** In order to reduce compliance burden on the small charitable trust running educational institutions and hospitals, the Budget proposes **to increase the limit on annual receipts for these trusts from present Rs.1 Crore to Rs. 5 Crore for non-applicability of various compliances.**
- The Finance Minister said that a phased manufacturing plan for solar cells and solar panels will be notified to build up domestic capacity. **She announced raising duty on solar inverter from 5 per cent to 20 percent and on solar lanterns from 5 per cent to 15 per cent.**
- Since the interest on contribution made by an employee enjoys tax exemption without there being any upper limit, **the government has proposed that interest accrued in respect of employee's contribution in excess of Rs. 2.50 lakhs every year shall become taxable in the hands of the employee.** So the **interest in respect of annual contribution of Rs. 2.50 lakhs only will come tax-free and any interest accrued on excess contribution shall become taxable in the hands of the employee year after year.**
- To boost infrastructure, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced **a record sum of ₹1,10,055 crore for railways of which Rs. 1,07,100 crore is for capital expenditure only.** **Indian Railways papered a National Rail Plan for India 2030,** said finance minister adding, "The plan is to create a future ready railway system by 2030 bringing down the logistic cost for industry is at the core of the strategy to enable Make In India." **She also mentioned 100% broad gauge route electrification would be completed by December 2023.**

The Union Budget of India also referred to as the Annual Financial Statement in the Article 112 of the Constitution of India, is the annual budget of the Republic of India. The Government presents it on the first day of February so that it could be materialised before the beginning of new financial year in April. Until 2016 it was presented on the last working day of February by the Finance Minister in Parliament. The budget, which is presented by means of the Finance bill and the Appropriation bill has to be passed by Lok Sabha before it can come into effect on 1 April, the start of India's financial year. As of January 2021, Morarji Desai has presented 10 budgets which is the highest count followed by P Chidambaram's 9 and Pranab Mukherjee's 8. Yashwant Sinha, Yashwantrao Chavan and C.D. Deshmukh have presented 7 budgets each while Manmohan Singh and T.T. Krishnamachari have presented 6 budgets.



China's first Hualong One nuclear reactor starts commercial operation

- China National Nuclear Corp said the first of its Hualong One units, third-generation pressurised water nuclear reactors, began commercial operations.
- The reactor in Fuqing in China's southeastern province of Fujian was first connected to the grid on November 27 last year, following more than five years of construction work. "This marks that China has mastered independent third-generation nuclear power technology following the United States, France, Russia and others". The Hualong One units, designed to have a 60-year lifespan, have an installed capacity of 1.161 million kilowatts each.

China is a country in East Asia and the world's most populous country, with a population of around 1.404 billion. Beijing is the capital of the People's Republic of China. Xi Jinping is serving as president of the People's Republic of China. National People's Congress is the national legislature of the People's Republic of China. With 2,980 members in 2018, it is the largest parliamentary body in the world. China's currency yuan joins the International Monetary Fund's basket of reserve currencies. China claims sovereignty over all of the South China Sea, a huge source of hydrocarbons. However, several ASEAN member countries, including Vietnam, Philippines and Brunei, have made counterclaims. Chinese claims in the South China Sea are described in part by the nine-dash line.

Nepal decides to award hydropower project to India's Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam

- Nepal has decided to award the contract for construction of 679 megawatt Lower Arun Hydropower Project to India's Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN). This was decided at a meeting of the Investment Board Nepal (IBN), chaired by Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.
- The project was awarded to the SJVN under the Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT) delivery method. Similar to the Arun III hydel project, which will provide 21 per cent free power to Nepal during the concession period, the developer of the Lower Arun hydel project should also prioritise providing certain percent of power free of cost. The developer will hand over the ownership of the project to the government of Nepal after 20 years of commercial operation.

Nepal is a landlocked country in South Asia located in the Himalaya. Nepalese rupee is the official currency of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. Constitution of Nepal is the present governing Constitution of Nepal. Nepal is governed according to the Constitution which came into effect on September 20, 2015, replacing the Interim Constitution of 2007. Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli is currently serving as the Prime Minister of Nepal. He was the first elected prime minister under the newly adopted Constitution of Nepal.

World's first biofuel rocket takes flight for the first time

- A rocket company that hopes to become the "Uber for space" has launched the world's first biofuel-powered rocket.
- Brunswick-based bluShift Aerospace's 20 ft prototype hit an altitude of around 4,000 ft in a first run designed to test the rocket's propulsion and control systems. Sascha Deri, founder of bluShift Aerospace, told the BBC the rocket's biofuel took six years to create and is sourced from farms. He would not expand on exactly how it is made.

Dubai to have the world's first Clothespin Tower

- **The Clothespin Tower is the first conceptual building of its kind that turns the mundane clothespin into an icon of eternal love and unity.** While most buildings and skyscrapers boast of height and architecture but lack truth and philosophy, **the Clothespin Tower, based on the famous artwork of Zygo, can be called a “monument of art”.**
- **The concept behind the Clothespin tower shows two halves complementing each other,** just like the everyday Clothespin. A leading team of his is planning to create the first Clothespin Tower in Dubai using innovative design and cutting-edge technology to **build the 40-floor tower as a symbol of love, peace and hope between the world and the UAE.**

World Bank to provide USD 500 million to Bangladesh for improving Road and Digital Connectivity

- **The government of Bangladesh signed an agreement with the World Bank for the upgradation of rural roads and connectivity in the western region.**
- **The project is expected to benefit over 20 million people** in the western region of Bangladesh. The project will help **upgrade the 48 kilometre two-lane Jashore-Jhenaidah road** to a modern 4-lane highway. It will also help improve 600 kilometre of connecting rural roads and build or develop new rural markets.

Bangladesh is a country in South Asia. It shares land borders with India and Myanmar (Burma). Nepal, Bhutan and China are located near Bangladesh but do not share a border with it. Dhaka is its capital and largest city, followed by Chittagong, which has the country's largest port. Bangladeshi taka is the currency of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Mohammad Abdul Hamid is the 16th and current President of Bangladesh, in office since April 2013. Sheikh Hasina is the current Prime Minister of the Bangladesh. India shares its longest international border with Bangladesh (4,096-kilometer) (2,545-mile).

World's First 3-D Printed School to open in Madagascar

- **The American philanthropist and founder of the Thinking Huts nonprofit, Maggie Grout, has come up with an innovative concept to help make education more accessible around the world: a life-size 3D-printed school.** The first such school is due to open its doors in Madagascar.
- To bring this school project to life, **Maggie Grout teamed up with the architectural design agency Studio Mortazavi, based in San Francisco.** The pilot project will be **built on the university campus of the Ecole de Management et d'Innovation Technologique (EMIT), in the city of Fianarantsoa in Madagascar,** and will welcome students from preschool through high school.

Myanmar military announces new State Administrative Council

- **The regime in Myanmar headed by the Army has announced a new State Administrative Council. The council headed by the Army Chief General Min Aung Hlaing has eleven members out of which eight are from the military.**
- **The State Administration Council is the current executive body governing Myanmar following the Myanmar coup d'état in February 2021.** The council was formed on 2 February 2021, and has 16 members. **Myint Swe is a Burmese politician, currently serving as the acting president of Myanmar.**

Aung San Suu Kyi is a Myanmar politician, diplomat, author, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1991). She is the leader of the National League for Democracy and the first and served as State Counsellor of Myanmar (equivalent to a prime minister) and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2016 to 2021. She is also the first woman to serve as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Myanmar's capital city is Naypyidaw and kyat is the currency of Myanmar. Sittwe Port is a deep-water port constructed by India in 2016 at Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State in Myanmar, on the Bay of Bengal. Situated at the mouth of the Kaladan River, the USD 120 Million port is being financed by India as a part of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, collaboration between India and Myanmar. Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project is a project that will connect the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata with Sittwe seaport in Rakhine State, Myanmar by sea.

Denmark to create world's first energy island in the North Sea

- **Denmark approved a plan to build the world's first energy island in the North Sea** that will produce and store enough green energy to cover the electricity needs of 3 million European households.
- **The artificial island**, which in its initial phase will be the size of 18 football fields, will be linked to hundreds of offshore wind turbines and will supply both power to households and green hydrogen for use in shipping, aviation, industry and heavy transport.
- The move came as the European Union unveiled plans to transform its electricity system to rely mostly on renewable energy within a decade and increase its offshore wind energy capacity 25-fold by 2050.

Denmark (Danish) is a Nordic country in Northern Europe. The Kingdom of Denmark is constitutionally a unitary state comprising Denmark proper and the two autonomous territories in the North Atlantic Ocean: the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Copenhagen is the capital and most populous city of Denmark. The krone is the official currency of Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands. Mette Frederiksen has been Prime Minister of Denmark since June 2019.

US and Russia to extend New START Treaty by 5 years

- **US and Russia to extend the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty)** by five years. The United States and Russia have extended a crucial nuclear arms control treaty until 2026, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.
- **The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty or New START is the last nuclear treaty between the two countries and was set to expire Feb. 5, 2021.** Renewing the agreement was one of the first national security challenges facing President Joe Biden's administration.
- **Signed in 2010 by Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev of Russia**, the agreement placed the lowest limits in decades on American and Russian deployed nuclear warheads, and the land- and submarine-based missiles and bombers that deliver them.
- **The five-year extension comes less than 24 hours after the U.S. criticized the nearly three-year prison sentence handed to Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny**, along with other members of the Group of Seven, or G-7 — the informal group of seven large industrialized countries including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) is a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation with the formal name of Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. It was signed on 8 April 2010 in Prague and, after ratification entered into force on 5 February 2011. It is expected to last until 5 February 2026, having been extended in 2021. New START replaced the Treaty of Moscow (SORT), which was expired in December 2012. The treaty calls for halving the number of strategic nuclear missile launchers. A new inspection and verification regime will be established, replacing the SORT mechanism.

Kyrgyzstan appoints new prime minister

- **Kyrgyzstan appointed Ulukbek Maripov as the country's new Prime Minister bringing a long-running political crisis to a close.** A new government was formed after Sadyr Japarov, who won presidential elections held on Jan. 10, resigned as prime minister.
- Party leaders who formed a coalition **nominated Maripov for the premiership.** He was then serving as chairman of the Accounting Chamber, a state auditing institution. **Maripov won a vote of confidence in the polls**, which were held to determine the new prime minister and cabinet members.

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country in Central Asia. Bishkek is the capital and largest city of Kyrgyzstan. The som is the currency of the Kyrgyz Republic. Sadyr Japarov is the current President of Kyrgyzstan. Supreme Council is the unicameral Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic.



BSE sets up innovation sandbox web portal

- **Leading stock exchange BSE has set up an “innovation sandbox” web portal** where fintech firms and individuals may use the environment for offline testing of their applications in a test environment. This will help in creating an ecosystem which promotes innovation in the securities market.
- **The portal is a workflow-based platform**, where applicants will be able to access application programming interfaces (APIs), test data of stock exchanges, depositories and qualified registrar and share transfer agents, among others.

Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) is an Indian stock exchange located at Dalal Street, Mumbai. It was established in 1875. BSE is Asia’s first stock exchange. BSE claims to be the world’s fastest stock exchange, with a median trade speed of 6 microseconds.

Google is almost running out of AR/VR projects to kill off

- **Google is almost running out of AR/VR projects to kill off.** The company announced in an email to Poly users that they will be shutting down the 3D-object creation and library platform “forever” 2021. The service will shut down on June 30, 2021 and users won’t be able to upload 3D models to the site starting April 30, 2021. Poly was introduced as a 3D creation tool optimized for virtual reality.
- **Users could easily create low-poly objects with in-VR tools.** The software was designed to serve as a lightweight way to create and view 3D assets that could in turn end up in games and experiences, compared to more art and sculpting-focused VR tools like Google’s Tilt Brush and Facebook’s (now Adobe’s) Medium software.

Alphabet Inc. is an American multinational conglomerate headquartered in Mountain View, California. It was created through a restructuring of Google on October 2, 2015, and became the parent company of Google and several former Google subsidiaries. Larry Page and Sergey Brin announced their resignation from their executive posts in December 2019, with the CEO role to be filled by Sundar Pichai, also the CEO of Google. Page and Brin remain co-founders, employees, board members, and controlling shareholders of Alphabet Inc.

Government to set up Rs 20,000 crore DFI to promote infra financing

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government will set up a Rs 20,000 crore Development Finance Institution (DFI) with a view to mobilise Rs 111 lakh crore required for funding of the ambitious national infrastructure pipeline.
- Unveiling the Union Budget 2021-22, the Finance Minister said that a professionally-managed DFI to be set up to provide, enable and catalyze infrastructure financing. The government proposes Rs 20,000 crore to capitalise this institution and aims to have a lending portfolio of at least Rs 5 lakh crore in three years.

Tax holiday for startups extended for another year till March 2022

- In order to incentivise start-ups in the country, the Government has extended the eligibility for claiming tax holiday for start-ups by one more year - till 31st of March, 2022.

- The Government has also **extended the capital gains exemption for investment in start-ups by one more year - till 31st of March, 2022 to incentivise funding of the start-ups.**
- **The Government has increased FDI limit from 49 to 74 per cent in Insurance Companies and allowed foreign ownership and control with safeguards. The Government has proposed to infuse 20 thousand crore rupees to re-capitalized Public Sector Banks.**

Budget 2021 unveils scheme for setting up mega textile parks in India

- **The government unveiled a scheme for setting up mega textile parks in the country, as part of the Centre's efforts to position India as a fully integrated, globally competitive manufacturing and exporting hub for the sector.** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made the announcement while presenting the Budget 2021-22.
- **The textile ministry had recently said a scheme and a Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (MITRA) Park, in over 1,000 acres of land with state-of-the-art infrastructure, common utilities and Research and Development (R&D) lab, are under consideration.**
- **So far, 59 textile parks have been sanctioned under the scheme for integrated textile parks, out of which 22 have been completed. The production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme, announced earlier for 10 key sectors including textile and automobiles, would help India become self-reliant, boost manufacturing and enhance exports.**

15th Finance Commission recommends Rs 1,075 crore embankment-cum-road for Majuli

- **Assam's Majuli will have a new embankment-cum-road around the island as the 15th Finance Commission has recommended for it along with a project for comprehensive development of the Kamakhya temple in Guwahati.**
- **The commission has recommended Rs 1,075 crore for the construction of the new embankment-cum-road around the world's largest inhabited riverine island and Rs 300 crore for the comprehensive development of the Kamakhya temple complex.**

Majuli or Majoli is a river island in the Brahmaputra River, Assam and in 2016 it became the first island to be made a district in India. The island is formed by the Brahmaputra River in the south and the Kherkutia Xuti, an anabranch of the Brahmaputra, joined by the Subansiri River in the north.

The Finance Commission is a Constitutionally mandated body that is at the centre of fiscal federalism. Set up under Article 280 of the Constitution, its core responsibility is to evaluate the state of finances of the Union and State Governments, recommend the sharing of taxes between them, lay down the principles determining the distribution of these taxes among States. The Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV-FC or 15-FC) is an Indian Finance Commission constituted in November 2017 and is to give recommendations for devolution of taxes and other fiscal matters for five fiscal years, commencing 01-04-2020. The commission's chairman is Nand Kishore Singh, with its full-time members being Ajay Narayan Jha, Ashok Lahiri and Anoop Singh. In addition, the commission also has a part-time member in Ramesh Chand. Shaktikanta Das served as a member of the commission from November 2017 to December 2018.

Jeff Bezos to step down as Amazon CEO

- **Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos will step down as the chief executive of the company -- which he founded almost 27 years ago. Bezos will transition to the role of executive chairman in the third quarter of 2021. Andy Jassy, CEO of Amazon Web Services would take over as CEO of Amazon.**

Amazon.com, Inc. is an American multinational technology company based in Seattle, Washington, which focuses on e-commerce, cloud computing, digital streaming, and artificial intelligence. It is one of the Big Five companies in the U.S. information technology industry, along with Google, Apple, Microsoft, and Facebook. Amazon was founded by Jeff Bezos in Bellevue, Washington, on July 5, 1994. It started as an online marketplace for books but expanded to sell electronics, software, video games, apparel, furniture, food, toys, and jewelry.

Reliance gets world's first 'carbon-neutral' oil from United States

- **Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd** has sourced the world's first consignment of 'carbon-neutral oil' from the US as it looks to become a net zero-carbon company by 2035.
- **Reliance, which operates the world's largest single location oil refining complex at Jamnagar in Gujarat with capacity of 68.2 million tonnes a year, got 2 million barrels of consignment Permian basin.** Oxy Low Carbon Ventures (OLCV), a division of US oil major Occidental, delivered carbon-neutral oil to Reliance.

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) is an **Indian conglomerate holding company headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.** On 18 October 2007, **Reliance Industries became the first Indian company to breach \$100 billion market capitalization.** On 10 September 2020, **Reliance Industries became the first Indian company to cross \$200 billion in market capitalisation.** It is also the **highest income tax payer in the private sector in India.** **Dhirubhai Ambani founded Reliance Industries in Bombay with his cousin, Mukesh Dhirubhai Ambani is the current chairman, managing director, and largest shareholder of Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL).**

BHEL commissions 800 MW unit at Gadarwara project in Madhya Pradesh

- **"Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has successfully commissioned the second unit (800 MW) of the 2x800 MW Gadarwara Super Thermal Power Project Stage-I" in Madhya Pradesh.**
- **The project is being developed by NTPC Ltd.** The first unit of 800 MW of this project was commissioned by BHEL in 2019 and is presently under commercial operation.
- **BHEL is India's largest manufacturer of power generating equipment** with an installed base of over 1,90,000 MW of power equipment globally.

Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) is an **Indian public sector engineering and manufacturing company based in New Delhi, India.** Established in 1964, BHEL is India's largest power generation equipment manufacturer.

Power ministry to launch manufacturing programme for critical equipment

- The Ministry of Power will launch a domestic manufacturing programme **for critical power and renewable energy equipment at an outlay of Rs 1,500 crore** in the coming financial year.
- **The scheme titled 'Manufacturing Zones under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package' in the Union Budget** would entail setting up three manufacturing zones in a year.
- **These zones are divided into three categories– coastal, land-locked and hilly states.** The scheme would call for offers from the states to submit applications to set up these zones. **The three selected zones would get Rs 500 crore each for the development of manufacturing hubs.**

RBI directs select NBFCs, UCBs to implement risk-based internal audit system

- The Reserve Bank has **directed select Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and Urban Co-operatives Banks (UCBs) to implement a risk-based internal audit system.**
- The RBI said **all deposit taking NBFCs, all non-deposit taking NBFCs with asset size of 5,000 crore rupees and above and all urban cooperative banks with asset size of 500 crore rupees and above will have to implement the system by March 2022.**
- **Currently, all the entities supervised by the RBI have their own approaches on internal audit, resulting in certain inconsistencies, risks and gaps in the system.**

India becomes the first Asian country to allow small investors to directly lend to the government

- **In a landmark move, the Reserve Bank of India that retail investors in India will be given online access to invest in government securities.** Right now, there is a way for small investors to buy government bonds via the **goBID platform** on the National Stock Exchange (NSE).
- However, with the latest announcement from RBI, **small investors who do not like the risk of stock markets will have a new platform — dubbed Retail Direct — just like the trading platforms for stocks, which will be directly under the central bank.**

RBI to set up a 24x7 helpline for digital payment services

- **RBI has announced certain measures of protection of common bank account holders in Monetary policy statement. It includes setting up of 24*7 helpline for digital payment services, integrated ombudsman scheme, CTS across all bank branches and allowing retail investors to open Gilt accounts with RBI.**
- As a result, digital transactions have registered massive growth in recent times. But some users face difficulties during transaction has to suffer a lot for grievance redressal. **The Payment Systems Vision document of RBI envisages setting up a 24x7 helpline for addressing customer queries** in respect of various digital payment products.
- **The helpline will, in addition to building trust and confidence, also reduce expenditure on both financial and human resources, otherwise incurred for addressing queries and grievances.**

The Reserve Bank of India was founded on 1 April 1935 to respond to economic troubles after the First World War. RBI was conceptualised as per the guidelines, working style and outlook presented by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his book titled “The Problem of the Rupee – Its origin and its solution” and presented to the Hilton Young Commission. The bank was set up based on the recommendations of the 1926 Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance, also known as the Hilton–Young Commission. In 1969, the Indira Gandhi-headed government nationalised 14 major commercial banks. Upon Indira Gandhi’s return to power in 1980, a further six banks were nationalised. The first Governor of the RBI was British banker Osborn Smith and C.D. Deshmukh was the first Indian Governor of RBI. Shashikant Das is the current Governor of RBI.

RBI projects GDP at 10.5 percent in 2021-22

- In the last bi-monthly monetary policy meet for the current fiscal year, the Reserve Bank of India projected India’s GDP growth rate at 10.5 percent for the fiscal year 2021-22.
- The growth outlook has improved significantly, and the vaccination drive will further boost the economic rebound, RBI said. **The apex bank expects the Indian economy to grow in the range of 8.3 percent to 26.2 percent in the first half of FY22, followed by a 6 percent growth in Q3FY22.**
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said that the **monetary policy review has decided to continue with an accommodative stance of monetary policy to maintain status quo on key policy rates.** This will continue as long as necessary at least through the current financial year and into next year to revive growth and mitigate the impact of Covid 19.
- **The repo rate is kept unchanged at 4 percent and the reverse repo rate at 3.35 percent.** While announcing the policy review the **RBI governor Shaktikant Das said that the GDP growth is projected at 10.5 percent in the Financial Year 2021-22.** CPI inflation has been revised to 5.2 percent for the fourth quarter of the current financial year.

ICICI Bank signs MoU with Japan’s MUFG Bank

- **ICICI Bank announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MUFG Bank, Japan’s premier bank, for collaboration towards catering to the banking requirements of Japanese corporates present in India.**
- **The MoU establishes a framework of the partnership between the banks across various domains including trade, investment, treasury, corporate and retail banking.** It also paves way for the two banks to combine their individual strengths and cater holistically to the banking requirements of Japanese corporates operating in India. **Japan is the fifth largest investor in India’s economy with cumulative FDI inflows of \$34.15 billion from April 2000 to September 2020, contributing 7% to India’s total FDI inflows during the period.**

ICICI Bank Limited is an Indian multinational banking and financial services company headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra with its registered office in Vadodara, Gujarat. ICICI Bank was established by the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI), an Indian financial institution, as a wholly-owned subsidiary in 1994. ICICI Bank is one of the Big Four banks of India others banks are SBI, Bank of Baroda and HDFC. Sandeep Bakhshi is the current MD & CEO, ICICI Bank since October 2018.

Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala first woman, African national to head World Trade Organisation

- Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was poised to become the first African and first woman to lead the embattled World Trade Organization, after a South Korean rival withdrew and the United States reversed its previous opposition.
- The government of President Joe Biden expressed its strong support for Okonjo-Iweala, lauding her experience at the World Bank and leading Nigeria's finance ministry, and pledging to work with her on needed reforms.
- The twin developments ended months of uncertainty over the leadership of the global trade body, and cleared the way for WTO members to conclude a consensus-based process and confirm Okonjo-Iweala as the next WTO director-general.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. World Trade Organization has replaced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which commenced in 1948. Roberto Azevedo is the current Director-General of the WTO. The WTO has 164 members and 23 observer governments. Liberia became the 163rd member on 14 July 2016, and Afghanistan became the 164th member on 29 July 2016.

The government of India awarded Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) a Rs. 48,000 crore contract to supply 83 LCA Mk-1A jets to the Indian Air Force

- On the opening day of Aero India 2021 on February 3, 2021, the government of India awarded state-owned plane maker Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) a Rs. 48,000 crore contract to supply 83 LCA Mk-1A jets to the Indian Air Force.
- Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on January 13 approved the proposal to buy 83 advanced Tejas jets to bolster the IAF's combat potential, with defence minister Rajnath Singh calling the largest indigenous defence procurement deal "a game changer for self-reliance in the Indian defence manufacturing" sector. The CCS approval came 10 months after the ministry gave a green light to the purchase of 83 LCA (light combat aircraft) Mk-1A jets from HAL. The aircraft to be ordered include 73 Mk-1A fighter jets and 10 LCA Mk-1 trainer aircraft.

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is an Indian state-owned aerospace and defence company headquartered in Bangalore, India. It is governed under the management of the Indian Ministry of Defence. The government-owned corporation is primarily involved in the operations of the aerospace and is currently involved in the design, fabrication and assembly of aircraft, jet engines, helicopters and their spare parts.

Union Bank of India raised Rs 1,000 crore by issuing Basel III-compliant bonds on a private placement basis

- State-owned Union Bank of India said it has raised Rs 1,000 crore by issuing Basel III-compliant bonds on a private placement basis. The bank has issued Basel III-compliant Perpetual Debt Instruments in the nature of debentures eligible for inclusion in Additional Tier 1 Capital to the tune of Rs 1,000 crore, according to a regulatory filing. The coupon rate on the bonds is 8.64% per annum, payable annually.
- Basel III is a global, voluntary regulatory framework on bank capital adequacy, stress testing, and market liquidity risk. This third installment of the Basel Accords was developed in response to the deficiencies in financial regulation revealed by the financial crisis of 2007–08.

Union Bank of India is one of the largest government-owned banks of India with 120+ million customers and a total business of US\$106 billion. After the amalgamation with Corporation Bank and Andhra Bank, which came into effect on 1 April 2020, the amalgamated entity becomes the fourth largest bank in terms of branch network. Union Bank of India (Union Bank) was registered on 11 November 1919 as a limited company in Mumbai and was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi.



Inventions/Discoveries

In World First, Britain to mix Pfizer and Oxford Vaccine Doses

- **British researchers** are to **explore mixing doses of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines** in a **world first trial** aimed at finding new ways to swiftly reduce coronavirus infections as new mutated variants emerge.
- **In the UK, two vaccines are currently in use**, following regulatory approval. These are the **BNT162b2 vaccine, developed by Pfizer and BioNTech** and the **ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 (AZD1222), developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca**. Both of these vaccines have been authorised for emergency use by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), as well as a vaccine developed by Moderna, which is expected to be available from Spring 2021.
- While thousands of individual changes have arisen as the virus mutates on replication and evolves into new variants, only a tiny minority are likely to be important or change the virus in an appreciable way. **The so-called British variant, known as VUI-202012/01 or B.1.1.7.**, has mutations including a change in the spike protein that the coronavirus uses to **bind to the human ACE2 receptor** - meaning that it is probably easier to catch.

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The first case was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. It has since spread worldwide, leading to an ongoing pandemic. Symptoms of COVID-19 are variable, but often include fever, cough, fatigue, breathing difficulties, and loss of smell and taste. Symptoms begin one to fourteen days after exposure to the virus. Various testing methods have been developed to diagnose the disease. The standard diagnosis method is by real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) from a nasopharyngeal swab.

In a first, Tata to build military aircraft in India as it acquires IP rights

- **In a first for the industry, the Tata Group will develop and manufacture a military aircraft in India**, having acquired intellectual property rights for a German-origin platform.
- **The high-altitude, twin-engine aircraft, capable of playing multiple roles** from signal intelligence to cross-border surveillance, is currently in the final stages of testing in Germany.
- It is likely to arrive in India in the next three months for further integration. This would be the **first time that an Indian private entity is looking at making a full military-grade aircraft**, which until now has been the domain of the state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL).

Tata Group is an Indian multinational conglomerate headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. Founded in 1868 by Jamsetji Tata, the company gained international recognition after purchasing several global companies. It is one of the **biggest and oldest industrial groups in India. Each Tata company operates independently** under the guidance and supervision of its own board of directors and shareholders. **Natarajan Chandrasekaran is an Indian businessman and chairman of Tata Sons. He became the first non-Parsi and professional executive to head the Tata Group.**

Prime Minister Atma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana to be launched to develop capacities in health care system over 6 years

- **A new centrally sponsored scheme, PM Atma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana, will be launched with an outlay of about 64,180 crores over 6 years.** This will be in addition to the National Health Mission.
- Urban Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 to be implemented with a **total financial allocation of over 1.41 lakh crores over a period of 5 years from 2021 to 2026.**
- The scheme will **provide support for 17,788 rural and 11,024 Urban health and wellness centres.** Establishing integrated public health labs in **all the districts and setting up 3,382 public health units in 11 states. Setting up critical care hospital blocks in 12 central institutions and 602 districts.**
- **Strengthening the National Centre for Disease Control, its 5 regional branches as well as 20 metropolitan health surveillance units.** The scheme will expand the Integrated Health Information Portal to all the UTs and states to connect all public health labs
- It will work on the operationalization of the **17 new Public Health Units.** The scheme will also strengthen 33 existing Public Health Units at the Points of entry that is at 11 seaports, 32 airports, and 7 land crossings.
- **Establishing 2 mobile hospitals and 15 Health Emergency Operation Centres.** Establishment of a national institution for One Health, a Regional Research Platform for Southeast Asia Region of WHO, 4 regional National Institutes for Virology, and 9 Bio-Safety Level III laboratories.

National Health Mission (NHM) was launched by the government of India in 2013 subsuming the National Rural Health Mission and National Urban Health Mission. It was further extended in **March 2018, to continue until March 2020.** It is headed by Mission Director and monitored by National Level Monitors appointed by Government of India.

Looking for lithium toehold, India finds a small deposit in Karnataka

- The Government of India said that preliminary surveys on surface and limited subsurface by Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD), a constituent unit of Department of Atomic Energy have **shown presence of Lithium resources of 1,600 tonnes (inferred category) in the pegmatites of Marlagalla – Allapatna area, Mandya district, Karnataka.**
- **Lithium is a key element for new technologies and finds its use in ceramics, glass, telecommunication and aerospace industries. The well-known uses of Lithium are in Lithium ion batteries, lubricating grease, high energy additive to rocket propellants, optical modulators for mobile phones and as convertor to tritium used as a raw material for thermonuclear reactions i.e. fusion.**
- **The thermonuclear application makes Lithium as “Prescribed substance” under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962** which permits AMD for exploration of Lithium in various geological domains of the country. Due to the continuously increasing demand of Lithium ion batteries, the requirement of Lithium has increased over years.
- The development comes even as **India had last year got into an agreement with an Argentinian firm to jointly prospect lithium in the South American nation which has 17 million tonnes of lithium metal reserves.** The agreement was signed by India through a newly instituted state-owned company, **Khanij Bidesh India Limited.** The company has the specific mandate to acquire strategic mineral assets like lithium and cobalt abroad.
- **India and International Energy Agency members have signed the framework for Strategic Partnership to strengthen mutual trust** and cooperation and 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 International Energy Agency (IEA).

The International Energy Agency (IEA) is a Paris-based autonomous intergovernmental organisation established in the framework of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1974 in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis. Fatih Birol is a Turkish economist and energy expert, who has been the Executive Director of the IEA.

ISRO to launch Brazilian, Indian startup satellite in first mission of 2021

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** is planning to launch **Brazilian satellite Amazonia-1** and three Indian payloads on 28 February in its **first mission of 2021**. The satellites, including one built by a home-grown start-up, are slated to be **launched onboard the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) C-51**.

ISRO is the space agency of India headquartered in the city of Bangalore. ISRO was formed in 1969. ISRO built India's first satellite, Aryabhata, which was launched by the Soviet Union on 19 April 1975. Dr Kailasavadivoo Sivan is current the chairperson of the ISRO. Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) or Sriharikota Range (SHAR) is a rocket launch centre operated by ISRO. It is located in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.

Chandigarh: PGI launches India's first 'amputee clinic'

- **The PGIMER launched its 'PGI Amputee Clinic', the first in India.** The clinic, a collective effort of various experts and departments of the institute, **strives to provide social, mental and physical support to its patients.**
- **PGIMER Director Prof. Jagat Ram formally inaugurated the clinic,** which is being set up to improve amputation patient care by providing a host of services under one roof and with significant coordination.

Square Kilometre Array approved the establishment of world's largest radio telescope

- **The Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) Council held its maiden meeting and approved the establishment of the world's largest radio telescope.** SKAO is a new intergovernmental organisation dedicated to radio astronomy and is headquartered in the UK.
- At the moment, **organisations from ten countries are a part of the SKAO.** These include Australia, Canada, China, India, Italy, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, the Netherlands and the UK. **The Arecibo telescope in Puerto Rico, which was the second-largest single-dish radio telescope in the world, collapsed in December 2020.**
- **The telescope was built in 1963 and because of its powerful radar;** scientists employed it to observe planets, asteroids and the ionosphere, making several discoveries over the decades, including finding prebiotic molecules in distant galaxies, the first exoplanets, and the first-millisecond pulsar.
- **The telescope, proposed to be the largest radio telescope in the world, will be located in Africa and Australia** whose operation, maintenance and construction will be overseen by SKAO. The completion is expected to take nearly a decade at a cost of over £1.8 billion.

Henry Ford health system first in world to test treatments for Brain Cancer

- **Detroit-based Henry Ford Cancer Institute has announced it is the first site in the world to activate two treatments for glioblastoma, the deadliest form of brain cancer,** as part of a patient-centered adaptive platform trial called GBM AGILE. Led by Global Coalition for Adaptive Research, **GBM AGILE tests multiple therapies for patients with newly diagnosed and recurrent GBM.** Henry Ford was the first in the world to enroll a patient when enrollment began in 2019.

For the first time, researchers are able to characterise some of the properties of Einsteinium

- With a new study published in the journal Nature, **for the first time, researchers have been able to characterise some of the properties of Einsteinium.** Named after Einstein, it was discovered in 1952 in the debris of the first hydrogen bomb (the detonation of a thermonuclear device called "Ivy Mike" in the Pacific Ocean).
- **Ivy Mike was detonated on November 1, 1952** as part of a test at a remote island location called Elugelab on the Eniwetok Atoll in the South Pacific. It is difficult to create and is highly radioactive. **The most common isotope of the element, einsteinium 253 has a half-life of 20 days. Einsteinium-254 is one of the more stable isotopes of the element that has a half-life of 276 days.**
- **The element is also not visible to the naked eye and after it was discovered, it took over nine years to manufacture enough of it so that it could be seen with the naked eye.** Because of its high radioactivity and short half-life of all einsteinium isotopes, even if the element was present on Earth during its formation, it has most certainly decayed.



Sports Personalities in News

Ajay Singh re-elected as President of Boxing Federation of India

- **Ajay Singh** has been re-elected as President of the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) after defeating former Maharashtra sports minister Ashish Shelar in the polls.

New Zealand become first team to qualify for World Test Championship finals

- Kane Williamson-led New Zealand became the first team to qualify for the finals of the inaugural edition of the ICC World Test Championship.
- The development comes after Australia's tour to South Africa, which was scheduled to be held later this month, was postponed due to health concerns.

Sports Ministry announces recognition of Yogasana as a competitive sport in India

- The Ministry of AYUSH, and Youth Affairs and Sports jointly announced that Yogasana will get formally recognized as a competitive sport in India. Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said that they will now work towards getting Yogasana recognition as a competitive sport globally as well.
- This decision will help Yogasana get government funding. It is an important step in spreading awareness among people about the innumerable benefits of practicing yoga.

Belgium ends the 2020 as No. 1 in FIFA global rankings

- For the third consecutive year, Belgium ended the year as the top-ranked footballing nation in the world, just ahead of world champions France in the latest world rankings released on Thursday.
- Roberto Martinez's Belgium has been phenomenal in the last decade, and have topped the rankings since 2018.
- According to the rankings released by FIFA, soccer's world governing body, France followed Belgium at the No. 2 spot, Brazil were at No. 3 spot, while England and Portugal made it at No. 4 and No. 5 respectively to round out the top 5 rankings.

MISCELLANEOUS

Unified web portal for monitoring progress of GOBARDHAN activities launched

- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Animal Husbandry Minister Giriraj Singh, Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Minister of State for Jal Shakti Rattan Lal Kataria jointly **launched a unified web portal for monitoring the progress of GOBARDHAN activities across the nation. Gobardhan is an important component of Swachh Bharat Mission Phase-2 for organic solid waste management.**
- Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said, **at the rural level, earlier there was no way of proper disposal of cattle dung waste, but after the introduction of Gobardhan programme, people will be able to provide proper disposal of dung and achieve the goal of ODF Plus.**
- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar expressed confidence that the launch of unified portal of Gobardhan will **further strengthen the rural economy through a convergent approach for various Biogas projects models and initiatives.**

UNWTO calls Year 2020 worst year on record

- **The UN World Tourism Organization recently confirmed the Year 2020 as the ‘worst year on record’,** after global tourism suffered massively due to **international travel bans implemented to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. The international arrivals dropped by 74 percent** and destinations across the world welcomed 1 billion fewer international arrivals than 2019 due to widespread travel restrictions and unprecedented fall in demand.
- As per the latest report by the UN World Tourism Organization, **the collapse in international travel has represented an estimated loss of USD 1.3 trillion in export revenues,** which is more than 11 times the loss recorded during the 2009 global economic crisis.

InterModal Station in Nagpur will be ecological & environment friendly

- **Union Minister for Road Transport Nitin Gadkari has said that the InterModal Station (IMS) to be constructed by the National Highways Authority (NHAI) near Ajni railway station in Nagpur will be ecological and environment friendly.**
- **The first phase of this ambitious project will focus on land acquisition and rehabilitation work. The Ministry of Road Transport has allocated 1200 crore rupees for this project.** The roads, railways, metro, broad gauge metro as well as the newly proposed Nag river waterway will come together and become an intermodal station near Ajni railway station for transporting passengers seamlessly from all routes.

Felling of 300 heritage trees to construct five Railway over-bridges in West Bengal will cost India a staggering Rs. 2,23,50,00,000 (Rs. 2.2 billion)

- The Supreme Court recently took judicial notice of its expert committee report, which said the **felling of 300 heritage trees to construct five Railway over-bridges in West Bengal will cost India a staggering Rs. 2,23,50,00,000 (Rs. 2.2 billion).** The 10-digit figure was arrived at by the committee after: Calculating the products these trees would produce over 100 years of their natural lifetime. This included oxygen, micro-nutrients, compost and bio-fertiliser, besides the trees being valuable members of the natural environment. **Based on this, an individual tree parts with, free of cost, “products” worth Rs.74, 500 a year.**

Jharkhand passed a resolution that would allow tribals to identify with a distinct religion

- **The Jharkhand legislature passed a government-backed resolution that would allow tribals in the state to identify with a distinct religion. If the Centre approves the new Sarna code, Census 2021 would have to make space for a new religion.**
- **Currently, citizens can choose from only six religions: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism. A separate column for tribe as a religious identity was included in the census from 1871 to 1951, but was subsequently dropped.** The Jharkhand state cabinet passed the resolution on November 10, 2020.

Maharashtra launches scheme for startups to help file IT patents

- In a bid to boost the startup ecosystem in Maharashtra, **Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray launched a scheme aimed at providing financial assistance to innovative startups to file for IT patents.**
- As per a statement, around 125-150 startups will be **supported in the first phase of the scheme** with the **financial help of Rs 2 lakh to Rs 10 lakh**, along with financial assistance up to Rs 2 lakh for quality testing and certification for the startup's ideas.

West Bengal: Forest Department conducts water birds census for first time

- **In West Bengal, the Forest Department has conducted water birds census for the first time.** The study was conducted from 12th of January to 2nd of February in 54 different locations across the state. More than 800 persons including Forest staff, NGOs and Bird lovers were involved in this exercise.
- The rich biodiversity of the Sundarbans attracts lots of migratory birds every year. Birdwatchers and nature lovers from across the world come here on a regular basis. **For the first time, an initiative was taken by the State Forest Department to conduct the census of water birds of the wetlands of this state including the Sunderbans.**

J&K Reorganisation Amendment Bill introduced in Rajya Sabha

- **Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy introduced the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2021** in the Rajya Sabha.
- **The bill will replace Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Ordinance of 2021 which merged the J & K cadre of the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service, and Indian Forest Service with the Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, and Union Territory cadre, also known as AGMUT cadre.** The President had promulgated the ordinance last month to amend the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019.

Smriti Irani inaugurates 8th India International Silk Fair

- **Textiles Minister Smriti Irani inaugurated the 8th India International Silk Fair on Virtual Portal.** The fair is considered to be **India's biggest silk fair**, being held under one roof on Indian Silk Export Promotion Council's virtual platform.
- The five days event is being held virtually due to COVID-19 pandemic. **India has long history of silk production and is the 2nd largest producer of Silk.** India is the **only country in the world which produces all the four major varieties of silk - Mulberry, Eri, Tassar, and Muga.**

CRPF's anti-Naxal CoBRA unit gets first all-women battalion in world

- **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) inducted women commandos in its anti-Naxal Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) unit** which will undergo training and then will be sent to Naxal hit areas.
- According to the CRPF, **on the occasion of the 88th all-women battalion Raising Day**, these women commandos have been **inducted along with the introduction of all Mahila brass band** which will make CRPF the first force to have a women brass band. **Notably, 88th Mahila Battalion of CRPF has the distinction of being the first all-Mahila battalion in the world.**

Andaman and Nicobar Islands becomes first Union Territory to be corona free

- **Andaman and Nicobar Islands has become the first state or Union territory in the country to become Covid-19 free** with active cases falling to zero in the islands. Health ministry's website reported that the last **four infected persons in Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been declared cured.** The UT had reported a total of 4,932 cases and 62 deaths from the virus.

Military Contingent of Bangladesh Marches down Rajpath

- **In a first, a 122-member marching-cum-band contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces took part in the 72nd Republic Day parade** on the Rajpath, coinciding with the golden jubilee of that country's independence. Lt Col Abu Md Shahnoor Shawon of the Bangladesh army, who spearheaded the parading contingent said, "It was an honour for us to be part of this august ceremony of India, and that too in the **50th year of our Independence.**

Kichcha Sudeepa's Vikrant Rona becomes world's first movie to reveal title logo at Burj Khalifa

- Kichcha Sudeep's upcoming multilingual upcoming film, Vikrant Rona, created history with the movies trailer launch on the world's tallest building Burj Khalifa. The logo and a 180-second-long sneak peek of the film was superimposed on the Burj Khalifa.

'This Life at Play': Girish Karnad's memoir in English to be released on his birth anniversary

- Girish Karnad's memoir, which was to be translated from Kannada into English by the actor-playwright himself but could only finish a part of it before his death in 2019, will now be out in May after final touches by award-winning translator Srinath Perur.
- 'This Life at Play: A Memoir by Girish Karnad' will be released on the director's 83rd birth anniversary on May 19 by Fourth Estate, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.

In a first, India has inducted two American drones — Sea Guardian, unarmed version of the deadly Predator series — into the Navy on lease

- In a first, India has inducted two American drones — Sea Guardian, unarmed version of the deadly Predator series — into the Navy on lease under the emergency procurement in the backdrop of the tensions with China in Ladakh. Even though the drones, MQ-9 Guardian/Predator-B, have been leased from an American firm, General Atomics, for a year for surveillance in the Indian Ocean Region, it could also be used in Ladakh, top defence sources said.

Interpol created two secure and flexible services to facilitate cybercrime related communication among law enforcement agencies

- The Interpol has created two secure and flexible services to facilitate cybercrime related communication among law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders to ensure more effective and coordinated action based on timely intelligence. "Cybercrime is one of the most prolific forms of transnational crime. Highly complex cyberthreats such as malware, Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) and ransomware bring new challenges to law enforcement — including large volumes of data, cross-border investigations, and new areas of technical knowledge," said the Interpol in a statement.

International Criminal Police Organization, commonly known as INTERPOL is an international organization that facilitates worldwide police cooperation and crime control. Headquartered in Lyon, it has seven regional bureaus worldwide and a National Central Bureau in all 194 member states, making it the world's largest police organization. INTERPOL originated with the first International Criminal Police Congress in 1914, which brought officials from 24 countries to discuss cooperation on law enforcement matters. Kim Jong Yang is a South Korean police officer and the President of Interpol. The Secretariat is led by the Secretary General, currently Jurgen Stock, the former deputy head of Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office. Pursuant to its charter, INTERPOL seeks to remain politically neutral in fulfilling its mandate.

PERSONS IN NEWS

Virat Kohli remains India's most-valuable celeb, actors Akshay Kumar & Ranveer Singh follow

- **Team India skipper Virat Kohli retains the top position of India's most-valuable celebrity list for the fourth consecutive year.** His brand value remains steady at \$237.7 million in 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar ranked second with a brand value of \$118.9 million,** a jump of 13.8 per cent, followed by Ranveer Singh with a brand value of \$102.9 million.
- **The overall brand value of the top 20 celebrities in 2020 is estimated at \$1 billion, a dip of approximately five per cent from last year.** A recent survey conducted by Duff & Phelps released key findings from the sixth edition of its Celebrity Brand Valuation Study 2020: "Embracing the New Normal."

NASA appoints Indian-American scientist Bhavya Lal as acting chief of staff

- **Indian-American Bhavya Lal was appointed by NASA as the acting chief of staff of the US space agency.** NASA said Lal brings extensive experience in engineering and space technology, serving as a member of the research staff at the Institute for Defence Analyses Science and Technology Policy Institute (STPI) from 2005 to 2020.
- **There, she led analysis of space technology, strategy, and policy for the White House office of science and technology policy and national space council,** as well as federal space-oriented organisations, including NASA, the department of defence, and the intelligence community.

New York Fed's Daleep Singh to join Joe Biden administration as deputy NSA

- **The Federal Reserve Bank of New York has said that Daleep Singh,** the Head of the Markets Group at the bank is set to join US President Joe Biden's administration as deputy national security adviser. Singh's great grand-uncle was Daleep Singh Saund, the first Asian-American elected to the US Congress.

RS Sharma to head Ayushman Bharat

- **The National Health Authority (NHA) has appointed RS Sharma as the new Chief Executive to head its health insurance scheme – Ayushman Bharat or Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana –** a flagship programme of the government.
- **He will be replacing Indu Bhushan whose three years terms come to an end.** Sharma, the former Chairman of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), also heads the Empowered Group on Technology and Data Management to combat Covid-19, and is a member, National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration of Covid-19.

IMPORTANT DAYS

International Day of Education

- **International Day of Education is an annual international observance day held on January 24** and is dedicated to education.
- **“Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation”** is the theme of **International Education Day 2021** proclaimed by Unesco (United Nations) for the current year **2021**. The purpose of the **2021** theme is to **strengthen and welcome the revival of education**.

International Day of Human Fraternity 4 February

- **The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 4 February as the International Day of Human Fraternity.**
- The UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), in partnership with the Permanent Missions of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates to the UN, as well as the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, is **organized an event titled “A Pathway to the Future”** to celebrate this international day.

World Cancer Day

- **World Cancer Day is an international day marked on February 4** to raise awareness of cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection, and treatment. World Cancer Day is led by the Union for International Cancer Control to support the goals of the World Cancer Declaration, written in 2008.
- **The theme for World Cancer Day 2021 is ‘I Am and I Will.’** It is a multi-year campaign that began in 2019 and this year will mark the last year. The theme represents an empowering call-to-action urging personal commitment, it also represents the power of action taken now to have a positive impact on the future. **The theme clearly focuses on “together all our actions matter”.**

International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, 6 February

- **In 2012, the UN General Assembly designated February 6th as the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation,** with the aim to amplify and direct the efforts on the elimination of this practice.
- This year the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation and the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC) jointly launch the **2021 theme: “No Time for Global Inaction, Unite, Fund, and Act to End Female Genital Mutilation.”**

International Day of Women and Girls in Science, 11 February

- **On 11 February 2021, the 6th International Day of Women and Girls in Science Assembly** was held at the United Nations Headquarters virtually.
- With great momentum and interest to accelerate progress in achieving the 2030 Development Agenda and its 17 Global Goals, **the 6th International Day of Women and Girls in Science Assembly theme is ‘Beyond the Borders: Equality in Science for Society’,** with a special focus on the value of the social aspects and cultural dimensions in Science, Technology and Innovation to enhance sustainable development programmes.

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QUESTIONS

- In a first, a 122-member marching-cum-band contingent of the Armed Forces of _____ took part in the 72nd Republic Day parade on the Rajpath, coinciding with the golden jubilee of that country's independence.
(a) Nepal (b) Suriname (c) Fiji (d) Bangladesh
- The Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu will inaugurate _____ a National Tribal Festival at Dilli Haat in INA in the National Capital.
(a) Aadi Mahotsav (b) Tribal Parv (c) Tribal Celebrations (d) Aadi Uthan Parv
- Which is the only country in the world which produces all the four major varieties of silk - Mulberry, Eri, Tassar, and Muga?
(a) China (b) India (c) South Korea (d) USA
- Which of the following countries Hualong One units, third-generation pressurised water nuclear reactors, began commercial operations recently?
(a) South Korea (b) China (c) Japan (d) Taiwan
- The Clothespin Tower in _____ is the first conceptual building of its kind that turns the mundane clothespin into an icon of eternal love and unity.
(a) Dubai (b) New York (c) Dublin (d) Shanghai
- Which of the following countries has decided to award the contract for construction of 679 megawatt Lower Arun Hydropower Project to India?
(a) Afghanistan (b) Nepal (c) Myanmar (d) Bhutan
- Recently, The _____ confirmed the Year 2020 as the 'worst year on record', after global tourism suffered massively due to international travel bans implemented to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.
(a) UN World Tourism Organization (b) World Bank
(c) UNEP (d) Greenpeace International
- Which of the following has set up an "innovation sandbox" web portal where fintech firms and individuals may use the environment for offline testing of their applications in a test environment?
(a) NSE (b) BSE
(c) Metropolitan Stock Exchange (d) India International Exchange
- Recently, Kichcha Sudeep's upcoming multilingual upcoming film, Vikrant Rona, created history with the movies trailer launch on the world's tallest building _____.
(a) Burj Khalifa (b) Petronas Towers (c) World Trade Centre (d) Leaning Tower of Pisa
- International Day of Education is an annual international observance day held on _____ and is dedicated to education.
(a) January 24 (b) January 26 (c) January 29 (d) January 31
- Who has been recently appointed as the new Chief Executive to head its health insurance scheme – Ayushman Bharat or Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana – a flagship programme of the government?
(a) Amit Ranjan Vajpayee (b) Dibakar Bannerjee
(c) Nilotpal Chatterjee (d) RS Sharma
- 'This Life at Play: A Memoir by _____ will be released on the director's 83rd birth anniversary on by Fourth Estate, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.
(a) Girish Karnad (b) Ramesh Sippy (c) Subhash Ghai (d) Kuku Kohli

13. A new centrally sponsored scheme _____ will be launched with an outlay of about 64,180 crores over 6 years.
 (a) PM Atma Sakshar Swasth Bharat Yojana (b) PM Atma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Abhiyan
 (c) PM Atma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana (d) PM Atma Saksham Swasth Bharat Abhiyan
14. In a first for the industry, the _____ will develop and manufacture a military aircraft in India, having acquired intellectual property rights for a German-origin platform.
 (a) Tata Group (b) Wipro Group (c) Reliance Group (d) Adani Group
15. The government will set up a Rs 20,000 crore _____ with a view to mobilise Rs 111 lakh crore required for funding of the ambitious national infrastructure pipeline.
 (a) Development Finance Investment (DFI) (b) Developmental Financial Investment (DFI)
 (c) Development Finance Institution (DFI) (d) Development Finance Organisation (DFO)
16. Recently which union minister addressed the inaugural ceremony of the ASEAN India Hackathon?
 (a) Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' (b) Smriti Irani
 (c) Rajnath Singh (d) Amit Shah
17. The Fiscal deficit for the financial year 2021-22 pegged at _____ percent.
 (a) 4.2 (b) 5.1 (c) 6.8 (d) 7.4
18. The Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's second LCA production line in _____.
 (a) Hyderabad (b) Bengaluru (c) Lucknow (d) Chennai
19. In the Union Budget recently Government has enhanced the allocation to the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund from 30,000 to _____ crore rupees.
 (a) 35,000 (b) 40,000 (c) 50,000 (d) 70,000
20. In order to incentivise start-ups in the country, the Government has extended the eligibility for claiming tax holiday for start-ups till _____.
 (a) 31st of December, 2021 (b) 31st of March, 2022
 (c) 31st of July, 2022 (d) 31st of December, 2022
21. Recently, which of the following has become the first state or Union territory in the country to become Covid-19 free with active cases falling to zero?
 (a) Puducherry (b) Lakshadweep (c) Sikkim (d) Andaman and Nicobar Islands
22. Amazon CEO _____ will step down as the chief executive of the company – which he founded almost 27 years ago.
 (a) Jeff Bezos (b) Mark Zukerberg (c) Warren Buffet (d) Lary Page
23. The Union environment ministry launched 2021 as the _____ Year of the Environment.
 (a) Indo-Canadian (b) Indo-French (c) Indo-Japanese (d) Indo-Korean
24. India has committed that _____ per cent of its installed power generation capacity shall be from non-fossil fuel by the end of 2030 as a part of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions as per Paris Accord.
 (a) 10 (b) 20 (c) 40 (d) 50
25. Recently, Maritime body MUI urged the government to take cognisance of “_____ on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change” in the formulation of Maritime India Vision 2030.
 (a) Neptune Declaration (b) Jupiter Declaration (c) Uranus Declaration (d) Mars Declaration
26. Which of the following recently launched India's first 'amputee clinic'?
 (a) AIIMS Delhi (b) JIPMER Puducherry (c) AFMC Pune (d) PGI Chandigarh

27. Name the Indian-American who was appointed by NASA as the acting chief of staff of the US space agency.
 (a) Rajiv Nanda (b) Bhavya Lal (c) Arindam Bhaskar (d) Sumit Bhattacharya
28. Majuli will have a new embankment-cum-road around the island as the 15th Finance Commission has recommended for it. Majuli is first island district of India located in:
 (a) Assam (b) Nagaland (c) West Bengal (d) Manipur
29. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the year-long centenary celebrations via video-conferencing in Chauri Chaura. Chauri Chaura is located in:
 (a) Odisha (b) Uttar Pradesh (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Jharkhand
30. Union Budget for Financial Year 2021-22 has proposed to set up _____ new Sainik Schools in the country, in partnership with NGOs, private schools and State-owned schools.
 (a) 30 (b) 50 (c) 80 (d) 100
31. Which of the following countries hosted Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Defence Ministers' Conclave 2021?
 (a) Sri Lanka (b) Mauritius (c) Maldives (d) India
32. Which of the following states virtually launched the 'Har Ghar Pani, Har Ghar Safai' mission as part of the government's campaign to accomplish the goal of 100 per cent potable piped water supply in all rural households by March next year?
 (a) Haryana (b) Punjab (c) Himachal Pradesh (d) Uttar Pradesh
33. Which of the following Uttar Pradesh districts has topped in the ranking of aspirational districts by government think tank Niti Aayog in December 2020?
 (a) Shravasti (b) Gorakhpur (c) Maharajganj (d) Gonda
34. The World's First 3-D Printed School is to open in _____.
 (a) Fiji (b) Guyana (c) Myanmar (d) Madagascar
35. The regime in Myanmar headed by the Army has announced a new State Administrative Council. The council headed by _____.
 (a) Ne Win sat (b) Min Aung Hlaing (c) Olive Yang (d) Khin Nyunt
36. Recently, which of the following states launched a scheme aimed at providing financial assistance to innovative startups to file for IT patents?
 (a) Gujarat (b) Maharashtra (c) Karnataka (d) Tamil Nadu
37. Which of the following Indian companies has sourced the world's first consignment of 'carbon-neutral oil' from the US as it looks to become a net zero-carbon company by 2035?
 (a) Wipro (b) Reliance (c) Adani (d) Godrej
38. Recently, India got its first specialised institution - Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM) in _____ which will work as a knowledge hub for various stakeholders for conserving wetlands that occupy 4.6% of the country's total land area.
 (a) Chennai (b) Bengaluru (c) Jaipur (d) Kochi
39. Who has been re-elected as President of the Boxing Federation of India (BFI)?
 (a) Shreyash Rajputra (b) Amit Malviya
 (c) Ajay Singh (d) Ashish Shelar
40. The International Day of Human Fraternity is observed on:
 (a) 30th January (b) 2nd February (c) 4th February (d) 6th February

41. A recent survey conducted by Duff & Phelps released key findings from the sixth edition of its Celebrity Brand Valuation Study 2020. Who among the following retained the top position of India's most-valuable celebrity list for the fourth consecutive year?
 (a) Shahrukh Khan (b) Amitabh Bachchan (c) Virat Kohli (d) Vishwanathan Anand
42. Which of the following has directed selected Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and Urban Co-operatives Banks (UCBs) to implement a risk-based internal audit system?
 (a) SIDBI (b) Ministry of Finance (c) NABARD (d) Reserve Bank of India
43. Recently, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated the first heliport of the state in _____ district.
 (a) Guwahati (b) Majuli (c) Barpeta (d) Bongaigaon
44. Which of the following two countries agreed to extend the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty) by five years?
 (a) France & Germany (b) Poland and Netherlands
 (c) USA and Russia (d) Mexico and USA
45. Recently, Union ministers jointly launched a unified web portal for monitoring the progress of _____ activities across the nation.
 (a) GOBARDHAN (b) GOBARKARYA (c) GOBARVARDHAN (d) SANYUKTAVIKAS
46. Which of the following states has conducted water birds census for the first time?
 (a) Gujarat (b) Maharashtra (c) Uttar Pradesh (d) West Bengal
47. Which of the following countries approved a plan to build the world's first energy island in the North Sea?
 (a) Norway (b) Belgium (c) Denmark (d) Germany
48. Recently, "BHEL has successfully commissioned the second unit (800 MW) of the 2x800 MW Gadawara Super Thermal Power Project Stage-I". Gadawara Super Thermal Power Project is located in:
 (a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Karnataka (c) Tamil nadu (d) Maharashtra
49. Which of the following union ministries will launch scheme titled 'Manufacturing Zones under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package' in the Union Budget?
 (a) Ministry of Textiles
 (b) Ministry of Defence
 (c) Ministry of Power
 (d) Ministry of Health & Family Affairs
50. Recently, Preliminary surveys by the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD) are learnt to have shown the presence of 1,600 tonnes of lithium resources in the igneous rocks of the Marlagalla-Allapatna region of _____.
 (a) Maharashtra (b) Tamil Nadu (c) Karnataka (d) Andhra Pradesh
51. Which of the following states has become first State in the country to make the end to end processing of the cabinet paperless by implementing e-cabinet application?
 (a) Himachal Pradesh (b) Haryana (c) Sikkim (d) Goa
52. Which is the first Asian country to allow small investors to directly lend to the government?
 (a) China (b) South Korea (c) Singapore (d) India
53. India's space agency Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is planning to launch Brazilian satellite _____ and three Indian payloads on 28 February in its first mission of 2021.
 (a) Amazonia-1 (b) Brasilia-4 (c) Robusta-8 (d) Brasilia-1

54. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, India slipped two places to _____ position in the 2020 Democracy Index's global ranking.
 (a) 27th (b) 38th (c) 45th (d) 53rd
55. Recently, the _____ introduced a risk-based internal audit (RBIA) system for select non-bank lenders and urban co-operative banks (UCBs).
 (a) Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
 (b) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)
 (c) Ministry of Finance
 (d) Small industrial Development Bank of India (SIDBI)
56. Recently, RBI has announced certain measures of protection of common bank account holders in Monetary policy statement. It includes setting up of _____ helpline for digital payment services.
 (a) 8*7 (b) 12*6 (c) 18*5 (d) 24*7
57. Recently, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched _____ an electric vehicle mass awareness campaign, to sensitize citizens about the benefits of switching to electric vehicles.
 (a) 'Switch Delhi' (b) 'Catch Delhi'
 (c) 'Air Pollution Free Delhi' (d) 'Electronic Delhi'
58. In Gujarat, the State Government has asked the Tata group to start the work on setting up Indian Institute of Skills-IIS. The proposed IIS at Nasmed is located in _____ Lok Sabha constituency.
 (a) Surat (b) Bhuj (c) Gandhinagar (d) Bhavnagar
59. Recently, India and Bahrain have agreed to forge deeper engagement in the field of _____.
 (a) Renewable Energy (b) Coal (c) Copper (d) Hydropower
60. Recently, the RBI governor Shaktikant Das said that the GDP growth is projected at _____ percent in the Financial Year 2021-22.
 (a) 7.5 (b) 8.7 (c) 9.4 (d) 10.5
61. A historic tripartite agreement for establishing India's first-ever geothermal field development project in _____ has been signed.
 (a) Gandhinagar (b) Leh (c) Gulbarga (d) Kunnur
62. Who among the following joined US President Joe Biden's administration as deputy national security adviser?
 (a) Mahesh Jain (b) Narendra Das (c) Ajay Krishnamoorthi (d) Daleep Singh
63. Which of the following Indian paramilitary forces has recently inducted women commandos in its anti-Naxal Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) unit which will undergo training and then will be sent to Naxal hit areas?
 (a) Border Security Force
 (b) Central Industrial Security Force
 (c) Central Reserve Police Force
 (d) Indo-Tibetan Border Police
64. Recently, Ulukbek Maripov has been appointed as the _____ new Prime Minister bringing a long-running political crisis to a close.
 (a) Turkmenistan (b) Kazakhstan (c) Kyrgyzstan (d) Mongolia
65. In a world first, the researchers from _____ are to explore mixing doses of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines.
 (a) Britain (b) Germany (c) France (d) Ireland

66. Which of the following banks announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MUFG Bank, Japan's premier bank, for collaboration towards catering to the banking requirements of Japanese corporate present in India?
(a) ICICI Bank (b) State bank of India (c) HDFC Bank (d) Axis Bank
67. Recently, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was poised to become the first African and first woman to lead the embattled World Trade Organization. She hails from which of the following countries?
(a) Nigeria (b) Liberia (c) Uganda (d) Algeria
68. The Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) Council held its maiden meeting and approved the establishment of the world's largest radio telescope in:
(a) Antarctica and Africa (b) North America and Europe
(c) South America and Asia (d) Africa and Australia
69. Which of the following has recently become the first team to qualify for the finals of the inaugural edition of the ICC World Test Championship?
(a) Australia (b) New Zealand (c) England (d) India
70. The 6th International Day of Women and Girls in Science Assembly was held at the United Nations Headquarters virtually on:
(a) 7th February (b) 9th February (c) 11th February (d) 15th February



ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. d In a first, a 122-member marching-cum-band contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces took part in the 72nd Republic Day parade on the Rajpath, coinciding with the golden jubilee of that country's independence.
2. a Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated Aadi Mahotsav, a National Tribal Festival at Dilli Haat in INA in the National Capital.
3. b India has long history of silk production and is the 2nd largest producer of Silk. India is the only country in the world which produces all the four major varieties of silk - Mulberry, Eri, Tassar, and Muga.
4. b China National Nuclear Corp said the first of its Hualong One units, third-generation pressurised water nuclear reactors, began commercial operations.
5. a The Clothespin Tower in Dubai is the first conceptual building of its kind that turns the mundane clothespin into an icon of eternal love and unity.
6. b Nepal has decided to award the contract for construction of 679 megawatt Lower Arun Hydropower Project to India's Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN).
7. a The UN World Tourism Organization recently confirmed the Year 2020 as the 'worst year on record', after global tourism suffered massively due to international travel bans implemented to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.
8. b Leading stock exchange BSE has set up an "innovation sandbox" web portal where fintech firms and individuals may use the environment for offline testing of their applications in a test environment.
9. a Kichcha Sudeep's upcoming multilingual upcoming film, Vikrant Rona, created history with the movies trailer launch on the world's tallest building Burj Khalifa.
10. a International Day of Education is an annual international observance day held on January 24 and is dedicated to education.
11. d The National Health Authority (NHA) has appointed RS Sharma as the new Chief Executive to head its health insurance scheme – Ayushman Bharat or Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana – a flagship programme of the government.
12. a 'This Life at Play: A Memoir by Girish Karnad' will be released on the director's 83rd birth anniversary on May 19 by Fourth Estate, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.
13. c A new centrally sponsored scheme, PM Atma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana, will be launched with an outlay of about 64,180 crores over 6 years. This will be in addition to the National Health Mission.
14. a In a first for the industry, the Tata Group will develop and manufacture a military aircraft in India, having acquired intellectual property rights for a German-origin platform.
15. c Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government will set up a Rs 20,000 crore Development Finance Institution (DFI) with a view to mobilise Rs 111 lakh crore required for funding of the ambitious national infrastructure pipeline.
16. a Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' addressed the inaugural ceremony of the ASEAN India Hackathon.

- 17. c** The Fiscal deficit for the financial year 2021-22 pegged at 6.8 percent.
- 18. b** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's second LCA production line in Bengaluru.
- 19. b** Government has also enhanced the allocation to the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund from 30,000 to 40,000 crore rupees.
- 20. b** In order to incentivise start-ups in the country, the Government has extended the eligibility for claiming tax holiday for start-ups by one more year - till 31st of March, 2022.
- 21. d** Andaman and Nicobar Islands has become the first state or Union territory in the country to become Covid-19 free with active cases falling to zero in the islands.
- 22. a** Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos will step down as the chief executive of the company – which he founded almost 27 years ago.
- 23. b** The Union environment ministry launched the Indo-French Year of the Environment along with Barbara Pompili, the French Minister for Ecological Transition.
- 24. c** India has committed that 40 per cent of its installed power generation capacity shall be from non-fossil fuel by the end of 2030 as a part of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions as per Paris Accord.
- 25. a** Maritime body MUI urged the government to take cognisance of “Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change” in the formulation of Maritime India Vision 2030.
- 26. d** Chandigarh PGI launched India's first ‘amputee clinic’.
- 27. b** Indian-American Bhavya Lal was appointed by NASA as the acting chief of staff of the US space agency.
- 28. a** Assam's Majuli will have a new embankment-cum-road around the island as the 15th Finance Commission has recommended for it along with a project for comprehensive development of the Kamakhya temple in Guwahati.
- 29. b** Mr Modi also released a postal stamp dedicated to the Chauri Chaura incident. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was also present on the occasion.
- 30. d** Union Budget for Financial Year 2021-22 has proposed to set up 100 new Sainik Schools in the country, in partnership with NGOs, private schools and State-owned schools.
- 31. d** India hosted Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Defence Ministers' Conclave on the sidelines of Aero India 2021.
- 32. b** Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh virtually launched the ‘Har Ghar Pani, Har Ghar Safai’ mission as part of the government's campaign to accomplish the goal of 100 per cent potable piped water supply in all rural households by March next year.
- 33. a** Shrawasti in Uttar Pradesh has topped in the ranking of aspirational districts by government think tank Niti Aayog in December 2020.
- 34. d** World's First 3-D Printed School to Open in Madagascar.
- 35. b** The regime in Myanmar headed by the Army has announced a new State Administrative Council. The council headed by the Army Chief General Min Aung Hlaing has eleven members out of which eight are from the military.

- 36. b** In a bid to boost the startup ecosystem in Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray launched a scheme aimed at providing financial assistance to innovative startups to file for IT patents.
- 37. b** Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd has sourced the world's first consignment of 'carbon-neutral oil' from the US as it looks to become a net zero-carbon company by 2035.
- 38. a** India got its first specialised institution - Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM) - in Chennai which will work as a knowledge hub for various stakeholders for conserving wetlands that occupy 4.6% of the country's total land area.
- 39. c** Ajay Singh has been re-elected as President of the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) after defeating former Maharashtra sports minister Ashish Shelar in the polls.
- 40. c** The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 4 February as the International Day of Human Fraternity.
- 41. c** Team India skipper Virat Kohli retains the top position of India's most-valuable celebrity list for the fourth consecutive year. His brand value remains steady at \$237.7 million in 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 42. d** The Reserve Bank has directed select Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and Urban Co-operatives Banks (UCBs) to implement a risk-based internal audit system.
- 43. b** Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated the first heliport of the state in Majuli district.
- 44. c** US and Russia to extend the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty) by five years.
- 45. a** Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Animal Husbandry Minister Giriraj Singh, Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Minister of State for Jal Shakti Rattan Lal Kataria jointly launched a unified web portal for monitoring the progress of GOBARDHAN activities across the nation.
- 46. d** In West Bengal, the Forest Department has conducted water birds census for the first time.
- 47. c** Denmark approved a plan to build the world's first energy island in the North Sea that will produce and store enough green energy to cover the electricity needs of 3 million European households.
- 48. a** Gadarwara Super Thermal Power Station is a coal based thermal power project located at near by Gangai village in Gadarwara Tehsil in Narsinghpur District in Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.
- 49. c** The Ministry of Power will launch a domestic manufacturing programme for critical power and renewable energy equipment at an outlay of Rs 1,500 crore in the coming financial year.
- 50. c** Preliminary surveys by the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD), an arm of the Department of Atomic Energy, are learnt to have shown the presence of 1,600 tonnes of lithium resources in the igneous rocks of the Marlagalla-Allapatna region of Karnataka's Mandya district.
- 51. a** Himachal Pradesh has become first State in the country to make the end to end processing of the cabinet paperless by implementing e-cabinet application.
- 52. d** In a landmark move, the Reserve Bank of India that retail investors in India will be given online access to invest in government securities. Right now, there is a way for small investors to buy government bonds via the goBID platform on the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

- 53. a** India's space agency Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is planning to launch Brazilian satellite Amazonia-1 and three Indian payloads on 28 February in its first mission of 2021.
- 54. d** India slipped two places to 53rd position in the 2020 Democracy Index's global ranking.
- 55. a** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced a risk-based internal audit (RBIA) system for select non-bank lenders and urban co-operative banks (UCBs).
- 56. d** RBI has announced certain measures of protection of common bank account holders in monetary policy statement. It includes setting up of 24*7 helpline for digital payment services.
- 57. a** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched 'Switch Delhi', an electric vehicle mass awareness campaign, to sensitize citizens about the benefits of switching to electric vehicles.
- 58. c** Proposed IIS at Nasmed is located in Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency.
- 59. a** India and Bahrain have agreed to forge deeper engagement in the field of renewable energy.
- 60. d** The RBI governor Shaktikant Das said that the GDP growth is projected at 10.5 percent in the Financial Year 2021-22.
- 61. b** A historic tripartite agreement for establishing India's first-ever geothermal field development project in Leh has been signed, with Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur terming it a step towards achieving the goal of carbon-neutral Ladakh.
- 62. d** The Federal Reserve Bank of New York has said that Daleep Singh, the Head of the Markets Group at the bank is set to join US President Joe Biden's administration as deputy national security adviser.
- 63. c** Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) inducted women commandos in its anti-Naxal Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) unit which will undergo training and then will be sent to Naxal hit areas.
- 64. c** Kyrgyzstan appointed Ulukbek Maripov as the country's new prime minister bringing a long-running political crisis to a close
- 65. a** British researchers are to explore mixing doses of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines in a world first trial aimed at finding new ways to swiftly reduce coronavirus infections as new mutated variants emerge.
- 66. a** ICICI Bank announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MUFG Bank, Japan's premier bank, for collaboration towards catering to the banking requirements of Japanese corporates present in India.
- 67. a** Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was poised to become the first African and first woman to lead the embattled World Trade Organization
- 68. d** The telescope, proposed to be the largest radio telescope in the world, will be located in Africa and Australia whose operation, maintenance and construction will be overseen by SKAO.
- 69. b** Kane Williamson-led New Zealand became the first team to qualify for the finals of the inaugural edition of the ICC World Test Championship.
- 70. c** On 11 February 2021, the 6th International Day of Women and Girls in Science Assembly was held at the United Nations Headquarters virtually.