
MANTHAN

A General Awareness Weekly

7th December to 13th December, 2020

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
Launcher

National



PM Narendra Modi laid foundation stone of new proposed Parliament Building in New Delhi

- Although the laying of the foundation stone was allowed, Justice A.M. Khanwilkar of Supreme Court of India put a hold on Central Vista Redevelopment Project at whole till resolution of pleas received against the project in the court. On 10 December 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone with a ceremony of sarva dharma prarthana (inter-faith prayer).
- The new Parliament Building is being constructed at a cost of 971 crore rupees which will house more Committee Rooms and Political Parties offices than the existing Parliament House.
- “The new building is an intrinsic part of the vision of ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ and will be a landmark opportunity to build peoples’ Parliament for the first time after independence, one which will match the needs and aspirations of ‘New India’ in the 75th anniversary of independence in 2022.”
- The Central Vista project includes construction of a new Parliament building, with the existing building converted into a museum. Five big office buildings each would come up on both sides of Rajpath, while the National Museum and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts buildings would be pulled down to make way for the new buildings.
- In 2010s, a proposal was introduced to revamp Central Vista and re-build or relocate a number of administrative buildings which initiated a program expecting completion in 2024. The new Parliament Building Complex, triangular in shape spread over 64,500 square metre, is described as the pivot of the Central Vista project design.
- It is to be much bigger than the existing Parliament building and will be able to house 1,224 Members of Parliament. The Lok Sabha chamber will have a seating capacity of 888 MPs while the Rajya Sabha chamber will accommodate 384 MPs. The increased capacity of the chambers has been provisioned for keeping in mind future increase in the number of MPs. Currently, the Lok Sabha has 545 MPs and the Rajya Sabha 245.
- Under the Central Vista project, the residence of the Prime Minister is likely to be shifted near the South Block that houses the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). The vice-president’s new house will be closer to the North Block. The “North” and “South” Blocks are named so for their location north and south of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- According to the Central Vista redevelopment plan, North and South Blocks will be converted into museums. However, the current residence of the vice president is among the buildings identified for demolition.

Originally called the House of Parliament, it was designed by the British architects Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker in 1912-1913 as part of their wider mandate to construct a new administrative capital city for British India. Construction of the Parliament House began in 1921 and it was completed in 1927. The opening ceremony of the Parliament House, which then housed the Imperial Legislative Council, was performed on 18 January 1927 by Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India. The construction cost back then was Rs 83 lakh - a princely sum in those days. The current Central Vista project is estimated to cost Rs 971 crore.

Gwalior & Orchha included in list of World Heritage City by UNESCO

- **Gwalior and Orchha of Madhya Pradesh** have been included in the list of World Heritage City by UNESCO. Tourism experts are calling it a big achievement. **Orchha located in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh** is famous all over the world for its temples and palaces.
- **Orchha was the 16th century capital of the erstwhile Bundela dynasty.** Many temples and palaces are located here, which have some legend. Orchha Raj Mahal, Jahangir Mahal, Ramaraja Mandir, Rai Praveen Mahal, Laxminarayan Mandir and many other famous temples and palaces are famous for a unique confluence of Rajput and Mughal architectural influences.
- **Gwalior was established in the 9th century and ruled by Gurjar Pratihar Rajvansh, Tomar, Baghel Kachvaho and Scindias.** The memorabilia left by them are found in abundance in memorials, forts and palaces in the area. **Gwalior is known for its palaces and temples**, including the intricately carved Sas Bahu Ka Mandir temple.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris. **Audrey Azoulay** appointed as the **Director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**, becoming the **second female leader of the organization.** **India is sixth on the list of countries with 37 sites in the list. Italy leads with 54 sites.**

PM Narendra Modi will inaugurate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention on January 9

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention to be held in virtual format on January 9.** Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention is the flagship event of the Government of India and provides an important platform to engage and connect with the overseas diaspora.
- **The theme of PBD 2021 is “Contributing to Atmanirbhar Bharat”.** The PBD Convention will include two Plenary Sessions – ‘Role of Diaspora in Atmanirbhar Bharat’ and ‘Facing Post Covid Challenges-Scenario in Health, Economy, Social and International Relations’.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a celebratory day observed on 9 January by the Republic of India to **mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India.** The day commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai on 9 January 1915.

Cyclone Nivar was the fourth cyclone to take shape in the North Indian Ocean region this year

- **Very Severe Cyclonic Storm Nivar was a tropical cyclone which brought severe impacts to portions of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in late November of 2020.** The eighth depression and fourth named storm of the 2020 North Indian Ocean cyclone season, Nivar originated from a disturbance in the Intertropical Convergence Zone.
- **Cyclone Nivar was the fourth cyclone to take shape in the North Indian Ocean region this year.** The first three cyclones were Cyclone Gati (made landfall in Somalia on November 22), Cyclone Amphan, (eastern India witnessed it in May), and Cyclone Nisarga (in Maharashtra). The name Nisarga was given by Bangladesh, Gati was taken from India’s suggested names. Nivara has been selected from the list of names given by Iran.
- **Cyclone warnings are provided by the India Meteorological Department from the Area Cyclone Warning Centres (ACWCs) at Calcutta, Chennai and Mumbai and Cyclone Warning Centres (CWCs) at Vishakhapatnam, Bhubaneshwar and Ahmedabad.** The cyclone warning process is coordinated by the Weather Central in the office of DDGM (Weather Forecasting) at Pune and the Northern Hemispheric Analysis Centre at New Delhi.
- **North Indian Ocean Region covers tropical cyclones formed over Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. The 13 members,** which come under the region, are Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. In 2018, five more countries were added. These are Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Yemen. **A total of 169 cyclones were named by these countries for this year, with 13 names from each country.**

Winter rains in North-Western India are caused by Western Disturbances. A Western Disturbance is an extratropical storm originating in the Mediterranean region that brings sudden winter rain to the northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent. It is a non-monsoonal precipitation pattern driven by the westerlies. Retreating monsoon season commences with the beginning of the withdrawal of the south-west monsoon (mid-September – November) and lasts till early January. It is a 3-month long process where it starts from the peninsula in October and from the extreme south-eastern tip by December. Thus, from October to December the coast of Tamil Nadu state receives at least half of its roughly 40 inches (1,000 mm) of annual precipitation. In simple words, retreating means withdrawal. So, withdrawal of south-west monsoon winds from skies of north India during months of October and November is known as retreating monsoon.

HAL-IISc Skill Development Centre in launches its first training programme

- HAL-IISc Skill Development Centre in Challakere of Chitradurga district in Karnataka launched its first training programme offering five courses in virtual mode.
- The programmes offered are in the niche engineering areas of aerospace, mechanical, electrical and electronic sectors, and in line with the “Make in India” mission. The experienced engineers, supervisors and faculty members of various technical institutes will be trained in the Centre.
- The trainees will spend more than 50 per cent of the course duration in labs, conducting experiments. Faculty members will be selected from Indian Institute of Science and other leading organisations including HAL.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had formally inaugurated the Skill Development Centre in Challakere on August 13th this year. The Centre is located in IISc’s new 1500 acre campus in Challakere, projected as a Science and Technology city.

PM Narendra Modi addressed inaugural session of virtual India Mobile Congress 2020

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given the inaugural address at the virtual India Mobile Congress 2020. IMC 2020 is being organised by the Department of Telecommunications, and the Cellular Operators Association of India. IMC 2020 is organised by the Department of Telecommunications, and the Cellular Operators Association of India.
- The theme for IMC 2020 is “Inclusive Innovation - Smart, Secure, Sustainable”. It aims to align to the Prime Minister’s vision to promote ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’, ‘Digital Inclusivity’, and ‘Sustainable development, entrepreneurship and innovation’. It also aims to drive foreign and local investments, encourage Research and Development in the telecom and emerging technology sectors.

India-Uzbekistan virtual summit on December 11, a first with central Asian nation

- In a first-ever virtual summit with a Central Asian country, PM Narendra Modi was held a virtual summit with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on December 11.
- PM Modi has already had virtual summits with his counterparts from--Australia, EU, Sri Lanka, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg. More such meets are on the anvil, with a virtual summit with Bangladesh expected to happen on the December 17. Indian Prime Minister had visited the doubly landlocked central Asian country in 2015 and 2016, followed by visits of Uzbek President Mirziyoyev to India in 2018 and 2019.

Uzbekistan is a country in Central Asia. It is surrounded by five landlocked countries: Kazakhstan to the north; Kyrgyzstan to the northeast; Tajikistan to the southeast; Afghanistan to the south and Turkmenistan to the south-west. Along with Liechtenstein, it is one of two doubly landlocked countries. Tashkent is the capital city. The sou’ m is the currency of Uzbekistan.

First visit by an Indian Army chief to Saudi Arabia and the UAE

- Regular joint military exercises and training besides joint production of defence equipment are some of the goals that India, UAE and Saudi Arabia look to achieve on Army chief General M.M. Naravane’s week-long trip to the two key Middle East countries.

- **This is the first visit by an Indian Army chief to Saudi Arabia and the UAE** and is seen as a sign of how India's ties with the Middle East has improved over the past few years.
- **Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa's visit to Saudi Arabia** in August, to ease the diplomatic strain between the countries, ended with him **being denied a meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman**.

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).

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar reassures farmers, MSP will continue & APMC mandis will not be scrapped

- **Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has reiterated government stand that Minimum Support Price will continue and APMC mandis will not be scrapped.**
- Mr Tomar said, **no one can take away the land of the farmer for any reason and buyers cannot make any changes** in the farmer's land. Mr Tomar also said that contractors cannot terminate the contract without full payment.
- The Minister said, **under the farms laws, farmers can fix the prices of the produce before they grow the crop.** He said, buyers will have to pay on time or else they will have to face legal action.

Minimum Support Price is the price at which government purchases crops for the farmers, to safeguard the interests of the farmers. In our country, MSP for 24 agricultural commodities of Kharif and Rabi season are announced by the Government based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agriculture Cost and Prices (CACP). MSP is fixed on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) since 2009. During the 2018-19 Union Budget the government announced that MSP would be kept at 1.5 times the cost of production (as per recommendations from the M S Swaminathan chaired National Commission for Farmers).

PM-WANI scheme will revolutionalise tech world & significantly improve WiFi availability across country

- **In a bid to fuel broadband internet proliferation across the country, the Government of India launched PM WANI (Prime Minister Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) Scheme. The scheme aims to bring large scale deployment of Wi-Fi hotspots** through the country to drive up connectivity options and improve digital access.
- **The scheme envisages setting up of public Wi-Fi networks and access points by local Kirana and neighbourhood shops through public data offices (PDO will be set up on the lines of Public Call Offices (PCOs))** that will not involve any licence, fee or registration.
- **Apart from, Public Wi-Fi being a low-cost option to reach unserved citizens** and grow the economy, it can revolutionise the tech world and significantly improve Wi-Fi availability across the length and breadth of India.
- The scheme will enable small shopkeepers to provide WiFi service. Prime Minister said, this will boost incomes as well as ensure the youth gets seamless internet connectivity. **It will also strengthen the Digital India mission.**
- Cabinet approved setting up of public Wi-Fi networks to provide public Wi-Fi service through Public Data Offices without levy of any License Fee. **The Union Cabinet also cleared the provision of submarine optical fibre cable connectivity between mainland (Kochi) and Lakshadweep Islands.**
- According to the TRAI report, **public Wi-Fi system on the WANI architecture can lead to a 10% rise in net penetration** which in turn can lead to a **1.4% increase in GDP**. PM WANI can result into a rapid scale-up of the Internet in rural India, which will be transformative, **given the low level of penetration — 27.57 subscribers per 100 populations in 2019.**
- **Wi-fi linked to broadband fibre service can be the fastest route to bridging the existing gap.**

India drops to second position in BNEF's 2020 Climatescope ranking; Chile bags top spot

- **India has dropped to the second position in Bloomberg New Energy Finance's (BNEF) 2020 Climatescope survey ranking from first last year, as a result of a decline in clean energy investment, which fell 12 per cent in 2018-19 to \$8.5 billion and has plummeted 32 per cent since 2017.**
- **Chile has bagged the top spot in the survey reflective of its strong clean energy policies while, Brazil remained at the third position.** However, the report added that Mainland China and India continued to be the biggest markets for clean energy investment with Mainland China far and away the largest.

In September 2019, at the United Nations Climate Action Summit, India announced increasing the renewable energy target to 450 GW by 2030 from 175 GW by 2022. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is the nodal Ministry of the Government of India for all matters relating to new and renewable energy. **New and Renewable Energy sources include solar energy, geothermal energy, wind power, hydropower, biomass, etc. Raj Kumar Singh is the current minister of New and Renewable Energy.**

Global climate summit marked 5th anniversary of Paris Climate Pact

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Global Climate Summit on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the landmark Paris Climate Agreement which was adopted on 12th December 2015.** The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was **adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12th December 2015 and entered into force on 4th of November 2016.**
- The Paris Climate Agreement completed five years on 12th of December and the United Kingdom has called for a virtual Global Climate Summit and Prime Minister Narendra Modi also took part in the meeting.
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India has not only achieved its target against climate change as per the Paris Agreement 2015 but has also gone beyond it.**
- Speaking at the **Climate Ambition Summit 2020, co-hosted by the United Nations, the United Kingdom and France,** Prime Minister asserted that review of achievements should be done against the set targets in order to inspire the youths and forthcoming generations. Mr. Modi said, **India has increased its solar capacity from 2.63 Gigawatt in 2014 to around 36 Gigawatt in 2020.**
- Referring to the **two remarkable initiatives of International Solar Alliance and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure,** Prime Minister said that the **centennial India in 2047 will not only meet its own targets but will also exceed the expectations.**
- The Prime Minister said that **India has exceeded in expanding its forest cover** and also safeguarding its biodiversity. The virtual summit witnessed world leaders coming together to make new commitments to tackle climate change and deliver on the Paris Agreement.

The landmark Paris deal, struck in 2015, aims to limit global warming to "well below" 2 °C above pre-industrial temperatures. The agreement came into force on November 4, 2016 and 189 countries have adopted it within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), dealing with greenhouse-gas-emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance. In November 2020, United States formally left the Paris Agreement. Under the Paris climate change agreement signed in 2015, India has committed to cut GHG (Green House Gas) emissions intensity of its GDP by 33-35 per cent, increase non-fossil fuel power capacity to 40 per cent from 28 per cent in 2015, add carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonne CO2 per annum by increasing the forest cover.

Lakshadweep first UT to become 100% organic

- **After Sikkim, Lakshadweep is the first Union Territory to become 100 per cent organic as all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, providing access to safer food choices and making agriculture a more environment-friendly activity. The ministry of agriculture has declared the island as organic.** Earlier in 2016, Sikkim became India's first "100 percent organic" State.
- According to FSSAI, 'organic farming' is a system of farm design and management to create an ecosystem of agriculture production without the use of synthetic external inputs such as chemical fertilisers, pesticides and synthetic hormones or genetically modified organisms.

India's smallest Union Territory, Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands with an area of 32 sq km. All are tiny islands of coral origin (Atoll) and are surrounded by fringing reefs. The Capital is Kavaratti and it is also the principal town of the UT. Praful Khoda Patel assumed additional charge as Administrator of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep from 05 December 2020.

MahaSharad Digital Platform

- **Maharashtra's Department of Social Justice is all set to launch an ambitious scheme for distribution of assistive devices to lakhs of persons with disabilities through MahaSharad Digital Platform to coincide with NCP chief Sharad Pawar's 80th birthday. It will be available on Play Store by March 2021.**
- **Maharashtra System for Health and Rehabilitation Assistance" or MahaSharad platform has been created to provide various devices to persons with disabilities free of cost through the Commissionerate for persons with Disability. Modern equipment and devices help divyang to lead life like normal individuals. Several people, organizations, private companies, industrialists and others are willing to make available such equipment for divyang.**
- **The MahaSharad platform will help such donors meet needy divyang. This is the first such experiment in the state to bring together the needy disabled people and various social groups who want to help them.**

Maharashtra is India's second-most populous state and third-largest state by area. Nagpur is Maharashtra's second capital and hosts the winter session of the state legislature. Pune is its cultural capital. Shiv Sena President Uddhav Thackeray takes oath as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. Uddhav Thackeray is the first of his family to be the chief minister of Maharashtra. His father Bal Thackeray founded the Shiv Sena over five decades ago. Bhagat Singh Koshiyari is serving as the current Governor of Maharashtra.

Centre exempted Handicraft and Geographical Indications toys from Quality Control Order

- **Centre has exempted Handicraft and Geographical Indications toys from Quality Control Order. Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade mentioned this exemption in Toys (Quality Control) Second Amendment Order, 2020. Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry has devised a comprehensive action plan to boost production and sale of indigenous toys across the country.**
- **Quality control order was issued by the Department for standardization and quality adherence of Toys and the order will come into effect from 1st January next year. This order aims to bring forward the synergized efforts of the centre, states and the stakeholders to promote 'Team up for toys' vision keeping quality standards of the indigenous toys as the priority.**

The first Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, Iran and Uzbekistan on joint use of Chabahar Port will be held

- **The first Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, Iran and Uzbekistan on the joint use of Chabahar Port was held virtually on December 14, 2020. During the meeting, the participants discussed joint use of Chabahar Port for trade and transit purposes and enhanced regional connectivity. All sides also noted the significant role played by Chabahar port for the region to deliver humanitarian assistance during the COVID pandemic.**
- **All sides welcomed India's proposal to hold "Chabahar Day" on the sidelines of the International Maritime Summit scheduled to be hosted by India in January 2021. India welcomes the interest of Uzbekistan to use the Chabahar port as a transit port.**

The Chabahar port is being considered a gateway to golden opportunities for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with central Asian countries besides ramping up trade among the three countries in the wake of Pakistan denying transit access to New Delhi. Under an agreement signed between India and Iran in May 2016, India is to equip and operate two berths in Chabahar Port Phase-I with capital investment of USD 85.21 million and annual revenue expenditure of USD 22.95 million on a 10-year lease.



Xi declares end to extreme poverty in China, meeting party goal

- **Chinese President Xi Jinping declared victory in an eight-year drive to eradicate extreme poverty in the world's most populous nation**, a key goal of the ruling Communist Party. After assuming leadership of the Communist Party eight years ago, **Xi made the drive to eliminate extreme poverty by 2020 one of his top goals.**
- The party defines it as a step to achieving what it calls a “**moderately prosperous**” society, a key part of its moves to improve living standards and underpin its claim to political legitimacy. **China's poverty line is slightly below the absolute poverty level of the World Bank, at market exchange rates.**

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.

Chinese scientists make world's first light-based quantum computer

- **Chinese scientists claim to have created the world's first light-based quantum computer** which can solve problems far faster than a **classical supercomputer**, an advance hailed by experts as a “**major achievement**” that **provides a fundamentally different approach to designing such powerful machines.**
- **Jiuzhang, the quantum computer**, can reliably demonstrate “**quantum computational advantage**”, a milestone in computing. **Quantum computers excel at running simulations that are impossible for conventional computers**, leading to breakthroughs in materials science, artificial intelligence and medicine. Jiuzhang takes its name from an ancient Chinese mathematical text.
- **Jiuzhang takes its name from an ancient Chinese mathematical text.** It can perform an **extremely esoteric calculation, called Gaussian boson sampling, in 200 seconds.** The same task would take the world's fastest classical supercomputer Fugaku around 600 million years, the report said. It is the second such milestone after Google declared its 53-qubit quantum computer had achieved such a breakthrough last year.

Quantum computing is the use of quantum phenomena such as superposition and entanglement to perform computation. Computers that perform quantum computations are known as quantum computers. Quantum computing began in the early 1980s, when physicist Paul Benioff proposed a quantum mechanical model of the Turing machine. Richard Feynman and Yuri Manin later suggested that a quantum computer had the potential to simulate things that a classical computer could not. On 23 October 2019, Google AI, in partnership with the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), claimed to have performed a quantum computation that is infeasible on any classical computer. The most widely used model is the quantum circuit. Quantum circuits are based on the quantum bit, or “qubit”, which is somewhat analogous to the bit in classical computation.

Bangladesh signs first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) since its independence with Bhutan

- **Bangladesh signed its first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Bhutan allowing duty free access to a range of goods between the two countries.** This is the **first PTA Bangladesh has signed with any country in the world.**

- **The agreement was signed on the occasion marking the 50 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries. In 1971, Bhutan was the first country in the world, followed by India as the second, to recognise Bangladesh as an independent country.**
- **Under the PTA 100 Bangladeshi products will get duty free access to Bhutan.** At the same time, 34 items from Bhutan will get duty free access into Bangladesh. Further items can be added in the list later on the basis of discussion between the two countries.
- **Goods like Jute and Jute products, baby clothes and accessories, men's trousers, jackets and blazers are among the 100 items from Bangladesh which will get duty free access to Bhutan. On the other hand fruit juice, natural honey, wheat flour jams, jellies and lime stone, quartzite etc from Bhutan will have duty free access to Bangladesh.**

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.

Kuwait emir reappoints Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid as PM

- **Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah reappointed Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah as Prime Minister** following parliamentary polls in the Gulf Arab state, which faces its worst economic crisis in decades.
- Sheikh Nawaf who took over the leadership of the Gulf state in September after the death of his brother, also asked Sheikh Sabah to nominate members of a new cabinet. The new cabinet would have to be approved by the Emir, according to a decree carried on state media.

Kuwait is a country in Western Asia. Situated in the northern edge of Eastern Arabia at the tip of the Persian Gulf, it borders Iraq to the north and Saudi Arabia to the south. **As of 2016, Kuwait has a population of 4.5 million people: 1.3 million are Kuwaitis and 3.2 million are expatriates. Expatriates account for approximately 70% of the population. Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is the Crown Prince of Kuwait. Aged 80 years, he is the oldest Crown Prince in the world. The Kuwaiti dinar is the currency of Kuwait.**

India and Qatar to create special Task-Force to further facilitate investments by QIA into India

- **India and Qatar decided to create a special Task-Force to further facilitate investments by Qatar Investment Authority into India.** Prime Minister Narendra Modi while speaking on telephone with Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of Qatar also resolved to explore Qatari investments in the entire energy value-chain in India.
- Both the leaders discussed the robust cooperation between **both countries in the fields of investment flows and energy security, and reviewed recent positive developments** in this regard. The leaders agreed to look forward to meeting in-person after the normalisation of the public-health situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Qatar is a country located in Western Asia, occupying the small Qatar Peninsula on the northeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Its sole land border is with neighbouring Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) monarchy Saudi Arabia to the south, with the rest of its territory surrounded by the Persian Gulf. Doha is the capital and most populous city of the State of Qatar. The Qatari riyal is the currency of the State of Qatar. Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is the Emir of Qatar. Khalid bin Khalifa is serving as Prime Minister of Qatar and Minister of the Interior from 28 January 2020.

Morocco latest country to normalise relations with Israel in US-brokered deal

- **Morocco has become the latest Arab country to agree to normalise relations with Israel in a deal brokered with US help.**
- Under the agreement, Morocco will establish full diplomatic relations and resume official contacts with Israel, grant overflights and also direct flights to and from Israel for all Israelis. **Morocco is the fourth Arab country since August to strike a deal aimed at normalising relations with Israel after the UAE, Bahrain and Sudan.**

Morocco is a country located in the Maghreb region of North Africa. Rabat is the capital city. Saadeddine Othmani has been Prime Minister of Morocco. Moroccan dirham is the official monetary currency of Morocco.

Cuba's president to drop its dual currency system from next month

- Cuba will unify its monetary system on New Year's Day, President Miguel Diaz-Canel closing the door on more than 25 years with two national currencies in circulation.
- Diaz-Canel said that the country will revert to using its peso, which has an official exchange rate of 24 for a U.S. dollar. It will drop the convertible peso, which is worth about \$1.

Cuba is located in the northern Caribbean where the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean meet. Havana is the capital city, largest city, and leading commercial center of Cuba. The convertible peso is one of two official currencies in Cuba, the other being the Cuban peso. Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermudez is serving as the 19th and current President of Cuba. He was previously First Vice President from 2013 to 2018.

Indian-origin Anil Soni appointed as CEO for WHO Foundation

- World Health Organisation has appointed Indian-origin Anil Soni as the Chief Executive Officer for the WHO Foundation. Global health expert Soni will assume his role as its inaugural CEO on January 1 next year.
- WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus described Soni as a proven innovator in global health who has spent two decades in service of communities affected by HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health. It was established on 7 April 1948, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The current Director-General of WHO is Tedros Adhanom, who started his five-year term on 1 July 2017.

New Height for Mount Everest

- Nepal and China have announced the revised height of Mount Everest as 8,848.86 metres. The new height is 86 cm more than the previous measurement. The new height of 8,848.86 meters replaced the long-associated 8,848 metre-height, which was, as per a measurement carried out by the Survey of India in 1954.
- The common declaration meant that the two countries have shed their long-standing difference in opinion about the mountain's height — 8,844 m claimed by China and 8,847 m by Nepal.
- Everest is also known as Sagarmatha in Nepal and Mount Qomolangma in China. The mountain lies on the border between Nepal and Tibet and the summit can be accessed from both sides.

Mount Everest gets its English name from Sir George Everest, a colonial-era geographer who served as the Surveyor General of India in the mid-19th century. It was first scaled in 1953 by the Indian-Nepalese Tenzing Norgay and New Zealander Edmund Hillary. Mount K2, at 8,611 metres above sea level, is the second highest mountain in the world. Avtar Singh Cheema was the first Indian man and sixteenth person in world to climb Mount Everest.

Special Annual Meeting 2021 to take place in Singapore in May

- The World Economic Forum will convene the Special Annual Meeting 2021 in Singapore from 13-16 May. It will return to Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, for the Annual Meeting 2022. The Special Annual Meeting 2021 in Singapore will be the first global leadership event to address worldwide recovery from the pandemic. This in-person meeting will bring together leaders to focus on shaping solutions to the world's most pressing challenges.

The World Economic Forum (WEF), based in Cologny, Geneva Canton, Switzerland, is an international NGO, founded in 1971. The WEF's mission is stated as "committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas". The WEF hosts an annual meeting at the end of January in Davos, a mountain resort in Graubunden, in the eastern Alps region of Switzerland. The WEF was founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab.



RTGS is available 24x7 and became operational from December 14, says RBI

- **The Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS) money transfer facility has become operational 24x7 from December 14,** RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said.
- **The minimum amount to be remitted through RTGS is Rs 2,00,000 with no upper or maximum ceiling.** “This comes within a year of operationalising NEFT 24x7 by the Reserve Bank,” the RBI earlier said in a statement. **The settlement system began its operations on March 26, 2004 with a soft launch involving four banks,** presently handles 6.35 lakh transactions daily for a value of Rs 4.17 lakh crore across 237 participant banks.
- **Just within a year of operationalising NEFT 24x7, the Reserve Bank has announced that the Real Time Gross Settlement System or the RTGS facility is now available for round the clock transactions.**
- **RBI has informed that RTGS uses ISO 20022 format** which is the best-in-class messaging standard for financial transactions. The feature of positive confirmation for credit to beneficiary accounts is also available in RTGS.

RTGS (real time gross settlement) and NEFT (national electronic funds transfer) are electronic payment systems that allow individuals to transfer funds between banks. Both these systems are maintained by the Reserve Bank of India. It is applicable only for money transfer within the country. Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) is another payment system in which the money is credited in the beneficiary’s account in real-time and on a gross basis. The RTGS system is primarily meant for large value transactions that require and receive immediate clearing.

Saudi Arabia ranked first across Arab world in Global Artificial Intelligence Index

- **Saudi Arabia has been ranked first across the Arab world and 22nd globally in the Global Artificial Intelligence Index,** showed Tortoise Intelligence Index report.
- **The kingdom ranked second worldwide in the “Government Strategy” standard, and took 9th place globally in the “Operating environment” standard,** according to the report.
- **The Global AI Index is underpinned by 143 indicators split across seven sub-pillars: Talent, Infrastructure, Operating Environment, Research, Development, Government Strategy and Commercial. Saudi Arabia moved up seven places compared to last year, as it came in 29th across the world in 2019.**

Commerce Ministry and AYUSH Ministry decide to set up an AYUSH Export Promotion Council

- **Ministries of Commerce and Industry and AYUSH have decided to work together to set up an Export Promotion Council to boost AYUSH exports.** This decision was taken in a joint review of AYUSH trade and industry by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and AYUSH Minister Shripad Naik.
- **It was also decided that the entire AYUSH sector will work together to achieve price and quality competitiveness to boost exports.** The review was held through video conference. It was attended by nearly 50 industry and trade leaders from the AYUSH Sector. More than 2000 stake-holders of the AYUSH Sector also attended the e-event through live streaming on virtual platforms.

Ayurveda is an alternative medicine system with historical roots in the Indian subcontinent. The theory and practice of Ayurveda is pseudoscientific. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) characterises the **practice of modern medicine by Ayurvedic practitioners as quackery.** In Sushruta Samhita (Sushruta's Compendium), Sushruta wrote that Dhanvantari, Hindu god of Ayurveda, incarnated himself as a king of Varanasi and taught medicine to a group of physicians, including Sushruta. **Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (abbreviated as AYUSH)** is purposed with developing education, research and propagation of indigenous alternative medicine systems in India. **The Ministry is headed by a Minister of State (Independent Charge), which is currently held by Shripad Yesso Naik.**

ICICI Bank Launches iMobile Pay, Offers Payments, Banking Services For All

- **ICICI Bank** announced that it has **transformed its mobile banking app, iMobile, into an app** that offers payments and **banking services to customers of any bank.** Called **iMobile Pay**, the app offers a unique combination of facilities of a payment app — such as enabling customers to pay to any UPI (Unified Payments Interface) ID or merchants, pay bills and do online recharges among others — with instant banking services namely savings account, investments, loans, credit cards, gift cards, and travel cards, along with other banking services.
- **The users of iMobile Pay can also transfer money to any bank account, payment app and digital wallet.** Another prominent feature of iMobile Pay is 'pay to contacts' that enable users to automatically see the UPI IDs of their phone book contacts, registered on the ICICI Bank UPI ID network, of any payment app and digital wallet. This unique functionality provides users a significant convenience of inter-operability, as they no longer have to remember the UPI IDs and can easily transfer money across payment app and digital wallet.

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.

2021 World Economic Forum to be held in Singapore instead of Davos

- **The World Economic Forum** announced that it will **convene its annual meeting this summer in Singapore instead of the iconic Swiss ski town of Davos** "in light of the current situation with regards to COVID-19 cases."
- The high-profile gathering, which attracts leaders across government, finance and economics, will be **held in the Asian financial hub May 13-16 and return to Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, in 2022,** the World Economic Forum said. The meeting will also include a virtual component to allow greater participation, according to Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Kotak MF launches REIT Funds of Funds scheme

- **Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company** has **launched of Kotak International REIT Fund of Funds,** which is **India's first diversified Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT) Mutual Fund.**
- The open-ended scheme will **invest in units of SMAM Asia REIT Sub Trust Fund.** This MF scheme will have a **diversified investment portfolio comprising of listed REITs** which will invest in real estate projects such as residential, office, data centres, warehousing, retail and hospitality.
- **Minimum Application Amount – First investment Rs. 5,000/- and in multiple of Rs. 1/- thereafter.**

Invest India wins United Nations Investment Promotion Award for 2020

- **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)** has declared 'Invest India' as **winner of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.**
- **The award ceremony took place at UNCTAD Headquarters in Geneva.** The Award recognizes and celebrates the **outstanding achievements of the World's best-practice investment promotion agencies.**
- The evaluation was based on UNCTAD's **assessment of work undertaken by 180 national Investment Promotion Agencies across the world.**

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was established in 1964 as a permanent intergovernmental body. UNCTAD is the part of the United Nations Secretariat dealing with trade, investment, and development issues. The organization's goals are to: "maximize the trade, investment and development opportunities of developing countries and assist them in their efforts to integrate into the world economy on an equitable basis". It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Global m-cap crosses \$100 trillion for the first time, India only 2.4% of it

- Global market capitalisation or the **total value of all listed stocks in the world crossed \$100 trillion mark for the first time led by the tech-driven market rally in the US and China.** On December 5, the world's market capitalisation was at \$100.5 trillion, or about Rs 7,400 lakh crore.
- **A V-shaped recovery of almost 63% from the March low of \$61.6 trillion has helped Global market cap global m-cap reach the milestone.** On March 24, the global market cap had fallen to \$61.6 trillion — a level that was not seen since 2016, according to Bloomberg data. It has risen 15.5% in the year so far from \$87 trillion at the close of 2019.
- **A large part of this rally was led by tech stocks in the US, popularly known as FAANGM (Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Google and Microsoft), market players said.** At close of trading last week, the US had an m-cap of \$41.6 trillion, while China's was \$10.7 trillion. **India, with a market cap of about Rs 180 lakh crore or \$2.4 trillion, was placed 10th.**

Urban local governance index: Odisha tops the list, Delhi at 13th spot

- **Odisha tops the list of states in urban governance followed by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh while Manipur and Nagaland are at the bottom,** according to the Urban Governance Index (UGI)-2020 released by the Praja Foundation. **Delhi ranks 13th in the list.**

Nomura projects India to be the fastest growing Asian economy in 2021

- **Nomura projected India to be the fastest growing Asian economy in 2021,** with an estimate of 9.9% gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the coming calendar year.
- **The Japanese brokerage turned positive on India's cyclical outlook,** with near term risks of a resurgent pandemic unlikely to derail growth. **The fastest-growing tag in 2021,** however, will come with its own challenges. A key concern in 2021 and beyond is the implication of the **K-shaped recovery seen till now.**

RBI issues draft circular on declaration of dividend by NBFCs

- **Reserve Bank of India has issued draft circular on declaration of dividend by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)** in pursuance to the announcement made in the monetary policy.
- Accordingly, **deposit-taking NBFCs and systemically important non-deposit-taking NBFCs must have their net non-performing assets below six percent and a capital adequacy ratio of at least 15 percent for the last three years,** including the accounting year for which it proposes to declare dividend.
- **RBI has added that non-systemically important, non-deposit-taking NBFCs should have a leverage ratio of less than seven while core investment company - CIC should have Adjusted Net Worth (ANW) of at least 30 percent of its aggregate risk-weighted assets on balance sheet.**

A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 2013 of India, engaged in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares, stock, bonds, hire-purchase insurance business or chit-fund business, but does not include any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods (other than securities) or providing any services and sale/purchase/construction of immovable property. NBFC is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956 before 2013 act. The working and operations of NBFCs are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) within the framework of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (Chapter III-B) and the directions issued by it. NBFC cannot accept demand deposits. NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself. Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs.

BSNL in partnership with Skylo to introduce worlds' first, satellite-based narrowband-IoT network in India

- **BSNL in partnership with Skylotech India** announced a **breakthrough in satellite-based NB-IoT (Narrow Band-Internet of Things)**. It is in pursuance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a truly Digital India starting with fishermen, farmers, construction, mining and logistics enterprises.
- With this solution, **India will now have access to a ubiquitous fabric of connectivity for millions of yet unconnected machines, sensors and industrial IoT devices**. This new 'Made in India' Solution, which is indigenously developed by Skylo, will connect with BSNLs satellite- ground infrastructure and provide PAN-India coverage, including Indian seas.
- The coverage will be so vast that it will **not leave any dark patch within the boundary of India, from Kashmir and Ladakh to Kanyakumari, and from Gujarat to the North East**, including the Indian seas.

India rolls out its first LGBT+ workplace equality index

- **For the first time in India, the country's 'Workplace Equality Index' has been rolled out for employers to check their progress on inclusion of people from LGBT+ communities** at the workplaces. This workplace index was introduced and is considered as the first "comprehensive bench-marking tool for employers".
- **The index has virtually announced winners from among 65 companies** who had shared their data on their employee diversity as well as inclusion practices. It is to note that the **India Workplace Equality Index (IWEI)** has been introduced two years after the apex court read down Section 377 in 2018.
- The IWEI has been brought as the reference for Indian industries by hotelier-activist Keshav Suri via his non-profit Keshav Suri Foundation. Suri has partnered with FICCI, Stonewall UK and Pride Circle for this.
- **The index has been brought after covering nine major areas** that are employee lifecycle, policies and benefits, allies and role models, employee network group, monitoring, senior leadership, community engagement, procurement and additional work.

Roshni Nadar Malhotra, first woman to head a listed Indian IT firm, among Forbes most powerful women list 2020

- **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Biocon Founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and HCL Enterprise CEO Roshni Nadar Malhotra** have been named among the world's 100 most powerful women by Forbes 2020.
- **US Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, Biocon Founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and HCL Enterprise CEO Roshni Nadar Malhotra** have also been named in the list which has been topped by German Chancellor Angela Merkel for the 10th year in a row.
- **The women on the 17th annual Forbes Power List hail from 30 countries** and were born across four generations that includes 10 heads of state, 38 CEOs and five entertainers.
- **Sitharaman is ranked 41st on the list, Nadar Malhotra comes in at the 55th spot, Mazumdar-Shaw -- described as India's richest self-made woman -- is ranked 68th and chairwoman of Landmark Group Renuka Jagtiani is ranked 98th. Roshni Nadar Malhotra is also the youngest woman to achieve this feat in Forbes Technology category.**

Forbes is an American business magazine owned by Integrated Whale Media Investments and the Forbes family. Published eight times a year, it features original articles on finance, industry, investing, and marketing topics. Forbes also reports on related subjects such as technology, communications, science, politics, and law. Its headquarters is located in Jersey City, New Jersey. **B. C. Forbes, a financial columnist for the Hearst papers, and his partner Walter Drey, the general manager of the Magazine of Wall Street, founded Forbes magazine on September 15, 1917.**

IESA, UNIDO tie up to boost energy storage innovations in India

- **The India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization** have joined hands to promote innovations in energy storage in India.

- **The Facility of Low Carbon Technology Deployment (FLCTD) by UNIDO launched the 4th round of innovation challenge to support and encourage new innovations in Indian energy storage and e-mobility space. IESA is a supporting partner for this innovation challenge.**

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that assists countries in economic and industrial development. It is headquartered at the UN Office in Vienna, Austria, with a permanent presence in over 60 countries.

Centre Notifies Updated Viability Gap Funding Scheme To Support Infrastructure Projects

- **The Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme was notified by the Ministry of Finance under which various infrastructure projects will be selected for financial support to provide a boost to the sector.**
- **According to the VGF scheme, the Empowered Committee (EC) chaired by the economic affairs secretary will sanction a funding amount of up to Rs 200 crore, while projects requiring more than Rs 200 crore would be approved by the Empowered Committee, after the approval from the Minister of Finance.**
- **The VGF scheme will be known as the ‘Scheme for Financial Support to PPPs’ (Public-Private Partnerships) in the infrastructure sector. This will be a central sector scheme and administered by the Finance Ministry.**
- **The updated viability gap funding scheme will come into force with immediate effect, according to notifications from the Ministry of Finance. Regarding the eligibility, the project will be implemented by a private sector company to be selected by the government or a statutory body through an open competitive bidding process.**

Viability Gap Finance means a grant to support projects that are economically justified but not financially viable. The scheme is designed as a Plan Scheme to be administered by the Ministry of Finance and amount in the budget are made on a year-to-year basis.

Equitas Small Finance Bank launches 3-in-1 account for saving, trading & demat

- **Widening the product net offered to its customers, the Equitas Small Finance Bank has launched a tripartite account to help customers keep their saving, trading and demat investments under one umbrella entity.**
- **To allow customers to invest across the products using a single platform, the bank has decided to provide broking and demat services through a referral arrangement with brokerage firms for trading and depository services. “This product allows customers a secure, seamless and convenient way to invest in their choice of investment instruments, including equity, FDs, govt securities and mutual fund products.**

Equitas Small Finance Bank is a small finance bank founded in 2007 by Equitas as a microfinance lender, with headquarters in Chennai, India. Small finance banks are a type of niche banks in India. Banks with a small finance bank license can provide basic banking service of acceptance of deposits and lending. The aim behind these to provide financial inclusion to sections of the economy not being served by other banks, such as small business units, small and marginal farmers, micro and small industries and unorganised sector entities. They are governed by the provisions of Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and other relevant statutes. The firms must have a capital of at least Rs. 200 crore. 75% of its net credits should be in priority sector lending and 50% of the loans in its portfolio must in Rs. 25 lakh range.



Inventions/Discoveries

Bezos says Blue Origin will take the first woman to moon's surface

- **Jeff Bezos' space company Blue Origin will take the first woman to the moon's surface**, the billionaire said as NASA nears a decision to **pick its first privately built lunar landers capable of sending astronauts to the moon by 2024**.
- **"This (BE-7) is the engine that will take the first woman to the surface of the Moon,"** Bezos said in a post on Instagram with a video of the engine test this week at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.
- **The BE-7 engine, which Blue Origin has been developing for years, has tallied 1,245 seconds of test-fire time and will power the company's National Team Human Landing System lunar lander.**
- **Blue Origin leads a "national team" as the prime contractor that it assembled in 2019 to help build its Blue Moon lander. That team includes Lockheed Martin Corp, Northrop Grumman Corp and Draper.**

Jeffrey Preston Bezos is an American internet entrepreneur, industrialist, media proprietor, and investor. He is best known as the founder, CEO, and president of the multi-national technology company Amazon. The first centi-billionaire on the Forbes wealth index, Bezos has been the world's richest person since 2017 and was named the "richest man in modern history" after his net worth increased to \$150 billion in July 2018. According to Forbes, he is the first person in history to have a net worth exceeding \$200 billion. Bezos founded the aerospace manufacturer and sub-orbital spaceflight services company Blue Origin in 2000. Blue Origin's New Shepard vehicle reached space in 2015, and afterwards successfully landed back on Earth.

Madras University student develops India's first seaweed beer

- **U Vignesh, a postgraduate student and researcher at the biotechnology department in the University of Madras, has made a beer from seaweed, which, he claims, has anti-cancer, anti-genotoxic, and antiinflammatory properties.**
- **"This beer is made from a seaweed found in abundance along the Tamil Nadu coast, and meets all key parameters laid out by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) for commercial beer brands". Vignesh is planning to approach the authorities to apply for a patent. He has submitted a dissertation on the subject as part of his course in the university. "India has about 844 species of seaweeds. Our investigation showed a specific brown seaweed found near Mandapam coast has high nutritional value compared to any other variety.**

Cleared in UK, Pfizer first in India to apply for emergency use

- **PFIZER India has become the first pharmaceutical firm to seek from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) emergency use authorisation for its Covid-19 vaccine in the country, after its parent company secured such clearance in the UK and Bahrain.** In its application to the drug regulator, Pfizer has sought permission to import the vaccine for sale and distribution in the country, besides waiver of clinical trials on Indian population in accordance with the special provisions under the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019.

- **The UK became the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19**, with the UK regulator Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency granting temporary authorisation for its emergency use. The British regulator said the jab, which claims to offer up to 95 per cent protection against COVID-19, is safe for roll-out.
- **Serum Institute of India (SII) has already produced 50 million doses of its covid-19 vaccine ‘Covishield’** at-risk even as the world’s largest vaccine producer reached one step closer to its launch by completing enrolment of 1,600 participants for its phase 3 trial. **The company has partnered with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for the trials. ICMR has funded the clinical trial site fees while Serum Institute has funded other expenses for Covishield.**
- **Bharat Biotech - Based in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, the company is developing a whole-virion inactivated vaccine called COVAXIN in partnership with state-run Indian Council of Medical Research.** It recently applied for emergency use authorisation in the country and is in talks with more than 10 countries in South America, Asia and Eastern Europe to sell it there.
- **Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories Ltd is conducting clinical trials of Sputnik V in India** and expects late-stage trials to be completed by March 2021. It will also distribute the finished vaccine in India once approved but there is no current plan for it to produce it. **Sputnik V is the world’s first registered vaccine based on a well-studied human adenoviral vector-based platform.**

IIT-Guwahati develops method to harvest water from air

- **A team of researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology–Guwahati (IIT-G) has developed a pitcher plant-inspired inexpensive method** for harvesting water from humid air.
- **The method, developed by spraying a sponge-like porous polymeric material on a simple A4 printer paper,** can also be used in underwater hulls of ships and submarines to prevent bio-fouling as well as to prevent icing on aircraft windows. The IIT-G researchers **used the concept of chemically patterned slippery liquid-infused porous surface, or SLIPS for the first time to effectively harvest water from moist or foggy air.**

90-year-old British woman becomes first person in world to receive Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

- **A 90-year-old woman from Northern Ireland became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine** — marking the start of the UK’s mass vaccination programme against the deadly disease. **Margaret Keenan, from Enniskillen receives the jab at University Hospital, Coventry. Keenan became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine outside trial conditions.**

Ministry of AYUSH, AIIMS to set up Department of Integrative Medicine

- **Ministry of AYUSH and AIIMS have decided to initiate work on setting up a Department of Integrative Medicine at AIIMS.** This was decided in a joint visit and review by Secretary, AYUSH Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha and Director, AIIMS, New Delhi Dr. Randeep Guleria.
- It was decided that **Centre for Integrative Medicine and Research(CIMR) AIIMS may develop an integrated protocol with Ayurveda and Yoga for study on Post COVID treatment.** Secretary AYUSH assured that the Ministry of AYUSH will strive to continue its support to CIMR till the dedicated Department is developed.

World carbon dioxide emissions drop 7% in pandemic-hit 2020

- **A locked-down pandemic-struck world cut its carbon dioxide emissions this year by 7%, the biggest drop ever, new preliminary figures show.**
- **The Global Carbon Project, an authoritative group of dozens of international scientists who track emissions,** calculated that the **world will have put 37 billion US tons (34 billion metric tons) of carbon dioxide in the air in 2020. That’s down from 40.1 billion US tons (36.4 billion metric tons) in 2019.**
- Scientists say **this drop is chiefly because people are staying home, traveling less by car and plane,** and that emissions are expected to jump back up after the pandemic ends. **Ground transportation makes up about one-fifth of emissions of carbon dioxide,** the chief man-made heat-trapping gas.

Indian-American among 18 astronauts selected for NASA's manned Moon mission

- **An Indian-American is among the 18 astronauts selected by NASA for its manned mission to the Moon and beyond. NASA named the 18 astronauts -- half of them women -- who will train for its Artemis moon-landing programme.**
- **Raja Jon Vurputoor Chari, a graduate of the US Air Force Academy, MIT, and US Naval Test Pilot School, is the only Indian-American in the list.**

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is an **independent agency of the executive branch** of the **United States** federal government **responsible for the civilian space program**, as well as aeronautics and aerospace research. **President Dwight D. Eisenhower** established NASA in **1958**. **James Frederick Bridenstine** is an **American politician and the current administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration**. He became the **first member of Congress to lead NASA**.

Sri Lanka records highest elephant deaths in world

- **Sri Lanka has set a world record for the highest number of elephant deaths in the world after more than 400 died across the island nation this year.**
- **Sri Lanka has recorded the highest number of elephant deaths in the world due to the human-elephant conflict.** The island-nation's Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) had ordered a special audit into the human-elephant conflict by renowned elephant expert Dr Prithviraj Fernando, the head of the Centre for Conservation and Research.

India's first indigenous mRNA vaccine candidate receives approval to initiate Phase 1 and 2 human clinical trials

- **India's first indigenous mRNA vaccine candidate has received approval from Indian Drug regulators to initiate Phase one and two human clinical trials. The novel mRNA vaccine candidate, HGCO19 has been developed by Gennova, Pune and supported with seed grant under the Ind-CEPI mission of the Department of Biotechnology.**
- **The mRNA vaccines do not use the conventional model to produce immune response.** Instead, they carry the molecular instructions to make the protein in the body through a synthetic RNA of the virus. **mRNA-based vaccines are scientifically the ideal choice to address a pandemic because of their rapid developmental timeline.** The mRNA vaccine is considered safe as is non-infectious, non-integrating in nature, and degraded by standard cellular mechanisms.
- **Scientists say, these vaccines can be quickly manufactured in an inexpensive manner under cGMP conditions to ensure their availability and accessibility for mass vaccination on a sustainable basis.**

Messenger RNA (mRNA) is a **single-stranded RNA molecule** that is **complementary to one of the DNA strands** of a gene. **The mRNA is an RNA version of the gene that leaves the cell nucleus and moves to the cytoplasm** where proteins are made. **During protein synthesis, an organelle called a ribosome moves along the mRNA, reads its base sequence, and uses the genetic code to translate each three-base triplet, or codon, into its corresponding amino acid.**

SPORTS



Sports Personalities in News

Jehan Daruvala creates history, becomes first Indian to win F2 race

- Jehan Daruvala created history when he became the first Indian to win a Formula 2 race during the Sakhir Grand Prix. A thrilling battle against F2 champion Mick Schumacher and Daniel Ticktum saw the 22-year-old Indian emerge on top in the support race of the season-ending Formula 1 Grand Prix.

Kiren Rijiju launches 2nd edition of Fit India Cyclothon

- Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has launched the second edition of Fit India Cyclothon via social media. The mega cycling event which started will run for 25 days till 31st December.
- The event will be held across the country in each district and citizens can participate by registering on Fit India website, cycle daily a distance of their choice, and share their images and videos on social media.

Manipur's Bala Devi becomes the first Indian Woman Footballer to score in Europe

- Manipur's Ngangom Bala Devi created history by becoming the first Indian woman to score in a professional European football league. She scored against Motherwell for Rangers FC and won the match 9-0.
- Bala Devi plays forward in the game. She joined the Scottish club in January 2020 and became the first Indian woman to sign a professional football contract overseas.

Suyash Mehta set to become first-ever Indian-origin referee to officiate in NBA

- Suyash Mehta is set to become the first-ever Indian-origin official to officiate in the National Basketball Association (NBA) league. Mehta, who has been part of G League and Summer League Games' officiating teams, was named in the officiating staff for the 2020-21 season of the league.

Govt to start 1000 Khelo India small centres to encourage sports culture in country

- Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said that the government has made various policy changes and taken up initiatives to encourage and support sportspersons and the sporting community even after they retire.
- Addressing the 10th Global Sports Summit, TURF 2020, organized by FICCI, Mr. Rijiju said, that we are also starting 1000 Khelo India small centres across the country that will help retired sports persons get employment or some role in shaping the sports culture of the country.

Ankita Raina wins ITF doubles title in Dubai

- Top Indian tennis player Ankita Raina won her third doubles title of the pandemic-hit 2020 season, clinching the Al Habtoor challenge with Ekaterine Gorgodze.
- The unseeded Indo-Georgian pair won against Aliona Bolsova Zadoinov from Spain and Slovakian Kaja Juvan in the final of the USD 100,000 hard court event

MISCELLANEOUS

Delhi-Meerut Corridor, India's 1st RRTS, to become operational in 2023

- With financing concerns having been resolved after loan approval from multilateral institutions in recent months, India's urban transport landscape is set for a major transformation **when the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS Corridor, India's first regional rapid transit system (RRTS), becomes operational in 2023**, ushering seamless connectivity in the National Capital Region (NCR).
- The corridor would connect **regional nodes in NCR and shorten the Delhi-Meerut transit to less than 60 minutes from the 3-4 hours taken by road**, besides reducing congestion and pollution.

Ladakh LG virtually inaugurates second edition of Ladakh Literature Festival 2020

- **Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur virtually inaugurated the second edition of Ladakh Literature Festival, 2020, in Leh.** The three Day festival hosted a series of talks, importance of the region, ancient knowledge of Ladakh, Folk music, cultural Dance, geology and wildlife of Himalayas and several interesting topics on YouTube and Facebook streaming.

Govt. takes several steps to develop infrastructure in aviation sector in North East

- **The Centre has taken several steps to develop the infrastructure in the aviation sector in the North East.** Regional Executive Director (North East) of Airport Authority of India M Suresh said that efforts are on to operationalise 10 unused airports.
- **The new air terminal in Guwahati will be completed in March 2022**, which would have 14 million passengers handling capacity per year. An initiative is being taken to start a water aerodrome in Assam.

PM Modi addressed International Bharati Festival 2020

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the International Bharati Festival, 2020** via video conferencing. This year the festival is being organised in virtual mode and will see participation of several national and international poets and artists. **The festival is being organised by Vanavil Cultural Centre to celebrate the 138th birth anniversary of Mahakavi Subramanya Bharati.**

Northeast's first human milk bank opens in Guwahati

- **The first human milk bank in the northeast was opened in Guwahati, Assam.** Opened in Satribari Christian Hospital (SCH), the bank, which is the 15th such unit in India, will be able to store human milk for up to six years.

National Centre for Divyang Empowerment inaugurated at CRPF Group Centre in Hakimpet

- Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy has **inaugurated the National Centre for Divyang Empowerment at the CRPF Group Centre in Hakimpet near Hyderabad.** This is first of its kind establishment to re-skill and rehabilitate the Divyang Warriors of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) who suffered life threatening injuries in line of duty.

Ludhiana for securing 1st rank amongst State Veterinary Universities

- **Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh** has congratulated the **Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), Ludhiana** for securing the first rank amongst State Veterinary Universities in India for the year 2019. GADVASU topped the ranking, conducted by the Education Division of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi.

Akshay Kumar and Rana Daggubati to launch Socialswag

- **Actors Akshay Kumar and Rana Daggubati** announced that they are coming together to **create India's first influencer led online market place called- Socialswag.** Poised to take over India's digital world by storm, the app is set to be launched nationwide in February 2021. Socialswag is a new age platform that will enable consumers to connect with - celebrities, influencers, bloggers and other inspirational individuals, through personal interactions and learning forums.

Ashraf Patel named Social Entrepreneur of the year

- Many NGOs and social workers are working tirelessly during the COVID 19 pandemic. **Ashraf Patel is one such person who has recently won the Social Entrepreneur of the Year award instituted by the Schwab Foundation and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation.**
- **The award was presented by Smriti Zubin Irani, Minister of Women and Child Development and Textiles** at a virtual ceremony last month. Ashraf Patel is the co-founder of Pravah and ComMutiny Youth Collective.
- **In partnership with UNICEF ROSA, they developed an appreciative enquiry tool to assess the impact of COVID 19 on the lives of adolescents in 8 South Asian countries.** ComMutiny members across 17 states reached 30 thousand vulnerable households with relief supplies in the times of COVID 19 crisis.

Joe Biden picks retired General Lloyd Austin for Defense Secretary

- **U.S. President-Elect Joe Biden has nominated retired General Lloyd Austin as his Defence Secretary** according to reports, making Gen. Austin the first African American in the post, if he is confirmed by the Senate.

Sushil Kumar Modi unanimously elected to Rajya Sabha

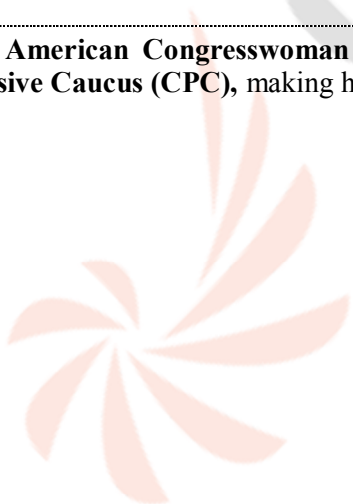
- **Senior BJP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar Sushil Kumar Modi has been unanimously elected to Rajya Sabha.** Byelection was necessitated following the death of Lok Janshakti Party founder and union minister Ram Vilas Paswan. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad have congratulated Sushil Kumar Modi for becoming member of Rajya Sabha.

Indian-origin Raj Chouhan elected Speaker of Canada's British Columbia Province

- **Raj Chouhan, an Indian-origin legislator in Canada, has been elected as the Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, becoming first from the community to occupy the post.**

Indian-American Pramila Jayapal elected as chair of powerful Congressional Progressive Caucus

- **Indian- American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal has been elected as the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), making her one of the most powerful US lawmakers for the 117th Congress.**



AWARDS

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris named Time 'Person of the Year'

- US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have been chosen as Time magazine's 2020 "Person of the Year," the publication announced.
- The Democratic pair were chosen ahead of three other finalists: frontline health care workers and Anthony Fauci, the racial justice movement, and President Donald Trump who Biden defeated in November's election.
- Time's magazine cover has a picture of Biden, 78, and Harris, 56, with the subtitle "Changing America's story".

Person of the Year (called Man of the Year or Woman of the Year until 1999) is an annual issue of the United States news magazine and website Time that features and profiles a person, a group, an idea, or an object that "for better or for worse... has done the most to influence the events of the year". The tradition of selecting a "Man of the Year" began in 1927, with Time editors contemplating the news makers of the year. The idea was also an attempt to remedy the editorial embarrassment earlier that year of not having aviator Charles Lindbergh on its cover following his historic trans-Atlantic flight. In 1949, Winston Churchill was named "Man of the Half-Century", and the last issue of 1989 named Mikhail Gorbachev as "Man of the Decade". The December 31, 1999 issue of Time named Albert Einstein the "Person of the Century". Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mahatma Gandhi were chosen as runners-up.

HelpAge India presented the UN Population Award for 2020

- HelpAge India has been presented the UN Population Award for 2020 (institutional category), as per a release issued by the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1981, the United Nations Population Award recognises contributions in the fields of population and reproductive health.
- The Committee for the United Nations Population Award, which made the selections, is chaired by Ion Jinga, Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations, and is composed of representatives of nine other UN Member States.
- For the first time in the history of the UN Population Award, the honour is being conferred on an Indian institution.
- The last time the Award came to an Indian was 28 years ago, back in 1992, when it was awarded to Mr. J.R.D. Tata as an individual laureate. HelpAge India, which has been working for 'the cause and care of disadvantaged older persons to improve their quality of life' for over four decades, is the first Indian institution to receive this award.

Brazil's Carolina Araujo becomes First Non-Indian to win Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians

- The Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians 2020 has been awarded to Carolina Araujo, Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in a virtual ceremony on December 9, 2020.
- Ms Araujo, who is Vice President of the Committee for Women in Mathematics at the International Mathematical Union, is the first non-Indian to receive this prize. Ms Araujo work area focuses on birational geometry, which aims to classify and describe the structure of algebraic varieties.
- The prize awarded annually to a researcher from a developing country funded by the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India in collaboration with ICTP (International Centre for Theoretical Physics), and the International Mathematical Union was given for her outstanding work in algebraic geometry. Her work area focuses on birational geometry, which aims to classify and describe the structure of algebraic varieties.

IMPORTANT DAYS

International Civil Aviation Day: 7 December

- **In 1996 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed that 7 December was to be the International Civil Aviation Day.** Every five years, coinciding with ICAO anniversaries the ICAO Council establishes a special anniversary theme for International Civil Aviation Day.
- Between these anniversary years, Council representatives select a single theme for the full four-year intervening period. The Council has decided that from now until 2023, **the theme will be: “Advancing Innovation for Global Aviation Development”.**

International Anti-Corruption Day: 9 December

- **The Assembly also designated 9 December as International Anti-Corruption Day,** to raise awareness of corruption and of the role of the Convention in combating and preventing it. The Convention entered into force in December 2005.
- **International Anti-corruption day 2020 theme is ‘United Against Corruption’.** The theme focuses on corruption as one of the biggest obstacles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Human Rights Day: 10 December

- **Human Rights Day is celebrated annually across the world on 10 December every year.** The date was chosen to honor the **United Nations General Assembly’s adoption and proclamation, on 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global enunciation of human rights** and one of the first major achievements of the new United Nations.
- **2020 Theme: Recover Better - Stand Up for Human Rights.**

International Mountain Day: 11 December

- **This year, for International Mountain Day (11 December), FAO focuses in celebrating mountains as the home to half of the world’s biodiversity hotspots** and addresses the threats they face.

UNICEF Day

- **UNICEF Day is observed every year on December 11.** The United Nations General Assembly **created UNICEF on December 11, 1946,** as the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund.

References:

The Hindu

The Economics Times

Indian Express

Press Information Bureau of India

The Times of India

Business Standard

News on AIR

Hindustan Times

QUESTIONS

1. Recently, Bangladesh signed its first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with _____ allowing duty free access to a range of goods between the two countries.
(a) Indi (b) Nepal (c) Bhutan (d) Myanmar
2. Who became the first Indian to win a Formula 2 race during the Sakhir Grand Prix?
(a) Anshul Kumari (b) Jehan Daruvala (c) Pushkar Ritharia (d) Mihir Bharadwaj
3. Which of the following countries recently declared victory in an eight-year drive to eradicate extreme poverty?
(a) Japa (b) South Korea (c) China (d) Thailand
4. International Civil Aviation Day 2020 is observed on:
(a) 2nd Decembe (b) 4th December (c) 7th December (d) 9th December
5. Which of the following countries has been ranked first across the Arab world and 22nd globally in the Global Artificial Intelligence Index, showed by Tortoise Intelligence Index report?
(a) Oma (b) Kuwait (c) Saudi Arabia (d) Jordan
6. Which of the following ministries and AYUSH have decided to work together to set up an Export Promotion Council to boost AYUSH exports?
(a) Ministry of Corporate Affairs (b) Ministries of Finance
(c) Ministry of Commerce and Industry (d) Ministries of Home
7. Recently, _____ India has become the first pharmaceutical firm to seek from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) emergency use authorisation for its Covid-19 vaccine in the country, after its parent company secured such clearance in the UK and Bahrain.
(a) PFIZER (b) CRIXER (c) MRITED (d) GRIZEN
8. Jeff Bezos' space company _____ will take the first woman to the moon's surface, the billionaire said as NASA nears a decision to pick its first privately built lunar landers capable of sending astronauts to the moon by 2024.
(a) Blue Origin (b) Oxen Given (c) Through Hist (d) Luno Cox
9. Which of the following universities student recently developed India's first seaweed beer?
(a) University of Delhi (b) University of Kolkata (c) University of Madras (d) IISc Bengaluru
10. Which of the following countries scientists claim to have created the world's first light-based quantum computer which can solve problems far faster than a classical supercomputer?
(a) Japan (b) South Korea (c) China (d) Thailand
11. Which of the following cities of Madhya Pradesh has been included in the list of World Heritage City by UNESCO?
(a) Gwalior and Orchha (b) Indore and Mandu (c) Bhopal and Raisen (d) Guna and Bina
12. Recently, World Health Organisation has appointed Indian-origin _____ as the Chief Executive Officer for the WHO Foundation.
(a) Sunil Panwar (b) Anil Soni (c) Sandeep Marwah (d) Aniruddh Jain
13. Recently, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTA d) has declared _____ as winner of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.
(a) 'Invest India' (b) 'Test India' (c) 'Revisit India' (d) 'Divest India'

14. Recently, the World Economic Forum announced that it will convene its annual meeting this summer in _____ instead of the iconic Swiss ski town of Davos “in light of the current situation with regards to COVID-19 cases.”
 (a) Manila (b) Singapore (c) New Delhi (d) Tokyo
15. Which bank recently announced iMobile Pay, the app which offers a unique combination of facilities of a payment app?
 (a) HDFC Bank (b) Axis Bank (c) ICICI Bank (d) RBL Bank
16. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given the inaugural address at the virtual _____.
 (a) India Mobile Congress 2020 (b) India Mobile Confederation 2020
 (c) India Mobile Ceremony 2020 (d) India Mobile Conference 2020
17. Which of the following ranked first amongst State Veterinary Universities in India for the year 2019?
 (a) Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Chennai
 (b) Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Bareilly
 (c) Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University, Tirupati
 (d) Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), Ludhiana
18. Who has recently launched the second edition of Fit India Cyclothon via social media?
 (a) Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju (b) President Ramnath Kovind
 (c) Prime Minister Narendra Modi (d) Defence Minister Rajnath Singh
19. Who will inaugurate the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention to be held in virtual format on January 9?
 (a) President Ramnath Kovind (b) Prime Minister of Mauritius Aneuruddh Jagannath
 (c) Prime Minister of Britain Boris Johnson (d) Prime Minister Narendra Modi
20. Recently, Senior BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi has been unanimously elected to Rajya Sabha from:
 (a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Bihar (c) Odisha (d) Madhya Pradesh
21. Name India’s first regional rapid transit system (RRTS), which becomes operational in 2023.
 (a) Bengaluru-Mysuru-Dharwad (b) Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut
 (c) Kolkata- Darjeeling- New Jalpaiguri (d) Mumbai-Pune-Nagpur
22. Recently, Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah has been reappointed as prime minister of:
 (a) Oman (b) Jordan (c) Kuwait (d) UAE
23. U.S. President-Elect Joe Biden has nominated retired General Lloyd Austin as his _____.
 (a) Defence Secretary (b) Foreign Secretary (c) Home Secretary (d) Environmental Secretary
24. Name the Indian-origin legislator in Canada, who has been elected as the Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, becoming first from the community to occupy the post.
 (a) Anuj Saxena (b) Viraj Deshmukh (c) Raj Chouhan (d) Mukund Narvane
25. Recently, Global market capitalisation or the total value of all listed stocks in the world crossed _____ trillion mark for the first time led by the tech-driven market rally in the US and China.
 (a) \$50 (b) \$100 (c) \$250 (d) \$500
26. Recently, A team of researchers at the _____ has developed a pitcher plant-inspired inexpensive method for harvesting water from humid air.
 (a) Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (b) Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi
 (c) Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur (d) Indian Institute of Technology-Kharagpur

27. Who became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine — marking the start of the UK's mass vaccination programme against the deadly disease?
 (a) Alexandra Rotwood (b) Margaret Keenan (c) Mitchell Mek (d) Rose Atwood
28. Who created history by becoming the first Indian woman to score in a professional European football league?
 (a) Loitongbam Ashalata Devi (b) Ngangom Bala Devi
 (c) Nongmaithem Ratanbala Devi (d) Oinam Bembem Devi
29. Who is set to become the first-ever Indian-origin official to officiate in the National Basketball Association (NBA) league?
 (a) Mahesh Burman (b) Aniket Gupta (c) Suyash Mehta (d) Viresh Modi
30. International Anti-Corruption Day is observed every year on:
 (a) 2nd December (b) 4th December (c) 6th December (d) 9th December
31. Recently, Indian Army chief General M.M. Naravane had the first visit by an Indian Army chief to the countries of:
 (a) Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (b) Oman and Jordan
 (c) Lebanon and Jordan (d) Saudi Arabia and UAE
32. In a first-ever virtual summit with a Central Asian country, PM Narendra Modi was held a virtual summit with _____ President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on December 11.
 (a) Kyrgyzstan (b) Uzbekistan (c) Tajikistan (d) Turkmenistan
33. Recently, the historic _____ scheme was cleared by Cabinet which will revolutionalise the tech world and significantly improve WiFi availability across the length and breadth of India.
 (a) PM-WANI (b) PM-WAPA (c) PM-WAYU (d) PM-YUVA
34. Recently, The first human milk bank in the northeast was opened in _____.
 (a) Imphal, Manipur (b) Shillong, Meghalaya (c) Guwahati, Assam (d) Kohima, Nagaland
35. According to the Urban Governance Index (UGI)-2020 released by the Praja Foundation, which of the following states topped the list of states in urban governance?
 (a) Maharashtra (b) Haryana (c) Gujarat (d) Odisha
36. Recently, Nomura projected India to be the fastest growing Asian economy in 2021, with an estimate of _____ gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the coming calendar year.
 (a) 6.9% (b) 7.4% (c) 8.2% (d) 9.9%
37. Recently, Government of India announced to start _____ Khelo India small centres to encourage sports culture in country.
 (a) 300 (b) 500 (c) 750 (d) 1000
38. Recently, Ministry of AYUSH and _____ have decided to initiate work on setting up a Department of Integrative Medicine.
 (a) AIIMS (b) AFMC
 (c) JIPMER (d) King George Medical University, Lucknow
39. Human Rights Day is celebrated across the globe every year on:
 (a) 5th December (b) 7th December (c) 10th December (d) 12th December
40. Recently, Actors Akshay Kumar and Rana Daggubati announced that they are coming together to create India's first influencer led online market place called _____.
 (a) Socialswag (b) Socialculture (c) Socialswing (d) Socialwin

41. Which of the following telecom companies in partnership with Skylo is set to introduce worlds' first, satellite-based narrowband-IoT network in India?
 (a) Reliance Jio (b) BSNL (c) Bharti Airtel (d) VI
42. Who have been chosen as Time magazine's 2020 "Person of the Year"?
 (a) Vladimir Putin (b) Narendra Modi & Amit Shah
 (c) Joe Biden & Kamala Harris (d) Donald Trump & Melania Trump
43. Which of the following countries has become the latest Arab country to agree to normalise relations with Israel in a deal brokered with US help?
 (a) Oman (b) Morocco (c) Somalia (d) Tunisia
44. Reserve Bank of India has issued draft circular on declaration of dividend by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), Deposit-taking NBFCs and systemically important non-deposit-taking NBFCs must have their net non-performing assets below _____ percent.
 (a) Three (b) Five (c) Six (d) Nine
45. Who among the following has not been named in the world's 100 most powerful women by Forbes 2020?
 (a) Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (b) Renuka Jagtiani
 (c) Roshni Nadar Malhotra (d) Nita Ambani
46. The Reserve Bank has announced that the Real Time Gross Settlement System or the RTGS facility will now be available for _____ hours.
 (a) 12 Hours (b) 15 Hours (c) 18 Hours (d) 24 Hours
47. According to the Global Carbon Project, an authoritative group of dozens of international scientists who track emissions, a locked-down pandemic-struck world cut its carbon dioxide emissions this year by _____ the biggest drop ever.
 (a) 5% (b) 7% (c) 9% (d) 15%
48. Name the Indian-American, who is among the 18 astronauts selected by NASA for its manned mission to the Moon and beyond.
 (a) Sudhakar Rao Anand (b) Tom Verghese
 (c) Raja Jon Vurputoor Chari (d) Manmohan Ram Shetty Hari
49. International Mountain Day is celebrated every year on:
 (a) 8th December (b) 10th December (c) 11th December (d) 14th December
50. Which of the following has been presented the UN Population Award for 2020 (institutional category), as per a release issued by the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)?
 (a) OldAge India (b) Jai India (c) HelpAge India (d) Aasra India
51. Recently, India has dropped to the _____ position in Bloomberg New Energy Finance's (BNEF) 2020 Climatescope survey ranking from first last year.
 (a) second (b) third (c) fourth (d) fifth
52. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Global Climate Summit on the occasion of the _____ anniversary of the landmark Paris Climate Agreement.
 (a) third (b) fourth (c) fifth (d) tenth
53. Name the person who has recently won the Social Entrepreneur of the Year award instituted by the Schwab Foundation and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation.
 (a) Nitin Singh (b) Deepak Jayant (c) Amit Mangat (d) Ashraf Patel

54. Ladakh Lieutenant Governor _____ virtually inaugurated the second edition of Ladakh Literature Festival, 2020, in Leh.
 (a) Girish Chandra Murmu (b) R K Mathur
 (c) Deepak Mathur (d) Mahesh Chandra Jain
55. Indian- American Congresswoman _____ has been elected as the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CP c), making her one of the most powerful US lawmakers for the 117th Congress.
 (a) Riya Jain (b) Pramila Jayapal (c) Amita Binaya (d) Niharika Vrinda
56. Which of the following countries will drop its dual currency system from next month?
 (a) Mexico (b) Canada (c) Cuba (d) Sri Lanka
57. For the first time in India, the country's _____ has been rolled out for employers to check their progress on inclusion of people from LGBT+ communities at the workplaces.
 (a) Work Equality Index at Offices (b) Workplace Equality Indices
 (c) Workplace Equality Index (d) Workplace Equality Reference
58. The India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA) and _____ have joined hands to promote innovations in energy storage in India.
 (a) World Bank (b) United Nations Industrial Development Organization
 (c) International Monetary Fund (d) United National General Assembly
59. India's first indigenous _____ vaccine candidate has received approval from Indian Drug regulators to initiate Phase one and two human clinical trials.
 (a) mDNA (b) mRNA (c) mRBC (d) mWBC
60. The Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians 2020 has been awarded to _____ Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in a virtual ceremony.
 (a) Martha Janem (b) Chritina Bret (c) Carolina Araujo (d) Desreg Varutha
61. Which is the first Union Territory of India to become 100 per cent organic as all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides?
 (a) Puducherry (b) Lakshadweep
 (c) Andaman & Nicobar Islands (d) Ladakh
62. Which of the following state is all set to launch an ambitious scheme for distribution of assistive devices to lakhs of persons with disabilities through MahaSharad Digital Platform?
 (a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Maharashtra (c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Haryana
63. Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade mentioned this exemption in _____ (Quality Control) Second Amendment Order, 2020.
 (a) Cookies (b) Toys (c) Crafts (d) Transistor
64. The first Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, _____ and Uzbekistan on joint use of Chabahar Port will be held.
 (a) Iraq (b) Afghanistan (c) Iran (d) Turkmenistan
65. Which was the first nation to plant flag on the Moon?
 (a) USA (b) China (c) Japan (d) Germany
66. The World Economic Forum will convene the Special Annual Meeting 2021 in _____ from 13-16 May, 2021.
 (a) Cambodia (b) Vietnam (c) Singapore (d) USA

67. Which of the following small banks has launched a tripartite account to help customers keep their saving, trading and demat investments under one umbrella entity?
(a) Jana Small Finance Bank (b) Equitas Small Finance Bank
(c) Utkarsh Small Finance Bank (d) Fincare Small Finance Bank
68. Recently, The Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme was notified by the _____ under which various infrastructure projects will be selected for financial support to provide a boost to the sector.
(a) Ministry of Health (b) Ministry of Corporate Affairs
(c) Ministry of Home (d) Ministry of Finance
69. Which of the following countries has recorded the highest number of elephant deaths in the world due to the human-elephant conflict?
(a) Thailand (b) Sri Lanka (c) Seychelles (d) Mauritius
70. Who won her third doubles title of the pandemic-hit 2020 season, clinching the AI Habtoor challenge with Ekaterine Gorgodze?
(a) Seeba Rehman (b) Shital Sharma (c) Ankita Raina (d) Bhakti Dalal



Career
Launcher

ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATION

1. c Bangladesh signed its first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Bhutan allowing duty free access to a range of goods between the two countries.
2. b Jehan Daruvala created history when he became the first Indian to win a Formula 2 race during the Sakhir Grand Prix.
3. c Chinese President Xi Jinping declared victory in an eight-year drive to eradicate extreme poverty in the world's most populous nation, a key goal of the ruling Communist Party.
4. c International Civil Aviation Day: 7 December.
5. c Saudi Arabia has been ranked first across the Arab world and 22nd globally in the Global Artificial Intelligence Index, showed Tortoise Intelligence Index report.
6. c Ministries of Commerce and Industry and AYUSH have decided to work together to set up an Export Promotion Council to boost AYUSH exports.
7. a PFIZER India has become the first pharmaceutical firm to seek from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) emergency use authorisation for its Covid-19 vaccine in the country, after its parent company secured such clearance in the UK and Bahrain.
8. a Jeff Bezos' space company Blue Origin will take the first woman to the moon's surface, the billionaire said as NASA nears a decision to pick its first privately built lunar landers capable of sending astronauts to the moon by 2024.
9. c U Vignesh, a postgraduate student and researcher at the biotechnology department in the University of Madras, has made a beer from seaweed, which, he claims, has anti-cancer, anti-genotoxic, and antiinflammatory properties.
10. c Chinese scientists claim to have created the world's first light-based quantum computer which can solve problems far faster than a classical supercomputer, an advance hailed by experts as a "major achievement" that provides a fundamentally different approach to designing such powerful machines
11. a Gwalior and Orchha of Madhya Pradesh have been included in the list of World Heritage City by UNESCO.
12. b World Health Organisation has appointed Indian-origin Anil Soni as the Chief Executive Officer for the WHO Foundation.
13. a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has declared 'Invest India' as winner of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.
14. b The World Economic Forum announced that it will convene its annual meeting this summer in Singapore instead of the iconic Swiss ski town of Davos "in light of the current situation with regards to COVID-19 cases."
15. c ICICI Bank announced that it has transformed its mobile banking app, iMobile, into an app that offers payments and banking services to customers of any bank. Called iMobile Pay, the app offers a unique combination of facilities of a payment app.
16. d Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given the inaugural address at the virtual India Mobile Congress 2020.

- 17. d** Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh has congratulated the Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), Ludhiana for securing the first rank amongst State Veterinary Universities in India for the year 2019.
- 18. a** Sports Minister Kiren Rijju has launched the second edition of Fit India Cyclothon via social media.
- 19. d** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention to be held in virtual format on January 9.
- 20. b** Byelection in Bihar was necessitated following the death of Lok Janshakti Party founder and union minister Ram Vilas Paswan. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad have congratulated Sushil Kumar Modi for becoming member of Rajya Sabha.
- 21. b** India's urban transport landscape is set for a major transformation when the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS Corridor, India's first regional rapid transit system (RRTS), becomes operational in 2023, ushering seamless connectivity in the National Capital Region (NCR).
- 22. c** Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah reappointed Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah as prime minister following parliamentary polls in the Gulf Arab state, which faces its worst economic crisis in decades.
- 23. a** U.S. President-Elect Joe Biden has nominated retired General Lloyd Austin as his Defence Secretary.
- 24. c** Raj Chouhan, an Indian-origin legislator in Canada, has been elected as the Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, becoming first from the community to occupy the post.
- 25. b** Global market capitalisation or the total value of all listed stocks in the world crossed \$100 trillion mark for the first time led by the tech-driven market rally in the US and China.
- 26. a** A team of researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) has developed a pitcher plant-inspired inexpensive method for harvesting water from humid air.
- 27. b** 90-year-old Margaret Keenan becomes the first patient in United Kingdom to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, in Coventry.
- 28. b** Manipur's Ngangom Bala Devi created history by becoming the first Indian woman to score in a professional European football league.
- 29. c** Suyash Mehta is set to become the first-ever Indian-origin official to officiate in the National Basketball Association (NBA) league.
- 30. d** The Assembly also designated 9 December as International Anti-Corruption Day, to raise awareness of corruption and of the role of the Convention in combating and preventing it.
- 31. d** This is the first visit by an Indian Army chief to Saudi Arabia and the UAE and is seen as a sign of how India's ties with the Middle East has improved over the past few years.
- 32. b** In a first-ever virtual summit with a Central Asian country, PM Narendra Modi was held a virtual summit with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on December 11.
- 33. a** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the historic PM-WANI (Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) scheme, which was cleared by Cabinet will revolutionalise the tech world and significantly improve WiFi availability across the length and breadth of India.
- 34. c** The first human milk bank in the northeast was opened in Guwahati, Assam.

- 35. d** Odisha tops the list of states in urban governance followed by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh while Manipur and Nagaland are at the bottom, according to the Urban Governance Index (UGI)-2020 released by the Praja Foundation. Delhi ranks 13th in the list.
- 36. d** Nomura projected India to be the fastest growing Asian economy in 2021, with an estimate of 9.9% gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the coming calendar year.
- 37. d** Government of India announced to start 1000 Khelo India small centres to encourage sports culture in country.
- 38. a** Ministry of AYUSH and AIIMS have decided to initiate work on setting up a Department of Integrative Medicine at AIIMS.
- 39. c** 10 December is an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of human rights in re-building the world we want the need for global solidarity as well as our interconnectedness and shared humanity.
- 40. a** Actors Akshay Kumar and Rana Daggubati announced that they are coming together to create India's first influencer led online market place called- Socialswag.
- 41. b** BSNL in partnership with Skylotech India announced a breakthrough in satellite-based NB-IoT (Narrow Band-Internet of Things).
- 42. c** US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have been chosen as Time magazine's 2020 "Person of the Year," the publication announced.
- 43. b** Morocco has become the latest Arab country to agree to normalise relations with Israel in a deal brokered with US help. Morocco is the fourth Arab country since August to strike a deal aimed at normalising relations with Israel after the UAE, Bahrain and Sudan.
- 44. c** Accordingly, deposit-taking NBFCs and systemically important non-deposit-taking NBFCs must have their net non-performing assets below six percent and a capital adequacy ratio of at least 15 percent for the last three years, including the accounting year for which it proposes to declare dividend.
- 45. d** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Biocon Founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and HCL Enterprise CEO Roshni Nadar Malhotra have been named among the world's 100 most powerful women by Forbes 2020.
- 46. d** Just within a year of operationalising NEFT 24x7, the Reserve Bank has announced that the Real Time Gross Settlement System or the RTGS facility will now be available for round the clock transactions.
- 47. b** A locked-down pandemic-struck world cut its carbon dioxide emissions this year by 7%, the biggest drop ever, new preliminary figures show.
- 48. c** Raja Jon Vurputoor Chari, 43, a graduate of the US Air Force Academy, MIT, and US Naval Test Pilot School, is the only Indian-American in the list.
- 49. c** This year, for International Mountain Day (11 December), FAO focuses in celebrating mountains as the home to half of the world's biodiversity hotspots and addresses the threats they face.
- 50. c** HelpAge India has been presented the UN Population Award for 2020 (institutional category), as per a release issued by the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1981, the United Nations Population Award recognises contributions in the fields of population and reproductive health.
- 51. a** India has dropped to the second position in Bloomberg New Energy Finance's (BNEF) 2020 Climatescope survey ranking from first last year

- 52. c** Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Global Climate Summit on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the landmark Paris Climate Agreement.
- 53. d** Ashraf Patel is one such person who has recently won the Social Entrepreneur of the Year award instituted by the Schwab Foundation and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation.
- 54. b** Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur virtually inaugurated the second edition of Ladakh Literature Festival, 2020, in Leh.
- 55. b** Indian- American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal has been elected as the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), making her one of the most powerful US lawmakers for the 117th Congress.
- 56. c** Cuba will unify its monetary system on New Year's Day, President Miguel Diaz-Canel closing the door on more than 25 years with two national currencies in circulation.
- 57. c** For the first time in India, the country's 'Workplace Equality Index' has been rolled out for employers to check their progress on inclusion of people from LGBT+ communities at the workplaces.
- 58. b** The India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization have joined hands to promote innovations in energy storage in India.
- 59. b** India's first indigenous mRNA vaccine candidate has received approval from Indian Drug regulators to initiate Phase one and two human clinical trials.
- 60. c** The Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians 2020 has been awarded to Carolina Araujo, Mathematician from the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in a virtual ceremony.
- 61. b** Lakshadweep is the first Union Territory to become 100 per cent organic as all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, providing access to safer food choices and making agriculture a more environment-friendly activity. The ministry of agriculture has declared the island as organic.
- 62. b** Maharashtra's Department of Social Justice is all set to launch an ambitious scheme for distribution of assistive devices to lakhs of persons with disabilities through MahaSharad Digital Platform to coincide with NCP chief Sharad Pawar's 80th birthday. It will be available on Play Store by March 2021.
- 63. b** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade mentioned this exemption in Toys (Quality Control) Second Amendment Order, 2020.
- 64. c** The first Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, Iran and Uzbekistan on joint use of Chabahar Port will be held.
- 65. a** China has planted its flag on the Moon, more than 50 years after the US first planted the Stars and Stripes there.
- 66. c** The World Economic Forum will convene the Special Annual Meeting 2021 in Singapore from 13-16 May.
- 67. b** Widening the product net offered to its customers, the Equitas Small Finance Bank has launched a tripartite account to help customers keep their saving, trading and demat investments under one umbrella entity.
- 68. d** The Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme was notified by the Ministry of Finance under which various infrastructure projects will be selected for financial support to provide a boost to the sector.
- 69. b** Sri Lanka has recorded the highest number of elephant deaths in the world due to the human-elephant conflict
- 70. c** Top Indian tennis player Ankita Raina won her third doubles title of the pandemic-hit 2020 season, clinching the Al Habtoor challenge with Ekaterine Gorgodze.