



# VAJIRAM & RAVI

Institute for Civil Services Examination



## CURRENT AFFAIRS 'QUICK REVISION'

# PRELIMS 2020

### (PART 2)

January to 15th April 2020

**TABLE OF CONTENTS****CULTURE & HISTORY**

- 'Dekho Apna Desh' Webinar Series
- Nihang
- Pandit Ravi Shankar
- Tourism Budget
- National Gallery Of Modern Art
- Arr-Rinam
- Satish Gujral
- Puthussery Ramachandran
- Ugadi
- Classical Languages
- Akbar Padamsee
- Kaifi Azmi
- Protection Of Cultural Property In Armed Conflict
- M Chidananda Murthy
- World Hindi Day
- Gomati Handicrafts
- All India Oriental Conference
- Tulu
- Namaste
- Ajrak
- Patola Saree
- Matribhasha Diwas
- Abide With Me
- Kiliki
- 22nd Edition Of Ethnologue
- Kambala
- Chitra Bharati Film Festival
- Siddhant Shikhamani
- Kunbi Saree/ Wendell Rodricks
- Pathri
- Beating Retreat Ceremony
- Bharat-Bangla Tourism Festival
- Herath Festival
- 'Gadhika' Products
- Kaka Hathrasi
- Giriraj Kishore
- Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust
- Bhakta Ramadasu
- Namaste Orchha
- Anthropological Survey Of India
- Rukuna Ratha Yatra
- Brihadeeswarar Temple
- Lui-Ngai-Ni
- Kala Kumbh
- Historical Gastronomica - The Indus Dining Experience
- Dholavira
- Centrally Protected Monuments
- Konark Sun Temple
- Chaitra Jatra Festival
- Nehru Memorial Museum & Library
- Operation Alberich
- 75th Anniversary Of The Liberation Of Auschwitz
- Tablighi Jamaat
- Nagardhan Excavations
- Warren Hastings
- Ashfaqullah Khan
- Lord Curzon
- Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (1889 – 1964)
- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
- Joy Bangla
- Biju Patnaik
- Kunjali Marakkar

- Battle Of Çanakkale/Gallipoli
- Adrian Helmet
- Kota Rani
- Babhaniyav Village
- T J Alone Panel/Dara Shikoh

**GEOGRAPHY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

- Leap Year
- New Monsoon Dates
- Jet Stream
- Location In News
- Northern European Enclosure Dam
- PM-Cares Fund
- Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)
- Chief Minister's Relief Fund
- State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)
- Integrated Road Accident Database (IRAD)
- Forest Fires

**POLITY & GOVERNANCE**

- Democracy Index-2019
- No-Fly List
- Bodo Agreement
- Bru-Reang Refugee Crisis
- Anticipatory Bail
- Star Campaigners
- Electoral Bonds
- Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI-2019)
- National Voters' Day 2020
- National Data And Analytics Platform
- The Forum Of The Election Management Bodies Of South Asia (FEMBoSA)
- Members Of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)
- Indelible Ink
- Trusted News Initiative
- Nominated Members Of Rajya Sabha
- Recusals

- Ero-Net
- 22nd Law Commission Of India
- Reservation In Promotion In Public Posts
- Ninth Schedule Of The Constitution
- Freedom In The World 2020 Report
- Transfer Of Judges
- Right To Private Property
- Article 131
- Presumption Of Constitutionality
- Right Of An Accused To Be Defended
- 15th Finance Commission
- Second National Judicial Pay Commission
- Chief Information Commissioner
- Janta Curfew
- Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008
- Ranjana Prakash Desai Commission
- Suspension Of MPs
- Social Media Posting A Fundamental Right
- SC Verdict On Internet Shutdown

**SOCIAL ISSUES**

- Jiyo Parsi
- Ease Of Living Index ; Municipal Performance Index (MPI)
- Missing Children And Women
- Beijing Declaration And Platform For Action (1995)
- Childline 1098
- Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) Phase-II
- Women In Armed Forces
- Permanent Commission For Women In The Navy
- SC/ST Amendment Act, 2018
- Crime In India
- Establishment Of Chairs Named After Eminent Women In Universities
- Global Social Mobility Report
- Levels And Trends In Child Mortality

- Maintenance And Welfare Of Parents And Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill, 2019
- Swachh Survekshan League 2020
- Tech For Tribals
- POCSO Rules, 2020
- Sanitary Napkin Disposal Bags Made Mandatory
- Gaura Devi
- UNDP's Gender Social Norms Index
- Mahua Nutribeverage
- Thirumathikart
- Madhuri Kanitkar
- Reservation For Persons With Disabilities
- Manual Scavenging
- Malnutrition Among Women
- A Future For The World's Children?
- #Sheinspiresus
- International Women's Day 2020
- Time '100 Women Of The Year'

## **EDUCATION**

- Yukti
- Samadhan Challenge
- Education Budget
- Delhi's Happiness Curriculum
- #Stayhomeindiawithbooks
- Corona Studies Series
- New Delhi World Book Fair
- Pariksha Pe Charcha
- Minority Educational Institutions
- ASER 2019 'Early Years'
- E-Learning Platforms
- Ukier-Ugc Higher Education Leadership Development Programme For Administrators
- The Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019
- Student Suicide
- Indian Institutes Of Information Technology Laws (Amendment) Bill 2020

- Project 'Isaac'
- QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World University Rankings 2020
- Dropout Rate In Schools
- Gross Enrolment Ratio For Females
- School Infrastructure
- AI Based Module

## **CORONAVIRUSES (COVID-19)**

- Coronavirus
- Covid-19 And Influenza: Similarities And Differences
- Spread
- Treatment
- Prevention
- Minal Dakhve Bhosale
- Sodium Hypochlorite
- CARUNA
- Operation Sanjeevani
- Centre For Augmenting War With Covid-19 Health Crisis
- Power System Operation Corporation
- Hydroxychloroquine
- Prafulla Chandra Ray
- iGOT E-Learning Platform
- United Against Covid – Express Through Art
- Operation Shield
- Covid19 Fact Check Unit
- Safe Plus
- Exercise NCC Yogdan
- Pandemic
- India Covid-19 Emergency Response And Health Preparedness Package
- Pooled Testing
- PCR Test
- Epidemic Disease Act, 1897
- Convalescent Plasma Therapy
- Herd Immunity

**HEALTH**

- Hantavirus
- World Tuberculosis Day
- TrueNat
- Institute Of Teaching And Research In Ayurveda Bill, 2020
- National Commission For Homoeopathy Medicine Bill 2019
- National Commission For Indian System Of Medicine Bill 2019
- Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill 2020
- Medical Termination Of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020
- World Cancer Day
- School Health Ambassadors
- Suposhit Maa Abhiyan
- Ayush Health And Wellness Centre
- Tobacco Use Prevalence
- Lorcaserin
- Arogya Sanjeevani Policy
- Yada Yada Virus
- E-Cigarette Or Vaping Product Use-Associated Lung Injury (Evali)
- National Policy For Treatment Of Rare Diseases
- Medical Equipment As 'Drugs'
- PNEUMOSIL
- Promotion Of Domestic Manufacturing Of Critical Starting Materials/Drug Intermediates And Apis
- Live Attenuated Classical Swine Fever Vaccine (IVRI-CSF-BS)
- Neonatal Deaths
- ICoSDiTAUS-2020
- Health Budget
- Anosmia; Ageusia
- NetSCoFAN
- Medical Devices Notified As Drugs

**INTERNATIONAL**

- World Happiness Report 2020
- Reciprocating Territory
- 'Stranded In India' Portal
- 50 Years Of NPT
- Indian Ocean Commission
- Henley Passport Index 2020
- World Economic Forum (WEF)
- World Future Energy Summit-2020
- 3rd Global Conference On Road Safety
- Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
- Kurzarbeit Scheme
- Stafford Act
- Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre (MGICC)
- Operation Vanilla
- Joint Exercises In News
- Protecting Power
- Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas
- STCW Convention
- India-France Defence Relations/ Réunion Islands
- Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive
- India Ports Global Limited
- ICP Biratnagar
- Commonwealth
- Indian Diaspora
- Sustainable Development Fee
- Donald Trump's Visit To India
- India-US Trade Relations
- Bilateral Visits
- India – Russia Energy Ties
- OPEC-Plus
- Organisation For The Prohibition Of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
- GISAID



**ECONOMY**

- Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package
- Indian Academy Of Highway Engineers
- Fully Accessible Route
- India VIX
- Companies Fresh Start Scheme, 2020; LLP Settlement Scheme, 2020
- Non-Deliverable Forward Market
- IFSC Banking Units (IBUs)
- Recession
- Short Selling
- Invest India Business Immunity Platform
- Regional Rural Banks
- Payment Aggregators
- Great Depression
- Direct Overseas Listing Of Indian Firms
- Interest Rate On Provident Fund Deposits
- FDI In Air India
- Virtual Currency
- Haulage Charges
- Renewable Energy Management Centers
- Hurun Global Rich List 2020
- G Srinivasan Committee
- FPIs From Mauritius
- Science And Applied Research Alliance And Support (SARAS)
- Steel Industry
- Tilhan Mission
- Force Majeure
- Sanjiv Puri Expert Group
- Dairy Processing And Infrastructure Development Fund
- Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)
- Spice+
- International IP Index 2020
- Punjab Kinnow
- Coal Sector
- Arun Jaitley National Institute Of Financial Management
- RBI Accounting Year
- Apiary On Wheels
- New Umbrella Entity
- Web Portal For Star Rating Of Mines
- Public Enterprises Survey -2018-19
- Taxation Of NRIs
- Basmati Rice (Basmati 334; DOM SUFID)
- India International Seafood Show 2020
- Global Misery Index
- GOTT Project Management Unit
- Crop Insurance Schemes
- India's Economic Growth
- 3rd Global Potato Conclave
- Specialized Supervisory And Regulatory Cadre
- Global Talent Competitiveness Index
- Mobile Aided Note Identifier (MANI)
- Interest Rate Futures Contracts
- National Stock Exchange Of India Ltd
- World Employment And Social Outlook 2020
- Adjusted Gross Revenue
- Economic Inequality
- 'Must Run' Status
- 'Option In Goods' In Commodities
- Apna Urea – Sona Ugle
- Hallmarking Made Mandatory For Gold Jewellery
- National Strategy For Financial Inclusion: 2019-2024
- Voting At GST Council
- GST Rates
- Purvodaya
- In-Depth Review Of India's Energy Policies 2020
- State Energy Efficiency Index 2019

- Small Finance Bank
- Residential Builder Finance With Buyer Guarantee Scheme
- New Energy Performance Standards For Air Conditioners
- Supervisory Action Framework For Primary (Urban) Co-Operative Banks (UCBs)
- Task Force On National Infrastructure Pipeline For 2019-2025
- Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process
- Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020
- BLCS (Type A & B)
- REITs; InvITs
- Global Investment Trend Monitor Report
- GATI
- Merchanting Trade Transactions (MTT) – Revised Guidelines
- Wings India 2020
- Restructuring Of Railways
- HRMS Mobile App
- Circuit Breaker In Stock Market
- Vistadome Coaches
- National Startup Advisory Council
- Market Intelligence And Early Warning System (MIEWS) Web Portal
- Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship Programme
- Nidhi Company
- Insolvency And Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill 2020
- Reconstruction Scheme For Yes Bank
- AT-1 Bonds
- Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020
- Land Acquisition
- First Banana Container Train
- Off-Budget Transactions
- Special Economic Zones (SEZs)
- Cess Fund To Support Construction Workers
- LPG Prices
- Remission Of Duties And Taxes On Exported Products (RoDTEP)
- RoSCTL Scheme
- SEBI Redefines 'Pledge'
- Committee To Review The Fiscal Consolidation Roadmap
- Upgradation Of National Highways
- Foreign Trade
- RBI Exemption From CRR Maintenance
- North East Natural Gas Pipeline Grid
- Key Highlights Of Union Budget 2020-21
- Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas Bill 2020
- National Technical Textiles Mission

#### **INTERNAL SECURITY**

- Biological Weapons Convention
- Rashtriya Raksha University Bill, 2020
- Republic Day Celebrations 2020
- DefExpo 2020
- India-Africa Defence Ministers' Conclave (IADMC 2020)
- Department Of Military Affairs
- National Forensic Sciences University Bill, 2020
- Data On Police Organizations
- Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)
- National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal
- National Security Guard (NSG) Regional Hub
- Indian Railway Protection Force Service
- Manohar Parrikar Institute For Defence Studies And Analyses
- Draft Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP), 2020
- Full Body Protector (प्रबला)
- Raider-X
- Police Commissionerate System

- FATF Plenary, February 2020
- Law And Order (Delhi)
- Sections 269 & 270 Of IPC
- K9 Vajra-T Gun
- ICGS Annie Besant; ICGS Amrit Kaur
- HFHSD – IN 512
- Light Combat Helicopter (LCH)
- Yard 45006 Vajra
- Tigersharks
- ICGS Varad
- INS Shivaji
- DRDO Young Scientists Laboratories
- Sharang
- NEGEV 7.62x51 Mm LMG
- Crime Multi Agency Centre (Cri-MAC)

**ENVIRONMENT**

- COP 13 On Conservation Of Migratory Species (CMS)
- Rubigula
- Himalayan Ibex
- World Water Day
- Earth Hour 2020
- GreenCo Rating System
- System Of Air Quality And Weather Forecasting And Research (Safar)
- Extinction Rebellion (XR)
- Polycrack
- HCFC-141b
- Ramsar Sites
- African Cheetah
- Laboratory For Conservation Of Endangered Species (LaCONES)
- 1t.Org
- Global Risks Report 2020
- Nature Risk Rising Report
- E-Waste Clinic
- India Climate Collaborative
- Biorocks
- Climate Change
- Olive Ridleys
- Ophichthus Kailashchandrai
- Star Labelling Programme For Deep Freezer And LCAC
- 'World's Largest' Subterranean Fish
- World Air Quality Report 2019
- World Sparrow Day
- State Of India's Birds 2020
- New Wetland Conservation Rules
- 'Blue Flag' Certification
- Tiger Deaths
- Craspedotropis Gretathunbergae
- Chinese Paddlefish
- Human-Elephant Conflict
- Senna Spectabilis
- Swamp Wallaby
- Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Rules
- Plastic Packaging Pollution
- Statement On Climate Of India During 2019
- R.K. Pachauri
- Cauvery Delta Region
- Wollemi Pine

**SCIENCE & TECH**

- National Mission On Quantum Technologies & Applications (NM-QTA)
- Vyommitra
- Telecommunication Consumers Education And Protection Fund
- Petroleum And Explosives Safety Organization (PESO)
- Thoothukodi Launch Port / SSLVs
- Nesyamun
- Neon
- TOI 700 d
- MACS 4028



## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- Biofuel From Microorganisms / Synechococcus Sp. PCC 7002
- 2020 CD3
- Henneguya Salminicola
- Askdisha
- Bhaskaracharya National Institute For Space Applications And Geo-Informatics (BISAG(N))
- Centre For Excellence In Blockchain Technology
- Xenobot
- Indian Science Congress Association
- GSAT-30
- Bi-Luminescent Security Ink
- High Definition (HD) Vs. Standard Definition (SD)
- In-Flight Wifi
- Sophisticated Analytical & Technical Help Institutes (SATHI)
- Schemes For Electronics Manufacturing
- Sutra PIC Programme
- Muktoshti
- Oculudentavis Khaungrae
- Apollo 13
- CollabCAD
- Antarashtriya Yoga Diwas Media Samman
- Ramnath Goenka Excellence In Journalism Awards
- Costa Children's Book Award
- Harivarasanam Award
- Swathi Music Award
- Muppavarapu National Awards
- Jeevan Raksha Padak
- 29th Saraswati Samman
- Swarna Jayanti Fellowships
- National Lalit Kala Akademi Awards
- SERB Women Excellence Award-2020
- Laureus World Sports Awards-2020
- 92nd Academy Awards
- National E-Governance Awards, 2020
- International Gandhi Awards For Leprosy
- 3rd Khelo India Youth Games
- Khelo India Winter Games
- Tokyo Olympics Postponed
- Wimbledon
- P K Banerjee
- Pullela Gopichand
- Niket Dalal
- Khelo India University Games
- Motera Stadium
- Rani Rampal
- P Parameswaran
- Neutron Jack
- Larry Tesler
- Katherine Johnson

### MISCELLANEOUS: AWARDS, SPORTS, PERSON IN NEWS

- Padma Awards 2020
- Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2020
- Nari Shakti Puraskar
- Women Transforming India Awards
- Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2020

## CULTURE & HISTORY

### 'DEKHO APNA DESH' WEBINAR SERIES

- Ministry of Tourism launched its "Dekho Apna Desh" webinar series from April 14, 2020.
- It has been launched to provide information on the many destinations and the culture and heritage of Incredible India. The webinar will be available on the Ministry's social media handles- IncredibleIndia on Instagram and Facebook.
- The first webinar of the series titled "City of Cities- Delhi's Personal Diary" touched upon the long history of Delhi. The series of webinars shall be an on-going feature of Ministry.

### NIHANG

- A group of Nihangs attacked a Punjab police party and chopped off the hand of an assistant sub-inspector in Patiala.**
- Nihang is an order of Sikh warriors, characterised by blue robes, antiquated arms such as swords and spears, and decorated turbans surmounted by steel quoits.
- Nihangs use the slogans 'chhardi kala' (forever in high spirits) and 'tiar bar tiar' (state of ever preparedness) for unforeseen events.
- Any person irrespective of caste, creed or religion can be included as Nihang provided he has unshorn hair as per the Sikh traditions at the time of entering the sect.
- Their origin can be traced back to the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. The word Nihang also occurs in a hymn in the Guru Granth Sahib, where it alludes to a fearless and unrestrained person. Nihangs today constitute a small community.



### PANDIT RAVI SHANKAR

- 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Pandit Ravi Shankar (1920 – 2012), an Indian musician and a composer of Hindustani classical music, was observed recently.
- The "Sitar maestro" was best-known proponent of the sitar in the 20th century.
- He popularised performing on the **bass octave of the sitar for the alap section.**
- He was known for a distinctive playing style in the middle and high registers that used quick and short deviations of the playing string and his sound creation through stops and strikes on the main playing string. Shankar promoted the jugalbandi duet concert style and claims to have **introduced new ragas Tilak Shyam, Nat Bhairav and Bairagi.**
- He was the music director of All India Radio, New Delhi, from 1949 to 1956.
- From 1986 to 1992, he served as a nominated member of Rajya Sabha.

### Awards And Honours Received

- Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1962); Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship (1975)
- Padma Bhushan (1967); Padma Vibhushan (1981); Bharat Ratna (1999)
- Kalidas Samman from the Government of Madhya Pradesh for 1987–88

- Ramon Magsaysay Award (1992).

**TOURISM BUDGET**

- To have well-trained resources in the disciplines of museology and archeology, the first **Indian Institute of Heritage and Conservation** will be established with the status of a deemed university which will operate under the Ministry of Culture.
- Five Archeological sites to be set-up/developed as Iconic Sites with on-site Museums at the following locations: **Rakhigarhi** (Haryana), **Hastinapur** (Uttar Pradesh), **Shivsagar** (Assam), **Dholavira** (Gujarat) and **Adichanallur** (Tamil Nadu).
- Maritime Museum to highlight **Harappan Age at Lothal**, Ahmedabad, will be renovated by Ministry of Shipping.
- Support will be provided for setting up **Tribal Museum in Ranchi (Jharkhand)**.

**NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART (NGMA)**

- In the wake of Coronavirus lock down, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) has launched for the first time a virtual tour of its permanent collection to art lovers to celebrate its 66th Foundation Day.
- NGMA is the premier art gallery which aims to acquire and preserve works of modern art from **1850s onward**. It is run and administered as a **subordinate office to the Ministry of Culture**, GoI.
- The **main museum in New Delhi was established in 1954** by the Government of India, with subsequent **branches at Mumbai and Bangalore**.

**ARR-RINAM**

- In the aftermath of COVID-19 outbreak, **Arunachal Pradesh's West Siang district** ceremonially entered the **Arr-Rinam phase** on March 26, 2020.
- Arr-Rinam is the Galo equivalent of lockdown imposed by consensus for 48 hours whenever an epidemic strikes. Arr-Rinam, which follows the Ali-Ternam ritual to ward off an epidemic, has been a part of their culture.
- Galos, a major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, dominate West Siang district.
- Ali-Ternam — Ali means epidemic and Ternam forestall — and Arr-Rinam were last performed almost four decades ago when a water-borne disease had affected many members of the community.

**SATISH GUJRAL**

- **PM Modi condoled the death of Satish Gujral** (1925 - 2020), a renowned Indian painter, sculptor, muralist and writer of the post-independent era.
- He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1999. His elder brother, Inder Kumar Gujral, was the Prime Minister of India between 1997 and 1998.

**PUTHUSSERY RAMACHANDRAN**

- **Veteran poet and Malayalam scholar** Puthussery Ramachandran passed away.
- He is credited with publishing **Kannassa Ramayanam** (the first complete Ramayana in Malayalam) and **Kerala Charithrathinte Adisthana Rekhakal** (The basic documents of the history of Kerala).
- His efforts resulted in **Malayalam getting recognised as a classical language** by the Union government in 2013. He was also the organising secretary of the **First All India Conference on Dravidian Linguistics** in 1971.

- **The Sahitya Akademi** honoured him with its **translation award** in 2005 and **Bhasha Samman** in 2014. In 2012, he was selected for the **Yesenin award**, instituted by the Russian Cultural Centre for popularising Russian poetry and culture in south India.

**UGADI**

- President of India wished the people on the eve of **Ugadi, Gudi Padava, Chaitra Sukladi, Sajibu Cheiraoba, Navreh and Cheti Chand** which traditionally mark the beginning of a new year in different parts of India.
- **Yugadi (also known as Samvatsaradi or ugadi)** is the New Year's Day for the people of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states in India. It is observed in these regions on the first day of month of Chaitra (the first month of lunar calendar).
- Maharashtrians celebrate the day as **Gudi Padwa**. Sindhis celebrate the same day as **Cheti Chand**. Manipuris also celebrate the same day as **Sajibu Nongma Panba (also called Meetei Cheiraoba or Sajibu Cheiraoba)**.

**CLASSICAL LANGUAGES**

- At the 93rd edition of the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, a resolution was passed **demanding the declaration of Marathi as a 'Classical' language**.
- **Currently, six languages enjoy the 'Classical' status:** Tamil (declared in 2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).

Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, an annual conference of Marathi writers, was started in 1878. Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade also headed it.

**Guidelines For Declaring A Language As 'Classical' Are:**

- High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years;
- A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers;
- The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community;
- The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

**Benefits Provided To A Classical Language**

- Two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in classical Indian languages.
- A Centre of Excellence for studies in Classical Languages is set up.
- The University Grants Commission (UGC) is requested to create Professional Chairs for the Classical Languages in the Central Universities.

**AKBAR PADAMSEE**

- **Noted Indian painter and artist Akbar Padamsee (1928 – 2020) passed away.**
- He is considered a pioneer in Modern Indian painting along with S.H. Raza, F.N. Souza and M.F. Husain. He worked with various mediums from oil painting, plastic emulsion, water colour etc. He always explored new plastic genres.
- **Honours received:** Padma Bhushan, Lalit Kala Akademi Fellowship, Kalidas Samman from MP govt.

**PROTECTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY IN ARMED CONFLICT**

- President Donald Trump tweeted that if Iran strikes America, in retaliation, the US would target 52 sites in Iran which are important to Iranian culture. Such a step could be considered a war crime.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- The **Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict**, adopted at the Hague in 1954, is the first international treaty focussed exclusively on the protection of cultural heritage during war and armed conflict.
- The **Rome Statute of 1998**, *the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court*, describes a “war crime” as any intentional attack against a historical monument, or a building dedicated to religion, education, art, or science.

## KAIFI AZMI

- **Google released a doodle on the occasion of 101 birth anniversary of Sayyid Athar Hussein Rizvi**, also known as Kaifi Azmi, (1919 – 2002).
- He was an Indian Urdu poet, who published his first collection of poems, **Jhankar** in 1943. **Aurat** is Azmi's one of the earliest works where he spoke on women empowerment. He is known for bringing Urdu literature into the film industry.
- He was the recipient of Padma Shri, Sahitya Akademi Award for Urdu for his collection *Awaara Sajde*, President's Award for national integration and Sahitya Akademi Fellowship for lifetime achievement.
- The government has also inaugurated a train named "**Kaifiyat Express**" which runs from his hometown Azamgarh to Old Delhi.



## M CHIDANANDA MURTHY

- PM Modi condoled the demise of M. Chidananda Murthy (1931 – 2020), a **Kannada writer famous for securing classical language status to Kannada Language**.
- **Awards recieved:** Rajyotsava award, Sahitya Akademi Award and Pampa Award.

## WORLD HINDI DAY

- The annual World Hindi Day was celebrated on **January 10 to promote use of Hindi language abroad. Special functions are being organized to mark the occasion.**
- On this day in 2006 the First World Hindi Conference was organized in Nagpur.

## ALL INDIA ORIENTAL CONFERENCE (AIOC)

- The Vice President of India inaugurated the 50th session of AIOC in Nagpur.
- AIOC, a biennial Conference, was founded in 1918 by the founders of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) as a pan Indian dialogue of Indological scholars.
- BORI, Pune, was founded in 1917 in honour of the work of Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, the foremost pioneer of scientific Orientology in India.
- The Institute is a public organization registered under Societies Registration Act 1860 and Bombay Public Trusts Act 1950.

Orientology is the study of the indigenous lore and wisdom of the ancient East or the 'Orient'.

## TULU

- Activists demanded inclusion of Tulu in the **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution**.
- Tulu is a Dravidian language whose speakers are concentrated in two coastal districts of Karnataka and in Kasaragod district of Kerala. Kasaragod district is called '**Sapta bhasha Samgama Bhumi** (the confluence of seven languages)', and Tulu is among the seven.
- The Census 2011 reports 18,46,427 native speakers of Tulu in India.



### Advantages Of Including Tulu In The Eighth Schedule:

- Tulu would get recognition from the Sahitya Akademi.
- Tulu books would be translated into other recognised Indian languages.
- MPs and MLAs could speak in Tulu in Parliament and State Assemblies, respectively.
- Candidates could write all-India competitive examinations like Civil Services in Tulu.

**Yuelu Proclamation**, made in 2018 by the UNESCO at Changsha, China says that the protection and promotion of linguistic diversity helps to improve social inclusion and partnerships.

### GOMATI HANDICRAFTS

- On the occasion of International Women's Day on **8<sup>th</sup> March**, PM Modi shared a story of **Vijaya Pawar** from Maharashtra's Beed district.
- The video showcased her journey of becoming an entrepreneur of age-old **Gomati handicrafts of the Banjara community**. With the guidance of the KVIC currently, Vijaya is working in 99 Tandas of four Talukas in the Beed district of Maharashtra.

### NAMASTE

- During Coronavirus pandemic, Namaste instead of the normal handshake, has emerged as the most preferred form of pleasantries to reduce physical contact.
- Namaste, sometimes spoken as Namaskar and Namaskaram, is a customary Hindu greeting used both for greeting and leave-taking.
- Namaste is usually spoken with a slight bow and hands pressed together, palms touching and fingers pointing upwards, thumbs close to the chest. This gesture is called **Añjali Mudrā**; the standing posture incorporating it is **Pranamasana**.
- In Hinduism, it means "I bow to the divine in you".



### AJRAK

- PM Modi addressed the 9th Episode of 'Mann Ki Baat 2.0.'
- He narrated the story of Ismail Khatri (of Ajrak village in Kutch area of Gujarat) who nurtured his traditional art form of '**Ajrak print**'.
- **Ajrak** is a unique form of blockprinted shawls with deep crimson red and indigo blue background found in Sindh region of India and Pakistan.



### Other Key Highlights:

- He also mentioned his surprise trip to **Hunar Haat** in Delhi and urged others to visit the exhibition organised by the Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- Quoting Tamil poetess **Avvaiyar** "Katrathu Kaiman Alavu Kallathathu Ulagalavu" which means, what we know is but just a handful of sand; what we do not know is like a universe in itself, PM pointed out the recent discovery of new species of fish in the caves of Meghalaya.
- He shared the achievement of **Kamya Karthikeyan**, who conquered Mount Aconcagua – the highest peak of the Andes Mountains in South America – at the age of twelve. She is now on '**Mission Saahas**' to conquer the highest peaks of all the continents.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- He hailed the take-off of Indian Air Force's AN 32 aircraft from Leh's Kushok Bakula Rimpoche Airport. The **aircraft for the first time ever used a mixture of 10% Indian bio-jet fuel.**

## MATRIBHASHA DIWAS

- Union HRD Ministry celebrated the Matribhasha Diwas across the country on **21st February** with the theme '**Celebrating our Multilingual Heritage.**'
- MHRD is celebrating the Matribhasha Diwas for the past three years to highlight the linguistic diversity of our country.
- International Mother Language Day (IMLD)** is a worldwide annual observance held on 21st February by UNESCO to promote awareness of linguistic diversity.
- It was first announced by UNESCO in 1999 and was formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2008.

## PATOLA SAREE

- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), inaugurated the first Silk Processing Plant at **Surendranagar in Gujarat** to increase the sale and availability of raw material for Gujarati Patola Sarees locally.
- Patola, the trademark Saree of Gujarat, is very costly and worn only by the Royals or the Aristocrat.
- Reason being the raw material silk yarn is purchased from Karnataka or West Bengal, where silk processing units are situated, thus increasing the cost of the fabric.

**KVIC** is a statutory body under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). It was formed in 1957. Its HQ is in Mumbai.

## ABIDE WITH ME

- There was a controversy over whether the tune 'Abide With Me', which is a part of the Beating Retreat celebrations that take place post-Republic Day, would be played this year or not. At the end it was played.
- The song 'Abide With Me' was written by **Henry Francis Lyte**, a Scottish poet, and hymnologist, in 1847. The tune became popular in the trenches during World War I.
- In India, the tune achieved significance after it was propagated by Mahatma Gandhi. At Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, it remains a part of the 'Ashram Bhajanavali', alongside bhajans like "Vaishnav jan toh", "Raghupati Raghav raja ram" etc.
- The tune is sung in church choirs and educational institutions. Abroad, the hymn is sung at military services in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the UK.

## KiLiki

- Filmmaker **SS Rajamouli** and **Madhan Karky** launched a website ([www.kiliki.in](http://www.kiliki.in)) to popularise and help anyone learn the kiLiki language.
- KiLiki is a language created in 2013 by Dr. Madhan Karky for the Indian blockbuster movie 'Baahubali' directed by SS Rajamouli. It was the language of Kaalakeya tribe in Baahubali.
- Started as a fictional language, now kiLiki has evolved into a language with script grammar and more than 3000 words. KiLiKi alphabet comprises of 22 symbols.



## KUNBI SAREE/ WENDELL RODRICKS

- Renowned fashion designer Wendell Rodricks died in Goa.** A Padma Shri awardee, he was also an author, environmentalist and gay rights activist.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- As a designer he has been credited with reviving the Kunbi saree, worn by the indigenous Kunbi tribal women of Goa.

### Kunbi Saree

- Kunbi saree was originally worn by **Kunbi and Gawda tribe** women who were basically **paddy field worker**. Traditionally, the Kunbi is a *cotton checkered sari* in red and white.
- The Kunbi saree is draped by tying in the fabric below the shoulder and a strip of cloth is crossed over the left shoulder and fastened on the back. This gives freedom to the Kunbi workers to carry on with their daily chores and hard field works.

### KAMBALA

- Srinivas Gowda** – a kambala jockey from Karnataka – competing in a kambala event covered 142.5 m in 13.62 sec. **Converting this into 100m sprint, he clocked 9.55 sec, ahead of Jamaican Usain Bolt's world record of 9.58 sec.**
- Kambala is an **annual Buffalo Race** held in the **Tulu region of Karnataka (districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi)**.
- The contest generally takes place between two pairs of buffaloes, each pair **race in wet rice fields, controlled by a whip-lashing farmer**.
- Kambala season runs from **November till March**.
- Some farmers also run their buffalo in non-competitive ritualistic manner for thanksgiving for protecting their animals from diseases. `133

#### Kambala vs jallikattu:

Kambala is “**Buffalo RACING**”.

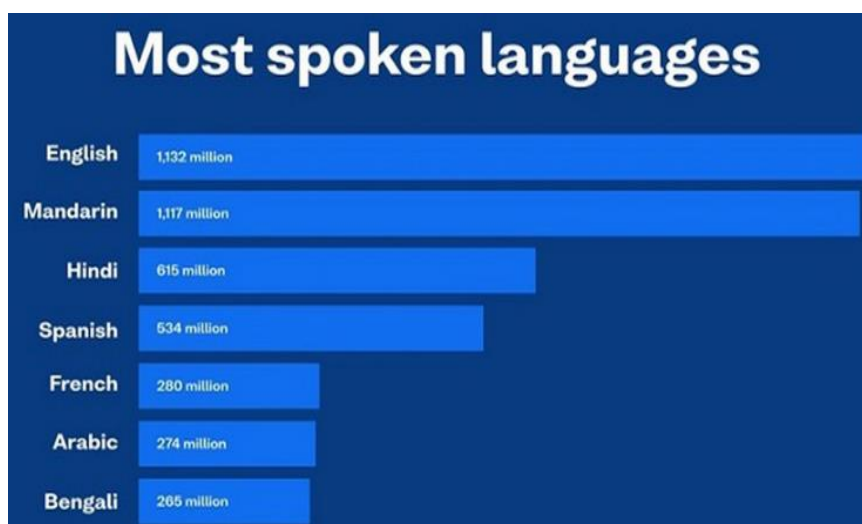
Jallikattu is “**Bull TAMING**” where a group of people try to hold on to the bull and win).

### 22nd EDITION OF ETHNOLOGUE

22nd edition of the world language database Ethnologue was released on the occasion of Mother Language Day (February 21).

#### Key Findings:

- English is at the top of the list with 1,132 million speakers. Chinese Mandarin is at the second position with 1,117 million speakers.
- Hindi is 3rd most spoken language in the world with 615 million speakers. Bangla, with 228 million native speakers, has been ranked 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The 22<sup>nd</sup> edition covers 7,111 living languages of the world. It also covered 348 languages which have gone out of use in recent history.



#### Ethnologue: Languages of the World

- Ethnologue: Languages of the World is an annual reference publication that provides information on the living languages of the world.
- It was first issued in 1951. Starting with the 17th edition, Ethnologue has been published annually by **SIL International**, a U.S.-based, worldwide, Christian non-profit organization.

**CHITRA BHARATI FILM FESTIVAL (CBFF)**

- CBFF was organized by **Bharatiya Chitra Sadhana at Gujarat University** in Ahmedabad.
- **This is the third edition of the festival** – the first was held in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, in 2016, and the second at Delhi's Siri Fort Auditorium in 2018.
- The aim of this film festival is to establish a 'Bharatiya' narrative in Indian cinema.

Realising the positive potential of all kinds of films in the process of the rise of Bharat, like minded persons created **Bharatiya Chitra Sadhana in 2016** to encourage films that promote ancient and modern Bharatiya values and philosophy.

**SIDDHANT SHIKHAMANI**

- PM Modi released the translated version of the **Shri Siddhant Shikhamani Granth in 19 languages and launched a mobile app of the Granth.**
- Siddhantha Shikhamani is a religious scripture of the **Panchacharyas tradition of Veerashaivas, also known as Lingayatism.**
- Traditionally, Siddhantha Shikhamani is attributed to Sri Shivayogi Shivacharya, and is said to contain the preachings of **Jagaduru Renukacharya**, the first Panchacharya.
- **It was written in Sanskrit**, and gives an elaboration of "the primitive traits of Veerashaivism found in the Vedas and the Upanishads" and "the concrete features given to it in the latter parts of the Saivagamas."

**PATHRI**

- Maharashtra government announced that it would grant **Rs 100 crore for the development of Pathri as a centre of religious tourism and "the birthplace of Sai Baba"**. This has triggered anger in Shirdi, the town synonymous with the saint.
- **Sai Baba of Shirdi** was an Indian spiritual master who is regarded by his devotees as a saint and a fakir. He is revered by both his Hindu and Muslim devotees.
- **Pathri** is a town and a municipal council in Parbhani district, Maharashtra. Several authoritative, popular works on Baba either directly mention Pathri as his possible birthplace, or speculate that he may have been from that area.
- **Shirdi** is a city located in Ahmednagar District, Maharashtra. Sai Baba is said to have come to Shirdi in 1872, where he lived until he passed away in 1918.

**BEATING RETREAT CEREMONY**

- Beating Retreat ceremony was held which officially marks the culmination of the Republic Day celebrations. It is **conducted on** the evening of 29 January, the third day after the Republic Day.
- It is **organized by** Section D of the Ministry of Defence.
- It is **performed by** the bands of the three wings of the military, the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force, and pipe bands from the Army, plus from 2016 a massed formation of bands of the Central Armed Police Forces and the Delhi Police.
- **The venue** is Raisina Hills and an adjacent square, Vijay Chowk, flanked by the North and South blocks of the Central Secretariat and the Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's Palace) towards the end of Rajpath.
- **The chief guest** of the function is the President of India.
- **The ceremony traces its origins to the early 1950s** when **Major Roberts** of the Indian Army developed the unique ceremony of display by the massed bands.

**BHARAT-BANGLA TOURISM FESTIVAL**

- **First-ever Bharat-Bangla Paryatan Utsav-Tourism festival was organized in Agartala, Tripura** by the Tripura State Tourism Department.
- It was organized in memories of the contribution of Tripura in 1971 Bangladesh liberation war as well as giving a fillip to the Tripura tourism sector.
- Cultural events and, visit to important tourism spots were key highlights of festival.

**HERATH FESTIVAL**

- PM Modi greeted people on the occasion of Herath festival, one of the biggest festivals of **Kashmiri Pandits**.
- The festival is marked by a night of praying followed by a day of feasting. Some say Herath means the night of the Lord Shiva.

**'GADHIKA' PRODUCTS**

- Amazon has been witnessing a crowd of online shoppers for ethnic products ever since 'Gadhika' products were launched on the e-commerce platform by the SC and ST Development Department of Kerala in December 2019.
- Gadhika products are **natural forest produce and eco-friendly handicraft** made from bamboo, coconut and coconut shell, and ornaments, food products, clothes, Wayanad turmeric, honey, pickles, puttu kutti, etc.
- They have been hand-crafted by artisans belonging to various tribes and SCs of Kerala.

**KAKA HATHRASI**

- Replying to the Motion of Thanks to the President's address in Rajya Sabha, PM Modi quoted **Hindi poet Kaka Hathrasi** to chide the Opposition for its "stagnation" and "unwillingness to move forward".
- Kaka Hathrasi (1906 - 1995) is counted among the foremost poets of '**haasya**' (humour) and '**vyanga**' (satire) in Hindi literature. He is credited with mainstreaming satire as a form of poetry in Hindi literature. He also wrote on classical dance and music under the pen name '**Vasant**'.
- Born to Prabhulal Garg, he took the name 'Kaka Hathrasi' based on his hometown, Hathras in Uttar Pradesh. He was honoured with the **Padma Shri** in 1985 for his contributions to Hindi literature.

**GIRIRAJ KISHORE**

- Well-known **Hindi novelist** Giriraj Kishore passed away at the age of 83.
- He was best known for his novel "**Pehla Girmitya**" that was based on Mahatma Gandhi's stay in South Africa.
- He was awarded the Padma Shri, Sahitya Akademi award and Vyas Samman.

**SHRI RAM JANMBHOOMI TEERTH KSHETRA TRUST**

- **Centre Government issued gazette notification over setting up of Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust for the construction of Ram Temple in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya.**
- The trust will have office in **Delhi**. It will have 15 trustees, out of which one trustee will always be from **Dalit community**. This trust will be completely free to take every decision related to the temple and 67 acres of land will be transferred to the trust.
- It was created as per the verdict of the Supreme Court of India. It was given the 2.77 acre (previously disputed) land as well as the 67.703 acre land acquired under the **Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act, 1993**.

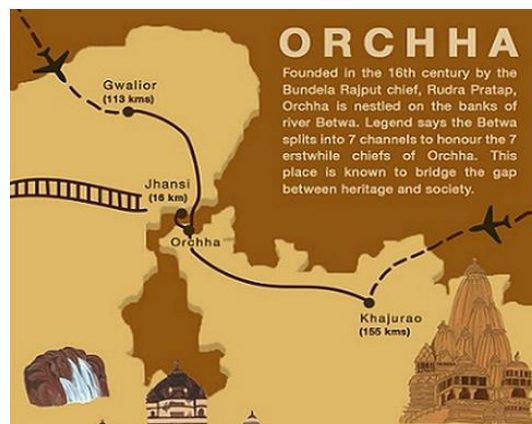


## BHAKTA RAMADASU

- A 11-foot imposing bronze statue of **Bhakta Ramadasu** was unveiled at his birthplace, **Nelakondapalli in Telangana's Khammam district**, on the occasion of his 387th birth anniversary.
- Kancharla Gopanna, popularly known as Bhakta Ramadasu or Bhadrachala Ramadasu, was a 17th-century Indian **devotee of Lord Rama and a composer of Carnatic music**.
- He was a famous Vaggeyakara (classical composer) from the Telugu classical era. His devotional lyrics to Rama are famous in South Indian classical music as **Ramadaasu Keertanalu**.
- He also wrote **Dasarathi Shatakamu**, a collection of nearly 108 poems dedicated to the son of Dasaratha (Lord Rama).

## NAMASTE ORCHHA

- Madhya Pradesh government organized a three-day multi-cultural festival to promote tourism in the heritage city of Orchha, a town in Niwari district of Madhya Pradesh which lies on the Betwa River.
- The first day of the festival was held at **Jahangir Mahal**, built in 17th Century by the then ruler Vir Singh Deo in honour of the Mughal emperor Jahangir.
- Orchha was founded in the 16th century AD by the **Bundela Rajput chief, Rudra Pratap Singh**, who became the first King of Orchha and also built the Fort of Orchha.



## ANTHROPOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (AnSI)

- As part of the commemoration of Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary, the AnSI has dedicated an entire issue of its journal on what it calls **"Gandhian insights into applied anthropology"**.
- **Mandate:** AnSI is an apex organisation, under **Ministry of Culture**, involved in anthropological studies and field data research for human and cultural aspects.
- **Established:** 1945; **HQ:** Kolkata

According to the recent journal, equality and human community of the **Gajan (a rural festival of Bengal)**, had so much in common with the Gandhian yatra.

## RUKUNA RATHA YATRA

- During the Republic Day celebrations of 2020, the tableau of Odisha displayed the famous **Rukuna Ratha Yatra of Lord Lingaraja in Bhubaneswar**.
- Lord Lingaraja is worshipped as both Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu in a sixth century-built temple named 'Lingaraj Temple' at Bhubaneswar.
- The Chariot Festival of Lord Lingaraja is celebrated at Bhubaneswar on the day of Ashokastami or Basanti Durga Puja. The festival takes place in the month of Chaitra (March-April) the day preceding Ramanavami.
- On the day of Ashokastami, 3 deities i.e. Chandrasekhar – the representative of lord Lingaraja, Rukmini & Basudeva are ceremonially brought to ascend chariot.
- After that, the chariot is drawn to Rameswara temple and remains there for four days which is called **Gundicha Gharand**. On the fifth day, the three deities start the return journey called **Bahuda**.

**BRIHADEESWARAR TEMPLE**

- The kumbhabhishegam (consecration) ceremony at the Sri Brahadeeswarar Temple was held after 23 years — and after the Madras High Court had settled an old argument over the ritual purification process, thus addressing the struggle for supremacy between the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions.
- Brihadeshwara Temple is also called as **Rajarajesvaram or Peruvudaiyar Kovil temple**.
- Located on South Bank of **Kaveri river** in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, this temple is an example of Tamil architecture from Chola period. It was built by King **Raja Raja Chola I** and completed in **1010 AD**.
- It is a Hindu temple dedicated to **Shiva**. The Kumbam (the apex or the bulbous structure on the top) of the temple is carved out of a single rock.
- The temple is part of the **UNESCO World Heritage Site** known as the "**Great Living Chola Temples**", along with Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Airavatesvara temple.

**LUI-NGAI-NI**

- The **Naga tribes** of Manipur celebrated its **seed sowing festival** 'Lui-Ngai-Ni', under the theme "Oneness through Culture" in Ukhrul, Manipur.
- The festival heralds the season of seed sowing and marks the start of the year for the Nagas and the festival was declared a state holiday since 1988.
- The festival is celebrated annually on 14–15 February at the start of the spring season.
- It is the second major inter-tribe Naga festival after Hornbill Festival.
- Leaders from other communities of the State, mainly **Meitei, Kuki and Zomi** also participated in Festival to show mutual solidarity for peaceful co-existence.

**KALA KUMBH**

- **Ministry of Textiles** organised Kala Kumbh – Handicrafts Exhibitions to promote Geographical Indication (GI) crafts and heritage of India.
- The exhibitions, sponsored by Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH), are being organized through the Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts).
- The exhibitions were held in major cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai.

**Do You Know**

- The GI tag is used on handicrafts which correspond to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g., a town, region, or country).
- **The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** provides for the registration of geographical indications relating to goods in India.
- The Act is administered by **Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks**- who is the Registrar of Geographical Indications. The Geographical Indications Registry is located at **Chennai**.
- As on August 2019, 178 GI handicraft products were registered from all over India.

**HISTORICAL GASTRONOMICA - THE INDUS DINING EXPERIENCE**

- National Museum in New Delhi and One Station Million Stories (OSMS) jointly hosted an exhibition on India's ancient food history called "Historical Gastronomica - The Indus Dining Experience" that goes back to over 5000 years ago.
- The National Museum in New Delhi, also known as the National Museum of India, was established in 1949. It functions under the **Ministry of Culture**.

- It also houses the **National Museum Institute of History of Art, Conservation and Museology** which was established in 1983 and is now a Deemed to be University.

### **DHOLAVIRA**

- India has submitted two nomination dossiers namely 'Dholavira: A Harappan City' and 'Monuments and Forts of Deccan Sultanate' for inclusion in the World Heritage List for the year 2020.
- Govt. of Madhya Pradesh has submitted the proposal of 'Group of Monuments at Mandu' in the year 2019 to World Heritage Centre (WHC).
- UNESCO World Heritage Sites are important places of cultural or natural heritage as described in the **UNESCO World Heritage Convention, established in 1972.**
- There are **38 World Heritage Sites** located in India which includes 30 cultural sites, 7 natural sites and one mixed-criteria site (Khangchendzonga National Park).

### **Do You Know**

- Dholavira is an archaeological site at Khadirbet in Kutch District, Gujarat. It lies on the **Tropic of Cancer**. Also known locally as **Kotada timba**, the site contains ruins of an ancient Indus Valley Civilization/Harappan city. The excavation site at Dholavira suggests that river water was stored in gigantic reservoirs around the city walls.
- **The Deccan sultanates** were five dynasties that ruled late medieval kingdoms, namely, Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar, and Berar in south-western India.
- **Mandu or Mandavgad** is an ancient city in the present-day Mandav area of the Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh.

### **CENTRALLY PROTECTED MONUMENTS**

- The Government of India is planning to conduct a review of monuments under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the ones protected by the State governments.
- At present, 3,691 monuments nationwide are protected by the ASI. **The highest number of sites are in Uttar Pradesh at 745 monuments and sites** followed by **Karnataka** at 506 and **Tamil Nadu** at 413.
- The list of the Centrally protected monuments had not seen a substantial increase in many years, and important sites under the State governments could be added to the list.
- There is a ban on construction within 100 metres of a Centrally protected monument and regulated construction within 100-200 metres under the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.**
- The Act protects monuments and sites that are over **100 years old.**

### **KONARK SUN TEMPLE**

- Union Culture Minister said that it is formulating a plan to restore the Konark Sun temple. According to Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the temple had been filled with sand and sealed by the British authorities in 1903 to stabilise the structure.
- **Location:** It is located on the coastline of Odisha in Puri district. The temple was originally constructed at the **mouth of the river Chandrabhaga**, but the waterline has receded since then.
- **History:** It was built in the 13th century. The temple is attributed to king **Narasingha deva I** of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty about 1250 CE.
- It was given the status of a **World Heritage Site** in 1984 by UNESCO.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- The temple remains a site of contemporary worship for Hindus, during the **annual Chandrabhaga Festival**, around the month of February.

### Features

- Also called the **Surya Devalaya**, the temple is dedicated to the **Hindu god Surya**.
- The temple, built from **Khondalite rocks**, is also known as '**BLACK PAGODA**' due to its dark colour.
- The temple complex has the appearance of a **100-foot high solar chariot, with 24 wheels and pulled by six horses, all carved from stone**.
- It is a classic example of the Odisha style of Architecture or Kalinga Architecture.
- It is oriented towards the east so that the first rays of the sunrise strike the main entrance. The wheels of the temple are sundials, which can be used to calculate time accurately to a minute.

### NEHRU MEMORIAL MUSEUM & LIBRARY (NMML)

- The Central Government has appointed **Nripendra Misra**, former principal secretary to the Prime Minister, as the Chairman of the Executive Council (EC) of the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library. This comes at a time when the institution is finalising plans to set up a **Museum of Prime Ministers**.
- Surya Prakash, who is the Chairman of Prasar Bharati, has been appointed as the Vice-Chairman of the Council. Meanwhile, two senior officials of the Ministry of Culture and Director of NMML will serve as ex-officio members in the EC.

### Do You Know

- The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) was set up in 1966 as an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture.
- Located at the Teen Murti Bhavan in Delhi, Nehru's official residence as Prime Minister, it houses his papers and others related to the freedom movement.

### CHAITRA JATRA FESTIVAL

- The famous annual Chaitra Jatra festival, scheduled to be held on March 17 at Odisha's Tara Tarini hill shrine, was cancelled as a precautionary measure against COVID-19 infection.
- This festival is celebrated at Tara Tarini hill shrine on Tuesdays of the Hindu month of Chaitra. The largest gatherings occur on second and third Tuesday. March 17 happens to be second Tuesday.
- Tara Tarini hill shrine, located at Kumari hill on banks of the Rushikulya river, is a major centre of Shakti worship in Odisha.

Indian Navy's sailboat INSV Tarini was named after Tara Tarini hill shrine. The first Indian all-woman crew had circumnavigated the globe in INSV Tarini.

### OPERATION ALBERICH

- The Oscar-nominated World War I drama '1917' was recently released in India which is based on Operation Alberich.
- Operation Alberich was the code name of a German military operation in France during the First World War.
- Alberich was a planned strategic withdrawal to new positions on the shorter and more easily defended **Hindenburg Line**, which took place between 9 February and 20 March 1917.
- The retirement eliminated the two salients which had been formed during the Battle of the Somme in 1916, between Arras and Saint-Quentin and from Saint-Quentin to Noyon.

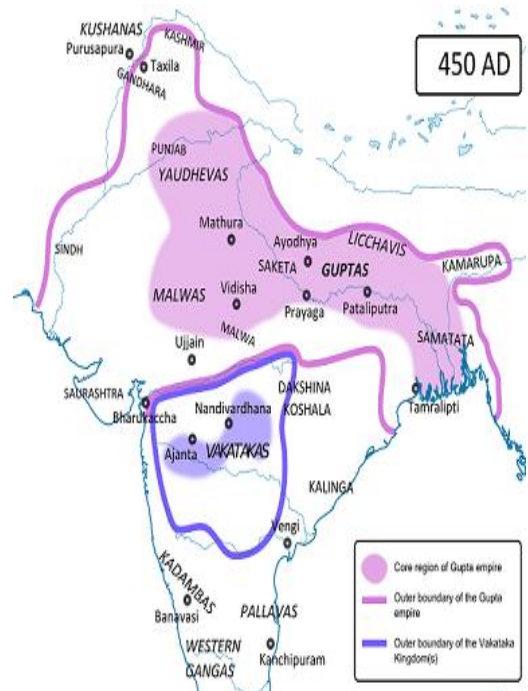
- The operation is regarded as a tactical success for the Germans, but is criticised for the disproportionate destruction it caused.

### TABLIGHI JAMAAT

- Over 200 have tested positive for COVID-19 from among 4,000-odd who had gathered in Delhi's Markaz Nizamuddin, the headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat.
- **What Is It?** Tablighi Jamaat, which literally means a society for spreading the faith, is a Sunni Islamic missionary movement.
- **Objective:** The proselytising movement aims to reach out to ordinary Muslims and revive their faith, particularly in matters of ritual, dress, and personal behaviour.
- **Background:** The roots of the Tablighi Jamaat lie in the Deobandi version of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence. It was launched by Deoband cleric and prominent Islamic scholar **Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Khandhalaw** in 1927 in Mewat to bring back Meo peasants (mostly Muslims who were largely practicing Hindu traditions) into the fold of traditional Islam.
- **How Wide Is Its Reach?** In two decades after its launch, the Tablighi Jamaat had spread beyond the Mewat region. It has a significant base in Pakistan, Bangladesh, United States, Britain, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

### NAGARDHAN EXCAVATIONS

- Archaeological excavations at Nagardhan, near Nagpur have provided evidence on the life, religious affiliations and trade practices of the **Vakataka dynasty**, the Shaivite rulers of Central India between the third and fifth centuries.
- Nagardhan served as the capital of the Vakataka dynasty.
- It is the first time clay sealings have been excavated from Nagardhan. The oval-shaped sealing belongs to the period when **Prabhavatigupta**, the queen of the Vakataka **King Rudrasen I**. It bears her name in the Brahmi script, along with the depiction of a conch. The presence of the conch is a sign of the *Vaishnava affiliation* that the Guptas held.
- Since the Vakataka people traded with **Iran and beyond through the Mediterranean Sea**, scholars suggest that these sealings could have been used as an official royal permission issued from the capital city.
- An intact idol of Lord Ganesha, which had no ornaments adorned, too was found. This confirmed that the elephant god was a commonly worshipped deity in those times.
- Researchers found animal rearing to be one of the main occupations. Remains of seven species of domestic animals — cattle, goat, sheep, pig, cat, horse and fowl — were traced in an earlier study by the team.



### Vakatakas

- The Vakataka Empire was a **Brahmin dynasty** from the Indian subcontinent that originated from the Deccan in the mid-3rd century CE. Their state is believed to have extended from the southern edges of Malwa and Gujarat in the north to the Tungabhadra River in the south as well as from the Arabian Sea in the west to the edges of Chhattisgarh in the east.



## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- They were the most important successors of Satavahanas in the Deccan and contemporaneous with Guptas in northern India.
- The Vakataka rulers were known to have forged **several matrimonial alliances** with other dynasties of their times. One of the key alliances was with Prabhavatigupta of the mighty Gupta dynasty, which was then ruling north India. She was the daughter of Chandragupta II.
- The Vakatakas are noted for having been patrons of the arts, architecture and literature. The rock-cut Buddhist viharas and chaityas of Ajanta Caves were built under the patronage of Vakataka emperor, **Harishena**.

## 75th ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ

- On January 27, 2020, survivors of the Holocaust and international heads of state marked the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.
- During the Second World War, the government of Nazi Germany killed approximately 17 million people across Europe in half a dozen camps specifically designated for killings.
- Of these seven killing centers, the camp at Auschwitz (in German-occupied Poland), perhaps the most well-known, was the largest in size. In many ways, Auschwitz has become the center of Holocaust history and research and serves as a reminder of the horrors of the Holocaust.
- Allied forces entered Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, finding hundreds of sick, starving and exhausted prisoners, who had somehow survived. In 2005, the UN-designated January 27 as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.



## WARREN HASTINGS

- Donald Trump's impeachment trial started in the US Senate. A precedent being discussed is that of the Warren Hastings case — the famous failed attempt by the British Parliament to impeach India's first governor-general.
- Warren Hastings was the first governor-general of Bengal (and the first de facto Governor-General of India). **First as the governor of Bengal (1772-1774) and then as Governor-General (1774-1785)**, Hastings strengthened British rule in the country, and made profound changes in administration.
- Hastings's conduct while in office was called into question after he returned to Britain in 1785. In 1786, impeachment proceedings were initiated against Hastings, probing his alleged mismanagement, mistreatment of natives, and personal corruption while in India.
- The impeachment trial began in 1788. In 1795, however, the House of Lords acquitted Hastings, and the impeachment failed.

## ASHFAQULLAH KHAN

- The Uttar Pradesh government has recently announced it will build a **121-acre zoo** named after Ashfaqulla Khan (1900 – 1927), a freedom fighter in the Indian independence movement. He was born in Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh.
- In the mid-1920s, Ashfaqulla Khan and Ram Prasad Bismil went on to found the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**, with the aim of winning freedom for the country through an armed revolution. HSRA published its manifesto titled "**The Revolutionary**" in 1925.
- He, along with Ram Prasad Bismil, was sentenced to death for the Kakori train robbery, commonly referred to as the Kakori conspiracy of 1925.

**LORD CURZON**

- West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar drew condemnation over his tweet referring to a table, apparently used by Lord Curzon to sign papers pertaining to the Partition of Bengal in 1905, as "iconic".
- Lord Curzon, India's Viceroy between 1899 and 1905, was one of the most controversial and consequential holders of that post.
- In 1891, he became Under-Secretary of State for India (the Deputy Minister in the British cabinet responsible for India). **He became the youngest Viceroy of India in 1899 at age 39**, and remained in office until his resignation in 1905.
- The **partition of the undivided Bengal Presidency** in 1905 was one of Curzon's most criticised moves, which triggered widespread opposition not only in Bengal but across India, and gave impetus to the freedom movement.
- Curzon, in 1901, had famously said, "As long as we rule India, we are the greatest power in the world. If we lose it, we shall drop straightaway to a third-rate power."

**SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN**

- PM Modi paid tributes to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his 100th Birth Anniversary.
- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920 – 1975) was a Bangladeshi politician and statesman.
- Mujib is credited as an important figure in efforts to gain political autonomy for East Pakistan and later as the central figure behind the Bangladesh Liberation Movement and the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.
- Thus, he is regarded "**Jatir Janak**" or "**Jatir Pita**" (Jatir Jônok or Jatir Pita, both meaning "Father of the Nation") of Bangladesh.
- He served as the **first President of Bangladesh** and later as the **Prime Minister of Bangladesh** from 17 April 1971 until his assassination on 15 August 1975.
- He is popularly dubbed with the title of "**Bangabandhu**" (Bôngobondhu "Friend of Bengal") by the people of Bangladesh.

**JOY BANGLA**

- The High Court of Bangladesh has ordered that 'Joy Bangla' will be the national slogan of Bangladesh. 'Joy Bangla' was the main slogan during the liberation war of Bangladesh fought against Pakistan in 1971.
- The first President of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also used 'Joy Bangla' in his speeches and specially during his historic 7th March speech in 1971 declaring the goal of independence for Bangladesh.

**RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR (1889 – 1964)**

- Former PM Indira Gandhi and freedom fighter Rajkumari Amrit Kaur are mentioned in TIME magazine's list of the 100 most powerful women who defined the last century in a new project that feature women who were "often overshadowed".
- Born into the Kapurthala royal family, she was drawn towards the work and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Later on she became **his secretary**. She took an active part in Salt Satyagraha and Quit India Movement.
- She was also a **member of the Indian Constituent Assembly**. She was also a member of Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights and Sub-Committee on Minorities.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- She was the **first woman in independent India who joined the Cabinet** as the **Health Minister** and remained in that position for 10 years.
- During these 10 years, she founded the **Indian Council for Child Welfare**. She also laid the foundation of **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)** and **Lady Irwin College** in Delhi in the following years.
- In 1950, she was elected the **President of World Health Assembly**, becoming the first woman and the first Asian to hold that post.
- She served as the **Chairperson of the Indian Red Cross society** for fourteen years. She initiated the Tuberculosis Association of India and the Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute in Madras (Chennai).
- She was the founder member of **All India Womens' Conference**. She served as the Chairperson of the **All India Women's Education Fund Association**.

## BIJU PATNAIK

- On the occasion of 104<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Biju Patnaik, PM Modi tweeted an Intelligence Bureau document from 1945 to show how Patnaik bravely lent his flying skills for freedom fighters like Ram Manohar Lohia.
- Bijayananda Patnaik (1916 – 1997), popularly known as Biju Patnaik, was an Indian politician, aviator and businessman.
- **Aviation:** At the start of the Second World War he joined the **Royal Indian Air Force** eventually becoming head of air transport command.
- **Role in Indian Freedom Struggle:** During quit India Movement, he used air force transports to fly clandestine missions that carried freedom fighters from hideouts across India to secret meetings that charted the independence struggle.
- **Role in Indonesian Freedom Struggle:** Patnaik rescued two key Indonesian independence leaders from a remote hideout in Indonesia and flew them to India, outraging the Dutch. For this act of bravery, he was given honorary citizenship in Indonesia and awarded the **'Bhoomi Putra' the highest Indonesian award**.
- **Politics:** As politician, he served twice as the Chief Minister of the State of Odisha. Biju Patnaik's younger son, Naveen Patnaik, is the current Chief Minister of Odisha.

## KUNJALI MARAKKAR

- A descendant of Kunjali Marakkar has filed a writ petition in the Kerala High Court seeking to stop the release of the upcoming movie 'Arabikadalinte Simham' for allegedly "distorting history".
- Set in the 16th century, the film is based on the battle exploits of Kunjali Marakkar IV—the naval chieftain of the Zamorin of Calicut.

### Kunjali Marakkar

- The Kunjali Marakkar or Kunhali Marakkar was the title given to the Muslim naval chief of the Zamorin of Calicut, by King of Calicut during the 16th century.
- There were four major Kunjalis who played a part in the Zamorin's naval wars with the Portuguese from 1507 to 1600.
- Kunjali Marakkars organised the first naval defense of the Indian coast by safeguarding Calicut from Portuguese invasion for almost a century.

## BATTLE OF ÇANAKKALE/GALLIPOLI

- Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has compared Kashmir to Çanakkale — the World War I battle that built several national identities.
- Battle of Çanakkale, also known as **Gallipoli Campaign** or **Dardanelles Campaign**, is considered to be the bloodiest of World War I. It took place on the Gallipoli peninsula (Gelibolu in modern Turkey), from 17 February 1915 to 9 January 1916.
- The Entente powers, Britain, France and Russia, sought to weaken the Ottoman Empire, one of the Central Powers, by taking control of the **Dardanelles straits** that provided a supply route to Russia.
- The Allies' attack on Ottoman forts at the entrance of the Dardanelles failed and was followed by an amphibious landing on the Gallipoli peninsula in April 1915 to capture the Ottoman capital of Constantinople (Istanbul).
- In the end, the land campaign was abandoned and the invasion force withdrawn. It was a costly defeat for the Allies and the campaign was considered a great Ottoman victory.
- The battle resulted in the emergence on the Turkish side of **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk**. The event is today one of the central pillars of the modern Turkish identity.



## ADRIAN HELMET

- A new research by biomedical engineers of Duke University has found that the Adrian helmet performs better than modern military helmets in protecting the head from shock waves created by overhead blasts.
- During World War I, the first combat helmet was issued to the French Army. Called the Adrian helmet, and introduced in 1915, it is often described as the first modern steel helmet. It was designed to protect French troops in trenches from head wounds from falling shrapnel.

## KOTA RANI

- Among several other reasons why the government believed Mehbooba Mufti, the former Chief Minister of J&K, should be detained under the Public Safety Act (PSA) was a reference to her being likened to Kota Rani for her “dangerous and insidious machination and usurping nature”.
- Kota Rani (died 1339), was the last ruler of the **Hindu Lohara dynasty** in Kashmir.
- She was the daughter of Ramchandra, the commander-in-chief of Suhadev, who was the king of Kashmir belonging to the Lohara dynasty.
- She was regent during the minority of her son, and ruled as monarch until 1339.
- She was deposed by **Shah Mir**, who became the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir.

## Kutte Kol

- Kutte Kol is a navigational canal running through the Srinagar.
- It is believed to be commissioned by Kota Rani initially to regulate floods on the Jhelum.
- This canal gets water from Jhelum River at the entry point of city and again merges with Jhelum river beyond the city limits.

**BABHANIYAV VILLAGE**

- A nearly 4,000-year-old urban settlement has been unearthed in Varanasi by a team of surveyors from the Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Experts say, this could be one of the craft villages mentioned in ancient texts.
- The university did the preliminary survey of the site in Babhaniyav village, 13 kilometres away from Varanasi. The survey found a temple dating back to the 5th century through 8th century, potteries which are 4,000-year-old and walls which are 2,000-year-old.
- The latest findings in Babhaniyav village is significant as it could have been a satellite settlement and feeding centre of the Varanasi-Sarnath region.

**T J ALONE PANEL/DARA SHIKOH**

- The Ministry of Culture recently set up a seven-member panel of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) headed by T J Alone, to locate the grave of the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh (1615-59).
- The eldest son of Shah Jahan, Dara Shikoh was killed after losing the war of succession against his brother Aurangzeb. He is believed to be buried somewhere in the Humayun's Tomb complex in Delhi, one of around 140 graves of the Mughal clan.
- Dara Shikoh is described as a "liberal Muslim" who tried to find commonalities between Hindu and Islamic traditions. He **translated into Persian the Bhagavad Gita as well as 52 Upanishads.**



## GEOGRAPHY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

### LEAP YEAR

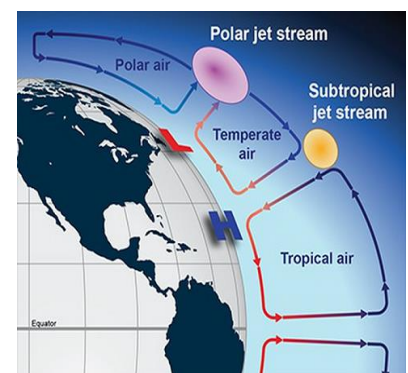
- Year 2020 is a leap year (also known as intercalary year or bissextile year) thus having 366 days instead of 365, by extending February to 29 days rather than 28.
- **Why Have Leap Years**
  - Earth takes close to (not exactly) 365 days and 6 hours to orbit the Sun, which means that the calendar year is about 6 hours shorter than the actual solar year.
  - By the end of 4 years, the calendar years will have missed a total of 24 hours, or one full day. To compensate, we have leap years.
- **Formula:** Leap years are always multiples of four — 2016, 2020, 2024 — but a year that is a multiple of four is not always a leap year. There are exceptions such as 1900 and 2100, both multiples of four, yet neither a leap year. The formula for leap year in the Gregorian calendar is:
  - A year that is a multiple of 4 is a leap year; except:
  - A year ending with 00 is not a leap year; except:
  - A “00 year” in which 00 is preceded by a multiple of 4 (1600, 2000, 2400 etc) remains a leap year.
  - That is why 1900 and 2100 are not leap years, but 2000 is one.

### NEW MONSOON DATES

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has revised the normal onset and withdrawal dates for the monsoon in some parts of the country from this year.
- **Present scenario:** The four-month southwest monsoon season officially begins on June 1, with the onset over Kerala, and ends on September 30.
- **Recent decision:** Although the June 1 date for the onset of the monsoon on the Kerala coast is unlikely to be changed, the dates for onset in many other parts of the country are expected to be revised. Effectively, the monsoon is now expected to have later arrival and withdrawal dates in most parts of the country.
- **Reason:** The main reason for the revision in the normal dates is the changes in precipitation patterns that have been taking place over the last many years. In the last 13 years, for example, only once has the onset over the Kerala coast happened on June 1.

### JET STREAM

- A British Airways flight broke the subsonic speed record during its New York-to-London journey. The Boeing 747-436 plane was able to achieve a speed of 1,327 kph as it was aided by a strong jet stream generated due to **Storm Ciara**.
- Jet streams are narrow bands of strong winds that flow over thousands of Km from west to east. **Major jet streams are found** near the upper levels of the atmosphere, around 9 to 16 km from the earth's surface, and can reach speeds of over 320 kph.



## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- The jet streams shift to the north or south depending on the season. During winters, the wind current is the strongest. They are also closer to the Equator during winter.
- Major jet streams** are the Polar Front, Subtropical, and Tropical jet streams. In India, the Tropical jet stream influences the formation and duration of the summer monsoon.

### NORTHERN EUROPEAN ENCLOSURE DAM (NEED)

- Scientists have proposed the construction of a Northern European Enclosure Dam (NEED) enclosing all of the North Sea as an extraordinary measure to protect Northern European countries from rising seas as a result of climate change.
- The Northern European Enclosure Dam (NEED) is a proposed solution to the problem of rising ocean levels in Northern Europe. The concept was conceived by the oceanographers Sjoerd Groeskamp and Joakim Kjellsson.
- It would be a megaproject, involving the construction of two massive dams of a combined length of 637 km enclosing all of the North Sea: (1) one between France and England, and (2) another between Scotland and Norway.



### LOCATION IN NEWS

<b>Addu Tourism Zone</b>	India and Maldives signed five MoUs for establishing the Addu Tourism zone in five islands of Addu atoll. Addu Atoll, also known as Seenu Atoll, is the southernmost atoll of the Maldives.
<b>Vadhavan Port</b>	Union Cabinet has given its 'in-principle' approval for setting up a Major Port at Vadhavan near Dahanu in Maharashtra on "land lord model".
<b>East-West Metro Corridor</b>	Railway Minister inaugurated the first phase of East-West Metro in Kolkata. On completion, it will connect two old cities Kolkata and Howrah. It will be Country's first underwater train lines where trains will play in tunnels under river Hooghly.
<b>Ulsoor Lake</b>	The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered the constitution of a joint committee to ascertain whether Ulsoor lake is being polluted owing to illegal activity. Ulsoor Lake or Halasuru Lake is one of the biggest lakes in Bengaluru.
<b>Kashi Mahakal Express</b>	PM Modi inaugurated the Kashi Mahakal Express. This bi-weekly train will run between Varanasi and Indore. It will connect three major Jyotirling in India located in Varanasi, Ujjain and Omkareshwar.
<b>Dasuopu Glacier</b>	Dasuopu Glacier, at 7,200 metres above sea level, is the highest-altitude site in the world where scientists have obtained a climate record from an ice core. It is located on Shishapangma, one of the world's 14 tallest mountains, which are all located in the Himalayas.
<b>Z-Morh Tunnel</b>	A Concession Agreement for completing the 6.5-kilometre long Z-Morh tunnel in J&K was signed between NHIDCL and APCO Amarnathji Tunnelway. Z-Morh Tunnel will provide all-weather road connectivity to Sonmarg tourist spot in J&K.
<b>Mopa Airport Project</b>	Supreme Court cleared the path for construction of an international airport at Mopa in Goa by lifting the suspension on Environmental Clearance (EC) granted to the project.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

<b>Bhilwara</b>	Bhilwara, considered the hub of textile manufacturing in Mewar region of Rajasthan, has grabbed national attention following a number of positive cases of COVID-19 being detected at a private hospital in the city.
<b>Kolkata Port Trust</b>	Kolkata Port Trust celebrated its 150th anniversary. The Port of Kolkata is a riverine port. It has two distinct dock systems - Kolkata Docks at Kolkata and a deep water dock at Haldia Dock Complex, Haldia. Opened in 1870, it is the oldest operating port in India.
<b>Challakere</b>	India's world-class facility for training astronauts will be established at Challakere, in Karnataka. Challakere is also known as the 'oil city' or "second Mumbai" of India because it is the second largest producer/supplier of edible oil after Mumbai.
<b>Al Asad Airbase</b>	Iran launched missile attacks on the al-Asad air base. Ayn al Asad is an Iraqi Armed Forces and United States armed forces base located in Al Anbar Governorate of Iraq.
<b>Jebel Ali Gas Field</b>	The United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced the discovery of a new natural gas field containing 80 trillion standard cubic feet of gas in the cross-border area of the Emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai.
<b>Gairsain</b>	Uttarakhand Chief Minister named Gairsain, in Chamoli district, as the new summer capital of the state, partially fulfilling an over two-decade demand by statehood crusaders to make it the permanent capital.
<b>Hubei</b>	Hubei province had been the epicentre of the outbreak of COVID-2019. Its capital is Wuhan. The name of the province means "north of the lake", referring to its position north of Dongting Lake.
<b>Sonbhadra</b>	The Geographical Survey of India (GSI) said that around 160 kg of gold that can be extracted from a site in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh.
<b>Belum caves</b>	Belum Caves Festival was held in Andhra Pradesh to highlight the importance of the Caves. Belum Caves in Kurnool District, Andhra Pradesh, is the second largest caves on the Indian Subcontinent after the Krem Liat Prah caves in Meghalaya.
<b>Thwaites glacier</b>	A new study has pinned the cause of the melting of Thwaites Glacier to the presence of warm water at a vital point beneath the glacier. Thwaites Glacier is an Antarctic glacier flowing into Pine Island Bay, part of the Amundsen Sea.
<b>Ther Mound, Sirsa</b>	Ancient site of Ther Mound in Sirsa could hold clues to the ancient city of 'Sarishika'. Sirsa is a city and a municipal council in Sirsa district of Haryana. Its present name is derived from the ancient name Sarishika, which finds mention in the Mahabharata, Panini's Ashtadhyayi and Buddhist text Divyavadana.

### PM-CARES FUND

- PM Modi announced the constitution of the **PM's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES)** fund.
- Mandate:** This will be a dedicated national fund with the primary objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation, like posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Administration:** Prime Minister is the Chairman of this trust and its Members include Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister.
- Donations to this fund will be **exempted from income tax under section 80(G)**.

**Foreign Contribution Accepted**

- Government has decided to accept **contributions from abroad**, “**irrespective of their nationalities**”, to the PM-CARES Fund. Thus, foreign governments, NGOs, and nationals can now contribute to the Fund.
- The foreign contribution is “only” applicable to the PM-CARES fund and not any other fund, like the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund.
- This is a major policy change since India has not accepted foreign aid in the past 16 years when the then UPA government decided to not accept aid.

**PRIME MINISTER’S NATIONAL RELIEF FUND (PMNRF)**

- Opposition leaders questioned the setting up of the PM CARES Fund as the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund (PMNRF) is already in existence.
- **Background:** In pursuance of an appeal by the then PM Nehru in **January, 1948**, the PMNRF was established to assist displaced persons from Pakistan.
- **Present usage:** It is utilized to render immediate relief to families of those killed in natural calamities like floods, cyclones and earthquakes, etc. and to the victims of the major accidents and riots. Since 2016, Financial assistance of Rs. 1 lakh is provided to the **acid attack victims from the Fund**.
- **Funding:** PMNRF accepts only voluntary donations by individuals and institutions and does not get any budgetary support. Conditional contributions, where the donor mentions that the amount is meant for a particular purpose, are not accepted in the Fund.
- All contributions towards it are **exempted from Income Tax under Section 80(G)**.
- **Status:** PMNRF has not been constituted by the Parliament. The fund is recognized as a Trust under the Income Tax Act.
- **Administration:** The Prime Minister heads the Fund. Disbursements are made with the approval of the Prime Minister. The fund is administered on an Honorary basis by Joint Secretary to the Prime Minister as Secretary of the fund.

**CHIEF MINISTER’S RELIEF FUND**

- The Ministry of Commerce has clarified that the contributions to the Chief Minister’s Relief Fund or the State relief fund will not qualify as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure, while any donation to the PM CARES Fund will.
- It has said in a circular that the Chief Minister’s Relief Fund’ or ‘State Relief Fund for COVID-19’ is not included in **Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013**, and therefore any contribution to such funds shall not qualify as admissible CSR expenditure,”
- Contribution made to **State Disaster Management Authority** to combat COVID-19 shall qualify as CSR expenditure under Schedule VII of Companies Act.
- Opposition parties slammed the circular as discriminatory and sought an immediate amendment to **Schedule VII of the Companies Act** to permit the States to access these funds which could save millions of lives.

**STATE DISASTER RESPONSE FUND (SDRF)**

- Government has recognised Coronavirus outbreak as a notified disaster for the purpose of providing assistance under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

- In case of procurement of essential equipment, the expenditure will be incurred only from the SDRF and not the National Disaster Response Fund, NDRF. The total expenditure on equipment should not exceed 10 per cent of the annual allocation of the SDRF.

**Do You Know**

- The State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), constituted under Section 48 (1) (a) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, is the primary fund available with State Governments for responses to notified disasters.
- The Central Government contributes 75% of SDRF allocation for general category States/UTs and 90% for special category States/UTs (NE States, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir).

**INTEGRATED ROAD ACCIDENT DATABASE (IRAD)**

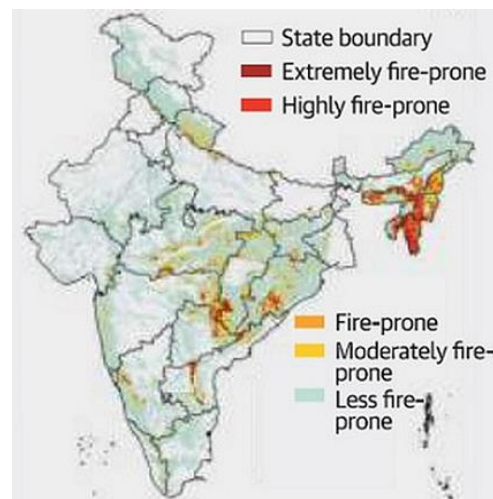
- The Government of India launched Integrated Road Accident Database (IRAD), a central accident database management system that will help in analysing causes of road crashes and in devising safety interventions to reduce such accidents in the country.
- This IT tool has been developed by the **Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M)** and will be implemented by the **National Informatics Centre**. The project costs ₹258 crore and is being supported by the World Bank.
- The system will be first piloted in 6 States with highest fatalities from road crashes: Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

**FOREST FIRES**

The Forest Survey of India (FSI) released the 2019 report on Forest Fires. It analyses forest fire points across the country from 2004 to 2017.

**Key Findings:**

- About **21.4% of forest cover** in India is prone to fires, with forests in the north-eastern region and central India being the most vulnerable.
- Extremely fire prone areas account for 3.89% of total forest cover, very highly fire prone areas account for 6.01% and highly fire prone areas for 11.50%. Together, the three categories come to 21.40 % of forest cover.
- Central Indian States also recorded a high number of forest fire alerts, with **Madhya Pradesh** accounting for 2,723 alerts; Maharashtra 2,516; Odisha 2,213 and Chattisgarh 1,008 alerts between November 2018 to June 2019.
- The reasons for fires here are manmade, particularly in cases where people visit forests and leave burning bidis, cigarette stubs or other inflammable materials. In cases of natural reasons, the scientist pointed to **thunderstorms** as the most likely cause.
- Major reasons for forest fires in the north-east is slash-and-burn cultivation, commonly called jhum or jhum cultivation.





## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

### DEMOCRACY INDEX-2019

- The 2019 Democracy Index was released by **The Economist Intelligence Unit** — the research and analysis division of The Economist Group, which is the sister company to The Economist newspaper. The report records how global democracy fared, analysing 165 independent states and two territories.
- India slipped 10 places in the 2019 global ranking to 51st place. India's overall score fell from 7.23 to 6.9 within a year (2018-2019) — the country's lowest since 2006.
- India was graded in electoral process and pluralism (8.67), government functioning (6.79), political participation (6.67), political culture (5.63) and civil liberties (6.76).
- In the Asia and Australasia region, India ranks eighth, behind Taiwan and Timor-Leste.
- The Index categorises India under “flawed democracies”**, countries that hold free and fair elections, but have weaknesses in aspects of democracy, such as problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation.
- There are only 22 “full democracies” as compared to 54 “authoritarian regimes” and as many “flawed democracies,” that include the U.S.
- The average global score recorded its worst value ever, down from 5.48 in 2018 to 5.44.

### India falls 10 places to 51st position

Top 5			Saarc nations		
Rank	Country	Score	Rank	Country	Score
1	Norway	9.8	51	India	6.90
2	Iceland	9.58	69	Sri Lanka	6.27
3	Sweden	9.39	80	Bangladesh	5.88
4	New Zealand	9.26	91	Bhutan	5.30
5	Finland	9.25	92	Nepal	5.28
Bottom 5			108	Pakistan	4.25
163	Chad	1.61	141	Afghanistan	2.85
164	Syria	1.43			
165	Central African Republic	1.32			
166	Dem Republic of Congo	1.13			
167	North Korea	1.08			



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit Report

### NO-FLY LIST

- Four airlines in India banned stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra from taking flights after he heckled television news anchor Arnab Goswami on an IndiGo flight.
- In 2017**, the government issued rules for preventing disruptive behaviour by air travellers and laid down guidelines for a no-fly list.
- As per the rules, a complaint of unruly behaviour needs to be filed by the pilot-in-command, and this is to be probed by an **internal committee** to be set up by the airline.
- During the period of pendency of the inquiry, the rules empower the concerned airline to impose a ban on the passenger. The committee is to decide the matter within **30 days**, and also specify the ban duration.
- Any aggrieved person, upon receipt of communication of a ban from the airline, may appeal within 60 days from the date of issue of the order, to an **Appellate Committee constituted by the Ministry of Civil Aviation**.
- The rules define three categories of unruly behaviour:
  - Level 1** refers to behaviour that is verbally unruly, and calls for debarment up to three months;

- **Level 2** indicates physical unruliness and can lead to the passenger being debarred from flying for up to six months;
- **Level 3** indicates life-threatening behaviour for which the debarment would be for a minimum of two years.

## **BODO AGREEMENT**

**A historic agreement was signed between Government of India, Government of Assam and Bodo representatives to end the over 50-year old Bodo crisis. Key highlights of the agreement:**

- Increase the scope and powers of the **Bodo Territorial Council (BTC)** and to streamline its functioning;
- Set up a commission under *Section 14 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India*, to recommend the **inclusion or exclusion of tribal population** residing in villages adjoining Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) areas;
- The Government of Assam will establish a **Bodo-Kachari Welfare Council**;
- The Assam government will also **notify Bodo language as an associate official language in the state** and will set up a separate directorate for Bodo medium schools;
- Promote and protect Bodo's social, cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities;
- Providing legislative protection for the land rights of tribals;
- A **Special Development Package** Rs. 1500 crores over three years will be given by the Union Government to undertake specific projects for the development of Bodo areas.
- Rehabilitate members of National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) factions (With this agreement, over 1500 armed cadres will abjure violence and join the mainstream).

### **Bodo Language?**

- PM Modi acknowledged the signing of the **Bodo Peace Accord 2020** among the Centre, Assam government and Bodo groups by writing these tweets in the Bodo language. The language is one of the key thrust areas in the Bodo Accord.
- Estimated to have 1.5 million speakers (Census 2011), Bodo is listed in the **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution**.
- It is spoken in Assam, where the Bodo tribe constitutes about 5-6% of the population, and in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and West Bengal.
- While Bodo is officially written in the **Devanagiri script**, the language has a history of having been written in at least three different scripts — until in 1974, the Government recognised Devanagiri as its official script.

## **ANTICIPATORY BAIL**

- **The Supreme Court ruled that no time limit could be fixed while granting anticipatory bail, and that it could continue till the end of trial.**
- Under Section 438 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), there is a provision for a person to seek 'Anticipatory Bail'.
- This means that an individual can seek or request to get bail in anticipation or in expectation of being named or accused of having committed a non-bailable offence.
- To get anticipatory bail the person seeking it, must approach the Court of Sessions or the High Court and citing section 438 of the Criminal Procedure Code apply for it.

## STAR CAMPAIGNERS

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) removed BJP leaders Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Sahib Singh from the party's list of star campaigners for elections to the Delhi Legislative Assembly.
- A recognised political party can have **40 star campaigners** and an unrecognised (but registered) political party can have 20.
- The list of star campaigners has to be communicated to the Chief Electoral Officer and Election Commission within a week from the date of notification of an election.
- Expenditure incurred on campaigning by notified star campaigners is exempt from being added to the election expenditure of a candidate. However, this only applies when a star campaigner limits herself to a general campaign for the political party he/she represents.

## BRU-REANG REFUGEE CRISIS

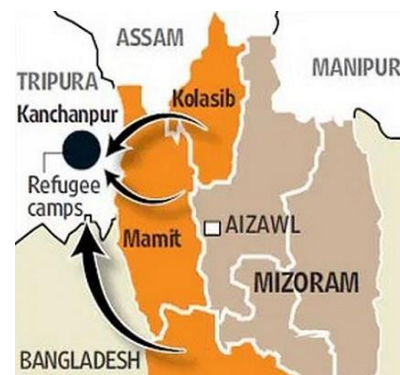
**An agreement was signed between Government of India, Tripura and Mizoram and Bru-Reang representatives to end the 23-year old Bru-Reang refugee crisis.**

### Salient Features Of The New Agreement

- Around 34,000 Bru refugees will be settled in Tripura and would be given rehabilitation aid from the Centre through a package of around Rs 600 crores.
- These people would get all the rights that normal residents of the States get.
- Each of the displaced families would be given 40x30 sq.ft. residential plots, a fixed deposit of Rs. 4 lakhs, Rs. 5,000 cash aid per month for 2 years, free ration for 2 years and Rs. 1.5 lakhs aid to build their house.

### Bru Tribe

- **Residence:** The Brus, also referred to as the Reangs, are spread across the north-eastern states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Mizoram. In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.
- **Culture:** They speak the Reang dialect of **Kokborok language** which is locally referred to as **Kau Bru**. Their **Hojagiri** folk dance is well known all over the world. '**Buisu**', not 'bihu' is the most popular festival of Reang tribes.
- In 1997, following ethnic tension, around 5,000 families comprising around 30,000 Bru-Reang tribals were forced to flee Mizoram and seek shelter in Tripura. These people were housed in temporary camps at Kanchanpur, in North Tripura.
- There had been a sustained demand of most Bru-Reang families that they may be allowed to settle down in Tripura, considering their apprehensions about their security.



## ELECTORAL BONDS

- Chief Justice of India (CJI) orally made it clear that if the Supreme Court had found it unnecessary to stay the electoral bonds scheme earlier, it might not stay the scheme even now.
- The Finance Bill, 2017 introduced "electoral bonds" scheme, which was notified in 2018.
- Electoral bonds are **interest-free bearer bonds** that are used to donate money **anonymously** to political parties.
- The bonds are issued in **multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore** which can be bought by Indian citizens or companies incorporated in India.

- **Eligible Parties:** Only political parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951 and has **secured no less than 1 % votes** in the last Lok Sabha elections are eligible to receive electoral bonds.
- **Issuer:** The **State Bank of India (SBI)** is the only bank authorised to sell them.
- **Anonymity:** Buyers of the bonds have to submit full KYC details at the time of buying. But the beneficiary political party is not required to reveal the identity of the entity that has given it the bond(s).
- According to critics, the scheme was being frequently opened to allow funds to fill the coffers of the ruling party. The scheme was meant for Lok Sabha elections, but the sale window had been opened before State Assembly elections repeatedly.

### CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX (CPI-2019)

- **Transparency International** released the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI-2019).
- The index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, according to experts and business people. It uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.
- The global average for 2019 is 43.
- **The top countries** are New Zealand and Denmark, with scores of 87 each, followed by Finland (86), Singapore (85), Sweden (85) and Switzerland (85).
- **The bottom countries** are Somalia, South Sudan and Syria with scores of 9, 12 and 13, respectively.
- **India's** ranking has slipped from 78 to 80 compared to the previous year. Its score of 41 out of 100 remains the same.
- **China** has improved its position from 87 to 80 with a score of 41 out of 100.
- In the Asia Pacific region, the average score is 45, after many consecutive years of an average score of 44, which "illustrates general stagnation" in the region.
- Transparency International (TI) is an international non-governmental organization which is based in **Berlin, Germany**, and was founded in **1993**. Its most notable publications include the **Global Corruption Barometer** and the **Corruption Perceptions Index**.

Country	Score in 2019	Rank in 2019	Change in rank from '18
Denmark	87	1	0
New Zealand	87	1	1
U.K.	77	12	-1
U.S.	69	23	-1
India	41	80	-2
China	41	80	7
Brazil	35	106	-1
Pakistan	32	120	-3
Russia	28	137	1
Bangladesh	26	146	3
Somalia	9	180	0

### NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY (NVD)-2020

- The 10th National Voters' Day (NVD) was celebrated with the theme '**Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy**'.
- Since 2011, NVD is annually celebrated on January 25 to mark the Foundation day of Election Commission of India, which was established on 25th January 1950 and to spread awareness among voters for promoting informed participation in the elections.

### NATIONAL DATA AND ANALYTICS PLATFORM (NDAP)

- **NITI Aayog released its vision for National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP).**
- The platform aims to democratize access to publicly available government data. It will host the latest datasets from various government websites, present them coherently, and provide tools for analytics and visualization.
- The development of NDAP will take place over a period of one year. The first version of the platform is expected to be launched in 2021.

**FORUM OF THE ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES of SOUTH ASIA (FEMBoSA)**

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) hosting the 10th Annual Meeting of the FEMBoSA at New Delhi. On the occasion, ECI, took over the Chair of the forum for the year 2020.
- FEMBoSA was established at the 3rd Conference of Heads of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of SAARC Countries held at New Delhi in 2012.
- Besides ECI, the other 7 members are EMBs from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan & Sri Lanka**. The annual FEMBoSA meeting is held by rotation among the members.
- The objectives of the Forum are to promote contact among the EMBs of the SAARC countries and cooperate with one another in enhancing the capabilities of the EMBs towards conducting free and fair elections.

**MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT LOCAL AREA DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (MPLADS)**

- Union Cabinet has suspended Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) fund for two years (2020-21 and 2021-22).
- These funds to the tune of Rs. 7900 crore rupees will be deposited in the consolidated Fund of India to strengthen Government's efforts in managing the adverse impact of COVID19 in the country.

**Background**

- MPLADS was launched in 1993. Initially, Ministry of Rural Development was the Nodal Ministry for this scheme. In October, 1994 this scheme was transferred to the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.
- The Scheme is **fully funded by the Government of India** under which funds are released in the form of grants-in-aid directly to the district authorities.
- The funds released under the Scheme are **non-lapsable**, i.e., the entitlement of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility. The **annual entitlement per MP/ constituency is ₹ 5 crore**.
- Under it, the **role of the Members of Parliament is limited to recommend works**. Thereafter, it is the **responsibility of the district authority to sanction, execute and complete** the works recommended within the stipulated time period.
  - **The elected Lok Sabha Members** can recommend works in their respective constituencies.
  - **The elected members of the Rajya Sabha** can recommend works anywhere in the state from which they are elected.
  - **Nominated Members of the Parliament** can recommend works for implementation, anywhere in the country.
- **MPLADS works can be implemented in** areas affected by natural calamities like floods, cyclone, hailstorm, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, landslides, tornado, earthquake, drought, tsunami, fire and biological, chemical, radiological hazards, etc.
- **15 % of MPLADS funds are to be utilized for areas inhabited by SC population and 7.5 % for areas inhabited by ST population.**

**INDELIBLE INK**

- Election Commission has decided to allow usage of indelible ink on persons for stamping for home quarantine by health authorities in view of COVID-19.



## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- Indelible ink refers to the violet-coloured ink in India that is applied on a voter's forefinger after she exercises her vote.
- It is known to contain **silver nitrate** and is manufactured in secrecy. Indelible ink remains bright for about 10 days, after which it starts fading.
- In 1962, the Election Commission in collaboration with the Law Ministry, the National Physical Laboratory of India and the National Research Development Corporation made an agreement with **Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd.** to manufacture ink that couldn't be wiped off easily.

Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd. was founded in 1937 by Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV. The company is the sole supplier of indelible ink for civic body, Assembly and Parliamentary polls.

### TRUSTED NEWS INITIATIVE

- **The BBC's global Trusted News Initiative will be extending its efforts to identify Fake News on the coronavirus pandemic.** The initiative will have in place a system in which partners will be able to alert each other to disinformation about COVID-19.
- The Trusted News Initiative, in which the BBC partners with other leading global news and technology organisations, was announced in **June 2019**.
- **The partners within the initiative are:** the BBC, Facebook, Google/YouTube, Twitter, Microsoft, AFP, Reuters, European Broadcasting Union (EBU), Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal, 'The Hindu' and CBC/Radio-Canada.

### NOMINATED MEMBERS OF RAJYA SABHA

- President Ram Nath Kovind has nominated Former CJI Ranjan Gogoi to the Rajya Sabha. Mr Gogoi served as the 46th Chief Justice of India from 3rd October 2018 till 17th November 2019.
- **Under Article 80 of the Constitution**, Rajya Sabha is composed of not more than 250 members, of whom **12 are nominated by the President of India** from amongst persons who have special knowledge or practical experience in matters as **literature, science, art and social service**.
- **Powers:** Nominated members enjoy all powers, privileges and immunities available to an elected member of Parliament. They take part in the proceedings of the House as any other member. **They are not entitled to vote in the election of the President of India. But in the election of the Vice-President of India, they have a right to vote.**
- So far, none from them has been inducted into the Council of Ministers.
- A nominated member is allowed six months, should he decide to join a political party after he has taken his seat in the House in terms of **Article 99 of the Constitution**.
- A nominated member has also been **exempted from filing his assets and liabilities** under Section 75A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951 which requires the elected member to do so within 90 days of his making or subscribing oath/affirmation.

### RECUSALS

- Supreme Court judge Justice Mohan M. Shantanagoudar recused himself from hearing a petition filed against the government's move to charge **former J&k CM Omar Abdullah under Public Safety Act**. The case was finally heard by another bench.
- **Judicial disqualification, also referred to as recusal**, is the act of abstaining from participation in an official action such as a legal proceeding.
- **Recusal usually takes place** when a judge has a conflict of interest or has a prior association with the parties in the case. A recusal inevitably leads to delay. The case goes back to the Chief Justice, who has to constitute a fresh Bench.

- **There are no written rules** on the recusal of judges from hearing cases listed before them in constitutional courts. It is left to the discretion of a judge.
- **The reasons for recusal are not disclosed** in an order of the court. Some judges orally convey to the lawyers involved in the case their reasons for recusal, many do not.

#### ERO-NET

- For the ERO-NET Project, **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has been awarded '**Silver**' Award for Excellence in Government Process re-engineering for digital transformation for the year 2019-20 from DARPG, Government of India.
- ERO-NET is a common database for all States and UTs with data of 91 crore electors. It provides bedrock of electoral roll in providing various web services to Conduct of Elections applications of ECI.
- ERO-NET standardised forms processing, standard database schema, and a standard template for e-roll printing.

#### 22<sup>nd</sup> LAW COMMISSION OF INDIA

- **Union Cabinet approved 22<sup>nd</sup> Law Commission of India for a period of three years.**
- **Status:** The Law Commission of India is a ***non-statutory body*** constituted by the Government of India from time to time.
- **Timeline:**
  - The first such Commission was established in 1834 under the Charter Act of 1833 under the Chairmanship of Lord Macaulay.
  - First Law Commission of Independent India was established in 1955 under the Chairmanship of M. C. Setalvad and has been re-constituted every three years.
- **The 22<sup>nd</sup> Law Commission will consist of:** a full-time Chairperson, 4 full-time Members; Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs as ex-officio Member; Secretary, Legislative Department as ex officio Member; and not more than five part-time Members.
- **Mandate:**
  - It shall, on a reference made to it by the Central Government or suo-motu, review existing laws in India for making reforms therein and enacting new legislations.
  - It shall also undertake studies and research for bringing reforms in the justice delivery systems for elimination of delay in procedures, speedy disposal of cases, reduction in cost of litigation etc.

#### RESERVATION IN PROMOTION IN PUBLIC POSTS

- The Supreme Court has reiterated in a judgment that Reservation in promotion in public posts cannot be claimed as a fundamental right.
- The court observed that State governments are not bound to provide reservation for appointment in public posts. Even the courts could not issue a mandamus directing the States to provide reservation.
- The court said **Articles 16 (4) and 16 (4-A)** of the Constitution did not confer individuals with a fundamental right to claim reservation in promotion.
- The Articles empower the State to make reservation in matters of appointment and promotion in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes only "if in the opinion of the State they are not adequately represented in the services of the State".

## NINTH SCHEDULE OF THE CONSTITUTION

- Opposition parties demanded that reservation should be put under the 9<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Constitution. The demand came after Supreme Court ruled that reservation in the matter of promotions in public posts was not a fundamental right, and that a state cannot be compelled to offer quota if it chooses not to.
- The Ninth Schedule contains a list of central and state laws which cannot be challenged in courts. Currently, 284 such laws are shielded from judicial review. A Tamil Nadu law that provides 69 per cent reservation in the state is part of the Schedule.
- The **first amendment** to the Indian Constitution in 1951 added Ninth Schedule to it. It was created by the new **Article 31B**, which along with 31A was brought in by the government to protect laws related to agrarian reform. While **Article 31A extends protection to 'classes' of laws, Article 31B shields specific laws or enactments.**
- **Although Article 31B excludes judicial review**, the apex court has said in the past that even laws under the Ninth Schedule would be open to scrutiny if they violated fundamental rights or the basic structure of the Constitution.

## FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2020 REPORT

- The Freedom in the World 2020 report ranked India at the **83rd position**, along with Timor-Leste and Senegal. This is near the bottom of the pile among the countries categorised as “Free”, with only Tunisia receiving a lower score.
- India's score fell by four points to 71, the worst decline among the world's 25 largest democracies this year.
- India scored 34 out of 40 points in the political rights category, but only 37 out of 60 in the civil liberties category, for a total score of 71, a drop from last year's score of 75.
- It treats “Indian Kashmir” as a separate territory, which saw its score drop precipitously from 49 to 28 this year, moving it from a status of “Partly Free” to “Not Free”.

The Freedom House report said that India showed a deteriorating trend when it came to personal autonomy

Year	Political rights	Civil Liberties	Total Score
2017	35/40	42/60	77/100
2018	35/40	42/60	77/100
2019	35/40	40/60	75/100
2020	34/40	37/60	71/100

**Top five countries in the free category:**

Finland, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, Luxembourg

**Bottom five countries in the free category:**

Botswana, Peru, India, Timor-Leste, Tunisia

*Freedom in the World is a yearly survey and report by the U.S.-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Freedom House that measures the degree of civil liberties and political rights in every nation.*

## TRANSFER OF JUDGES

- **Law Ministry transferring Justice S. Muralidhar from the Delhi High Court to the Punjab and Haryana High Court triggered a controversy** with Opposition alleged that the government's move was aimed at saving BJP leaders since Justice Muralidhar came down heavily on the Delhi police for not registering FIRs against BJP leaders.
- **Article 222 (1)** of the Constitution states that The President of India, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, may transfer a judge from one High Court to any other High Court.' There are no clear parameters detailing the circumstances which warrant transfer of high court judges.

## RIGHT TO PRIVATE PROPERTY

- A citizen's right to own private property is a human right. The state cannot take possession of it without following due procedure and authority of law, said the Supreme Court. The Court was looking into a matter that is 52 years ago when the Himachal Pradesh government forcibly took over four acres at Hamipur district from with Vidya Devi, a widow, to build a road in 1967.

- The State cannot trespass into the private property of a citizen and then claim ownership of the land in the name of '**adverse possession**'. Grabbing private land and then claiming it as its own makes the State an encroacher.
- **Background:** Property ceased to be a fundamental right with the 44th Constitution Amendment in 1978. Nevertheless, Article 300A required the State to follow due procedure and authority of law to deprive a person of his or her private property.

#### ARTICLE 131

- The Kerala government, filed a petition under Article 131 of the Constitution to declare the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act unconstitutional and in violation of Articles 14** (equality before law), **21** (protection of life and personal liberty) and **25** (freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion).
- Article 131 of the Constitution vests the Supreme Court with original jurisdiction over disputes occurring between states or between states and the Centre.
- The original jurisdiction of a court means the power to hear a case for the first time, as opposed to appellate jurisdiction, in which the court reviews the decision of a lower court.
- This jurisdiction shall not extend to a dispute arising out of any agreement having been entered into or executed before the commencement of this Constitution.
- In '**State of Rajasthan vs Union of India**', **1977**, the Supreme Court ruled that "mere wrangles between governments have no place in the scheme of that Article."

#### Article 32 vs Article 131?

- Unlike the original jurisdiction under Article 32 (which gives the top court the power to issue writs, etc.), the jurisdiction in Article 131 is exclusive, meaning it is only the Supreme Court which has this authority.
- Under Article 226, the High Courts too have the power to issue writs, directions etc.

#### PRESUMPTION OF CONSTITUTIONALITY

- The Supreme Court declined urgent hearing on a plea seeking to declare the Citizenship Amendment Act as constitutional and said that there was already a "**presumption of constitutionality**" to a law passed by Parliament.
- The term 'presumption of constitutionality' is a legal principle that is used by courts during statutory interpretation — the process by which courts interpret and apply a law passed by the legislature, such as Parliament.
- It is the legal principle that the judiciary should presume statutes enacted by the legislature to be constitutional, unless the law is clearly unconstitutional or a fundamental right is implicated. **The presumption is not absolute**, however, and does not stand when there is a gross violation of the Constitution. There are limitations to the doctrine.

#### RIGHT OF AN ACCUSED TO BE DEFENDED

The Karnataka High Court observed that it is unethical and illegal for lawyers to pass resolutions against representing the accused in court. Constitutional provisions about the right of an accused to be defended are:

- **Article 22(1)** gives the fundamental right to every person not to be denied the right to be defended by a legal practitioner of his or her choice.

- **Article 39A**, part of the Directive Principles of state policy, states that equal opportunity to secure justice must not be denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities, and provides for free legal aid.
- **Article 14** provides for equality before the law and equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

### 15th FINANCE COMMISSION

- The report of the 15th Finance Commission, **chaired by N K Singh**, was tabled in Parliament. The Commission has **reduced the vertical devolution** — the share of tax revenues that the Centre shares with the states — from 42% to 41%.
- The Commission intends to set up an expert group to initiate a **non-lapsable fund for defence expenditure**. It may do so by creating a separate fund from the gross tax revenue before computing the divisible pool — which means that states would get a smaller share of the taxes.
- It has considered the 2011 population along with forest cover, income distance, tax effort, area of the state, and “demographic performance” to arrive at the states’ share in the divisible pool of taxes.
- **The use of 2011 population figures** has resulted in states with larger populations getting larger shares, while smaller states with lower fertility rates have lost out.
- In order to reward population control efforts by states, the Commission developed a **criterion for demographic effort** — which is essentially the ratio of the state’s population in 1971 to its fertility rate in 2011 — with a weight of 12.5%.
- **The Income distance criterion** is calculated as the difference between the per capita gross state domestic product (GSDP) of the state from that of the state with the highest per capita GSDP, with states with less income getting a higher share in order to allow them to provide services comparable to those provided by the richer ones.
- The Finance Commission is a **constitutional body** formed under **Article 280** by the President of India to give suggestions on centre-state financial relations.

### SECOND NATIONAL JUDICIAL PAY COMMISSION

The Second National Judicial Pay Commission, **chaired by Justice P.V. Reddi**, submitted its final Report covering the subject of Pay, Pension and Allowances, in the Registry of the Supreme Court. **Recommendations are:**

- **Pay:** It has recommended the adoption of Pay Matrix which has been drawn up by applying the multiplier of 2.81 to the existing pay, commensurate with the percentage of increase of pay of High Court Judges.
- **Pension:** Pension at 50% of last drawn pay worked out on the basis of proposed revised pay scales is recommended w. e. f. 1-1-2016. The family pension will be 30% of the last drawn pay. Recommendation has been made to **discontinue the New Pension Scheme (NPS)** which is being applied to those entering service during or after 2004.

### CHIEF INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

- **The President of India** administered the oath of office to **Bimal Julka** as Chief Information Commissioner in the Central Information Commission (CIC).
- Later, Bimal Julka administered the oath of office to Amita Pandove as Information Commissioner in the CIC. With her induction, the total number of information commissioners in the CIC, including the Chief information commissioner, is 7.



- CIC is operating at a reduced strength of six information commissioners, against the sanctioned strength of 10, excluding the CIC.
- Central Information Commission was constituted in 2005 under the Right to Information Act, 2005. The jurisdiction of the Commission extends over all Central Public Authorities.
- The CIC and ICs are appointed by the President of India on the recommendation of **a selection committee** consisting of the ***Prime Minister as its head, the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha and a Union cabinet minister to be nominated by the PM.***

#### **New Changes Brought In By RTI Amendment Act 2019**

- **Term & Conditions of Service:** The Act allows Central government to notify term of office for Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and Information Commissioners (ICs) while as per RTI Act, 2005, CIC at the central level and ICs at state level will hold office for a term of **5 years.**
- **Quantum of Salary:** The Act says that salaries, allowances, and other terms and conditions of service of CIC and ICs will be determined by central government. While as per RTI Act the salary of CIC and ICs will be **equivalent to the salary paid to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (EC)** respectively.
- **Deductions in Salary:** As per RTI Act, 2005 at time of the appointment of CIC and ICs, if they are receiving pension or any other retirement benefits for previous government service, their salaries will be reduced by an amount equal to pension. The RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019 removes these provisions.

#### **DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOCK DOWN, CURFEW AND SECTION 144**

Entire country has been brought to a standstill but different words are being used to describe the situation in different states. So the terminology can get a little confusing. Each state has its own laws and is implementing measures depending on the resources it has.

##### **Lock down**

- A lock down can be enforced by a **Collector or Chief Medical Officer** in their particular area under the **Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897**. This gives them the power to **restrict the assembly of 5 or more people in close quarters**. However, **essential services** like hospitals, banks, ATMs, grocery stores, vegetables, and milk shops will still be open.
- **Under a lockdown, the police do not have the power to arrest anyone who is violating the lockdown** without the court's permission. They can issue a warning and advise the people to head home.
- If the person gets adversarial, the police does have the right to arrest them under **Section 269 and 270 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)**. If someone were to escape from quarantine, the authorities can book him under Section 271 of the IPC.

##### **Section 144**

Section 144 of the IPC **restricts the congregation of 5 or more people within a particular area**. Under the law, anyone found in violation will be booked for disobeying a public servant under **Section 188**.

##### **Curfew:**

- In Curfew, the **power is with the Collector and the Police Commissioner**.
- In addition to Section 144, **all essential services are also shut down**. Aside from emergency services like hospitals— banks, ATMs, grocery stores, vegetables and milk shops will all be shut.
- **Only administration and police personnel are allowed on the street**. Once the curfew is implemented, the district administration is exempt from action.

**Janta Curfew**

- 'Janta curfew' can also be called as a **self-curfew**. It is a kind of **self-imposed lockdown**. It means that the people in the country **are following the lockdown on their own conscience and will**.
- Going outside the house during the lockdown **will not invite severe penal action**. The intention behind the curfew was to get the people ready for any social distancing procedures if any emergencies come up.

**GRAM NYAYALAYAS ACT, 2008**

- The Supreme Court has directed the states, which are yet to come out with notifications for establishing Gram Nyayalayas, to do so within four weeks.
- **Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008** is an Act of Parliament enacted for establishment of Gram Nyayalayas or village courts for speedy access to justice system in the rural areas.
- In terms of Section 3(1) of the act, it is for the **State Governments in consultation with the respective High Courts** to establish Gram Nyayalayas
- Sections 5 and 6 of the 2008 Act provide that state government in consultation with the high court will appoint a '**Nyayadhikari**' for each '**Gram Nyayalaya**', who will be a person eligible to be appointed as a Judicial Magistrate of the First Class.
- The Gram Nyayalayas have both **civil and criminal jurisdiction** over the offences and nature of suits specified in the First, Second and Third schedule of the Act.
- The Gram Nyayalaya will **not be bound by the rules of evidence** provided in the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 but shall be guided by the principles of natural justice.
- **Appeal in criminal cases** shall lie to the Court of Session, which shall be heard and disposed of within a period of six months from the date of filing of such appeal.
- **Appeal in civil cases** shall lie to the District Court, which shall be heard and disposed of within a period of six months from the date of filing of the appeal.

**RANJANA PRAKASH DESAI COMMISSION**

- The Law Ministry notified the delimitation commission for **Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur**. The three-member commission will be headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai.
- Union Home Minister, while announcing reorganisation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into the UT of J&K and Ladakh, said that delimitation of Assembly constituencies of erstwhile state would be carried out on the basis of the 2011 Census.
- The delimitation in 2002, in which only boundaries of constituencies were readjusted, was completed in all states, except Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

**Do You Know**

- Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats to represent changes in population and is done on the basis of the last Census.
- Under **Article 82**, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.
- Once the Delimitation Act is in force, the Union government sets up a Delimitation Commission made up of a retired Supreme Court judge, the Chief Election Commissioner and the respective State Election Commissioners.
- The Constitution mandates that its **orders are final and cannot be questioned before any court** as it would hold up an election indefinitely.

- Delimitation Commissions have been set up four times — 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002 under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002. There was no delimitation after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses.

### **SUSPENSION OF MPs**

- **Seven Congress members were suspended for unruly behaviour in the Lok Sabha.**
- **Rule Number 373 of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business** says: “Speaker, if is of the opinion that the conduct of any Member is grossly disorderly, may direct such Member to withdraw immediately from the House for the remainder of the day’s sitting.”
- **Rule 374 says:**
  - The Speaker may name a Member who abuses the rules of the House by persistently and wilfully obstructing the business thereof.
  - If a Member is so named by the Speaker, the Speaker shall, on a motion being made forthwith put the question that the Member be suspended from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session.
  - Provided that the House may, at any time, on a motion being made, resolve that such suspension be terminated.
- **Rule 374A:** It is invoked by Speaker for automatic suspension of member of the House – for five consecutive sittings or the remainder of the session, whichever is less in the event of grave disorder occasioned by a Member.

### **What Happens In Rajya Sabha?**

- Like the Speaker in Lok Sabha, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha is empowered under Rule Number 255 of its Rule Book to “direct any Member whose conduct is in his opinion grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately” from the House for remainder of the day.
- **Unlike the Speaker, however, the Rajya Sabha Chairman does not have the power to suspend a Member.**

### **Procedure For Revocation Of A Member’s Suspension**

While the Speaker is empowered to place a Member under suspension, the authority for revocation of this order is not vested in her. It is for the House, if it so desires, to resolve on a motion to revoke the suspension.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT**

- **Tripura High Court has ordered that posting on social media is a “fundamental right” applicable to all citizens, including government employees.**
- The Tripura High Court has ordered the police to refrain from prosecuting a man who was earlier arrested over a social media post.
- Subsequently the police erased Section 153(A) of the IPC from the FIR. The purpose of the Section 153 A is to punish persons who indulge in wanton vilification or attacks upon the religion, race, place of birth, residence, language etc of any particular group

### **SC VERDICT ON INTERNET SHUTDOWN**

- Supreme Court declared that the fundamental right to freedom of expression and the right to carry on trade using the Internet are constitutionally protected. This came in the backdrop of the five-month-long Internet shutdown in Kashmir.
- Although the court stopped short of ruling that access to Internet is a fundamental right, it said that the Internet as a medium is used to exercise other fundamental rights.

- The verdict reiterated that the competent authority to issue an order under the Suspension Rules would be the **Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs**.

**Background**

- Information Technology Act, 2000, Section 144 of CrPC, 1973 and the Telegraph Act, 1885 are the three laws that deal with suspension of Internet services.
- In 2017, the centre notified the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Service) Rules under the Telegraph Act to govern suspension of Internet. These Rules derive their powers from Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act.

## SOCIAL ISSUES

### JIYO PARSI

- Minority Affairs Minister informed Lok Sabha that the **Parsi population in the country went up by 233 since 2013, when Jiyo Parsi scheme** was launched by Government of India to arrest the decline in population of the Parsi Community.
- The scheme comprises of three components: Advocacy Component, Health of the Community Component and Medical Component.

### Parsis (Zoroastrians)

- **Status:** Parsis are a notified minority community under National Commission of Minorities Act 1992.
- The population of Parsis had declined from 1,14,000 in 1941 to 57,264 in 2011, as per census data.
- **Reasons for low population of the community are:** Total Fertility Rate, late weddings, voluntary and involuntary childlessness.

### EASE OF LIVING INDEX (EoLI); MUNICIPAL PERFORMANCE INDEX (MPI)

- Ministry of Urban Affairs launched two Assessment Frameworks to assess quality of life of citizens in **100 Smart Cities and 14 other Million Plus Cities**.
- **Municipal Performance Index 2019:** Using it, the Ministry will assess the performance of municipalities based on 5 enablers namely Service, Finance, Planning, Technology and Governance.
- **Ease of Living Index 2019:** EoLI 2019 will facilitate the assessment of ease of living of citizens across three pillars: Quality of Life, Economic Ability and Sustainability which are further divided into 14 categories across 50 indicators.

### MISSING CHILDREN AND WOMEN

- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) released a study on missing women and children based on the annual Crime in India Report compiled by the agency for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018.
- The States where the highest number of women went missing in the three years are **Maharashtra** followed by West Bengal and MP.
- **Indore** (In MP) reported the highest number of missing children, with 596 in 2017 and 823 in 2018.

### BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (1995)

- 2020 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **Fourth World Conference on Women**, held in Beijing and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).
- The Beijing Declaration was a resolution adopted by the United Nations at the end of the Fourth World Conference on Women to promulgate a set of principles concerning the equality of men and women.

### CHILDLINE 1098

CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF) released data for 2018-2019. **Key findings:**

- Last year, the CHILDLINE helpline 1098 received a total of 62 lakh calls.
- The largest number of phone calls were made to seek intervention for abuse cases (17% of the total cases), followed by those pertaining to child labour (13%), education (12%), runaways (11%) and missing children (11%).



## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- Under child abuse category, 37% of the complaints were about child marriage, 27% about physical abuse and 13% regarding sexual abuse. The remaining 23% constituted emotional, corporal, domestic and cyber abuse. 35% of the sexual abuse cases were committed by neighbours, 25% by strangers and 11% by family members.

### CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF)

- CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF), an NGO, is the nodal agency appointed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) to manage CHILDLINE helpline 1098 — a free, emergency phone service for children in need of help.
- It was formed in 1999. In 2006-07, the MWCD granted it the exclusive 'Nodal Mother NGO' status to set up CHILDLINE services across the country.
- The CHILDLINE 1098 service has received a special mention in the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**.

### SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (GRAMEEN) PHASE-II

- The Union Minister for Jal Shakti launched Phase II of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) [SBM (G)] which will be implemented from 2020-21 to 2024-25.
- Phase – II of the SBM(G) will ensure that effective solid and liquid waste management (SLWM) is instituted in every Gram Panchayat of the country.
- Open Defecation Free (ODF) Plus** component will be monitored for four areas: (1) plastic waste management, (2) bio-degradable solid waste management (including animal waste management), (3) fecal sludge management and (4) Greywater management.

### Funding

- SBM (G) Phase II will be implemented in a mission mode with a total outlay of Rs. 1,40,881 crores. Of this Rs. 52,497 crore will be allocated from budget of Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
- The remaining amount will be dovetailed from the funds being released under 15th Finance Commission, MGNREGS and revenue generation models particularly for solid and liquid waste management.
- The fund sharing pattern** between Centre and States will be 90:10 for North-Eastern States and Himalayan States and UT of J&K; 60:40 for other States; and 100:0 for other Union Territories, for all the components.

### WOMEN IN ARMED FORCES

- The Supreme Court declared that **Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers** are eligible for permanent commission and command posts in the Army irrespective of their years of service.
- The verdict came on a nearly 10-year-old appeal filed by the government against a 2010 decision of the Delhi High Court to grant SSC women officers permanent commission.
- The induction of women officers in the Army started in 1992. Recruits under the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) had a shorter pre-commission training period than their male counterparts who were commissioned under the SSC scheme.
- In 2006, WSES scheme was replaced with the SSC scheme, which was extended to women officers. They were commissioned for 10 years, extendable up to 14 years.

### PERMANENT COMMISSION FOR WOMEN IN THE NAVY

- Supreme Court cleared Permanent Commission for women in the Navy and asked the Centre to complete the modalities within three months.

- It's denial is contrary to the Centre's policy of 1991 and 1998 which lifted the statutory bar on the induction of women officers in the Navy.
- It quashed the effect of the policy barring women officers inducted before 2008 from being granted permanent commission in the Navy. It also granted pension benefits to women officers who have retired and were not granted permanent commission.

### **SC/ST AMENDMENT ACT, 2018**

- Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the SC/ST Amendment Act, 2018 which rules out anticipatory bail in case of atrocities against SC/STs.
- It said, anticipatory bail can only be granted in cases where prima facie case is not made out. Also, a preliminary inquiry is not essential before lodging an FIR under the act nor is the approval of senior police officials.

#### **Background:**

- The SC/ST Amendment Act 2018 was brought to nullify the effect of a Supreme Court ruling which had diluted the provisions of the stringent Act.
- Earlier, in March, 2018, taking note of rampant misuse of the stringent SC/ST Act, supreme court ruled out the immediate arrest on any complaint filed under the law.

### **CRIME IN INDIA**

**National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) published the annual Crime in India Report 2018 and Accidental Death and Suicides in India 2018 report.**

#### **Crime Against Women:**

- Around 3.7 Lakhs cases of crime against women were reported in 2018, up from 3.5 Lakhs in 2017. **Uttar Pradesh** topped the list with 59,445 cases, followed by Maharashtra (35,497) and West Bengal (30,394).
- The conviction rate in rape-related cases stood at 27.2% even though the rate of filing charge sheets was 85.3% in such cases.
- Cruelty by husband or his relatives (31.9%) followed by assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (27.6%) constituted the major share of crimes against women.

#### **Accidental Death and Suicides in India 2018 report**

- According to it, 10,349 people working in the farm sector ended their lives in 2018, accounting for 7.7 % of the total number of suicides in the country.
- The total number of people who committed suicide in 2018 was 1,34,516, an increase of 3.6% from 2017 when 1,29,887 cases were reported. The highest number of suicide victims were daily wagers — 26,589, comprising 22.4% of such deaths.
- The majority of the suicides were reported in Maharashtra (17,972) followed by Tamil Nadu (13,896), West Bengal (13,255), Madhya Pradesh (11,775) and Karnataka (11,561).
- West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Goa, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep and Puducherry reported zero suicides by farmers/cultivators as well as agricultural labourers.
- The incidents registered under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes related Acts saw a decline from 6729 incidents reported in 2017 to 4816 in 2018.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF CHAIRS NAMED AFTER EMINENT WOMEN IN UNIVERSITIES

- WCD Ministry and University Grants Commission (UGC) announced the establishment of chairs named after eminent women in universities to motivate girls towards higher studies. The Chairs are to be established for a period of five years initially.
- Academic functions of the Chairs will be to engage in research and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the area of study, strengthen the role of university and academics in public policy making.

**Chairs proposed are as under (Subject/Proposed name of chair):**

<b>Administration:</b> Devi Ahilyabai Holkar	<b>Educational Reforms:</b> Hansa Mehta
<b>Literature:</b> Mahadevi Varma	<b>Mathematics:</b> Lilavati
<b>Freedom Fighter (North East):</b> Rani Gaidinliu	<b>Science:</b> Kamala Sohoni
<b>Medicine &amp; Health:</b> Anandibai Gopalrao Joshi	<b>Poetry &amp; Mysticism:</b> Lal Ded
<b>Performing Art:</b> Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshmi	<b>Forest/Wildlife Conservation:</b> Amrita Devi (Beniwal)

## GLOBAL SOCIAL MOBILITY REPORT

- World Economic Forum (WEF)** released its first-ever Global Social Mobility Report, which has ranked India a lowly 76 out of the 82 countries profiled.
- Methodology:** The WEF's Global Social Mobility Index assesses the 82 economies across the 5 key dimensions of social mobility: (1) Health; (2) Education (access, quality and equity, lifelong learning); (3) Technology; (4) Work (opportunities, wages, conditions); and Protection and Institutions (social protection and inclusive institutions).
- Rankings:**
  - Top 5: Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Iceland.
  - India's overall ranking is a poor 76 out of the 82 countries considered. In India, it would take 7 generations for a member of a poor family to achieve average income.
  - UK is ranked at 21, US at 27, Russia at 39, China at 45, Brazil at 60 and Pakistan at 79.

## LEVELS AND TRENDS IN CHILD MORTALITY

The 'Levels and Trends in Child Mortality' report was released by the United Nations (UN) inter-agency group for child mortality.

### Key Findings

- Half of all under-5 deaths in 2018 occurred in five countries:** India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia. India and Nigeria alone account for about a third.
- India is among the few countries in the world where, in 2018, the **mortality for girls under 5 years** of age exceeded that of boys. Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttarakhand showed the largest gender gaps in under-5 mortality.
- States with the **highest burden of neonatal mortality** are Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, with 32, 33 and 30 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively. India's neonatal mortality rate is 23.

## MAINTENANCE AND WELFARE OF PARENTS AND SENIOR CITIZENS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill, 2019 has been referred to the Standing Committee on Social Justice by the Lok Sabha Speaker. Salient features of the bill:

- **Definition of 'children'** has been expanded to include step-children, adoptive children, children-in-laws, and the legal guardian of minor children.
- **Definition of 'parents'** has been expanded to include parent-in-laws, and grandparents.
- Ceiling of Rs.10,000/- as maintenance amount has been removed.
- Preference to dispose of applications of senior citizens, above 80 years of age, early has been included.
- **Registration of Senior Citizens Care Homes/Homecare Service Agencies etc.** have been included. Minimum standards for senior citizen care homes has been included in the Bill.
- Appointment of Nodal Police Officers for Senior Citizens in every Police Station and District level Special Police Unit for Senior Citizens has been included.
- Maintenance of Helpline for senior citizens has been included.

#### **SWACHH SURVEKSHAN LEAGUE 2020**

- Union Minister for Urban Affairs announced the results of Swachh Survekshan League 2020, for first and second Quarters.
- In the *10 lakh plus population category*, **Indore** secured first place in both the quarters. *In one lakh to 10 lakh population category*, **Jamshedpur** in Jharkhand got the 1st spot in both quarters.
- Swachh Survekshan League 2020 (SS League 2020) was introduced with the objective of sustaining the on ground performance of cities on cleanliness.
- SS League 2020 is being conducted in 3 quarters, i.e. April- June, July – September and October-December 2019 and has 2000 marks for each quarter.

#### **POCSO RULES, 2020**

##### **Centre has notified the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Rules, 2020. Salient Features:**

- It includes provision of mandatory police verification of staff in schools and care homes, procedures to report sexual abuse material (pornography), imparting age-appropriate child rights education among others.
- Any person who has received any pornographic material involving a child or any information regarding such pornographic material shall report the contents to the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) or police, or the cybercrime portal.
- State Governments have been asked to formulate a child protection policy.
- Any institution housing children or coming in regular contact with children, including schools, creches, sports academies or any other facility for children must ensure a police verification and background check on periodic basis of every staff.
- POCSO Act was enacted in 2012 to provide a robust legal framework for the protection of children from offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography while safeguarding the interests of children at every stage of the judicial process.

#### **SANITARY NAPKIN DISPOSAL BAGS MADE MANDATORY**

- Environment Ministry announced that it would make it mandatory for sanitary napkin companies to provide bio-degradable disposal bags from January 2021 so that Napkins can be wrapped in these bags before being thrown in the garbage.
- The possibility of getting infected because of handling used Sanitary Napkins thrown in the garbage was brought to notice by many of the women garbage collectors.

**TECH FOR TRIBALS**

- A project aimed to transform 5 crore Tribal Entrepreneurs under the “Tech for Tribal” programme has been launched by TRIFED and IIT-Kanpur along with IIT-Roorkee, IIM Indore, Kalinga Institute of Social Science, Bhubaneswar and SRIJAN, Jaipur.
- It aims at capacity building and imparting entrepreneurship skills to tribal forest produce gatherers enrolled under the **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY)**.
- The Partners will develop course contents relevant to Entrepreneurship in Value Addition and Processing of Forest Produces.

**GAURA DEVI**

- Union HRD Minister planted a sapling in memory of Gaura Devi (1925 – 1991), an Indian **Chipko activist** in the Himalayas.
- In 1974, Gaura Devi, a resident of the Reni village, mobilised the women around her to stand up to the loggers, and their combined efforts would go on to save a whopping number of 2,500 trees from being axed.
- She was elected to lead the **Mahila Mangal Dal (Women's Welfare Association)** in the wake of the Chipko movement for protection of community forests.

**UNDP'S GENDER SOCIAL NORMS INDEX**

- **86% & 90% of women and men, respectively, held some sort of bias against women (2018), according to UNDP's Gender Social Norms Index. In India (2014-15), the percentage was 97% for women and 99% for men.**
- About half the world's population feel men make better political leaders. 24% of parliamentary seats worldwide are held by women, and there are only 10 female heads of government out of a possible 193.
- Over 40% feel that men make better business executives and have more right to a job when jobs are scarce. Less than 6% of CEOs in S&P 500 companies are women; while women work more hours than men, this work is more likely to be unpaid care work.

**MAHUA NUTRIBEVERAGE**

- The Government of India is set to launch a mahua-based alcoholic beverage in the market for the first time.
- Called Mahua Nutribeverage, it will be available as early as next month for Rs 700 for a 750 ml bottle, and will come in six fruit-based flavours. The beverage has a high nutritional value and relatively low alcohol content, at 5 per cent.
- It has been developed by IIT-Delhi after two years of research in collaboration with TRIFED. The marketing is being undertaken under the Tribal Affairs Ministry's **Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram**.

**Mahuwa (*Madhuca indica*)** is a prominent forest tree in tribal areas of Bastar. The mahua flowers are a rich source of sugars and are said to contain vitamins, minerals and calcium. The flowers are distilled yielding spirituous liquor also known as 'country beer'.

**THIRUMATHIKART**

- The **National Institute of Technology (NIT), Trichy, Tamil Nadu** in coordination with the **Union Department of Science and Technology** has developed Thirumathikart, a mobile app for SHG (Self Help Group) products.



## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- It aims to help women access market opportunities in a seamless manner. The platform will also enable SHGs to showcase their products to a wider audience.

### MADHURI KANITKAR

- Maj Gen 'Madhuri Kanitkar' was elevated to the rank of Lieutenant General, becoming the third woman officer in the Army and first paediatrician from the armed forces to hold the rank.
- Lt Gen Kanitkar took charge as Deputy Chief, Integrated Defence Staff (DCIDS), Medical (under Chief of Defence Staff), in New Delhi.
- Lt Gen Kanitkar has served for 37 years. She and husband Rajiv, also a Lt Gen, will be the first couple in the armed forces to hold this rank.
- She is the first trained paediatric nephrologist in the armed forces and is also a member of the Prime Minister's scientific and technical advisory board.

Lt Gen Punita Arora was the first woman officer to hold the rank. Padmavathy Bandopadhyay is the first woman Air Marshal of Indian Air Force, and the second woman officer in the armed forces to be promoted to a three-star officer rank.

### RESERVATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- Supreme court (SC) has affirmed **3% quota for disabled persons** both in **direct recruitment and in promotions in PSUs**.
- Arguments by Court**
  - Reservation for disabled is granted under Article 16(1) of the Constitution.
  - The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 emphasises that "employment is a key factor in the empowerment and inclusion of people with disabilities".
- Rajeev Kumar Gupta judgment (2016)** : The judgment confirms its earlier verdict in Rajeev Kumar Gupta's case that granted reservation in promotion to disabled persons employed in Groups A and B in addition to Groups C and D in the public sector.

### MANUAL SCAVENGING

- The Ministry of Social Justice informed Lok Sabha about the incidents of manual scavenging, which is banned under Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.
- The number of people who died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks in the country increased by almost 62% from 68 in 2018 to 110 in 2019.
- A total of 14,559 manual scavengers had been identified by Municipalities and Gram Panchayats in 13 States from 2013-2014 till January 31, 2020.
- Apart from that, a national survey was conducted in 194 districts in 18 States where 48,345 manual scavengers were identified till January 31, taking the total to 62,904.

### MALNUTRITION AMONG WOMEN

- WCD Ministry informed Rajya Sabha about Malnutrition among Women.
- As per the recent report of National Family Health Survey (NFHS) – 4 conducted by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2015-16, **22.9% women** (15-49 years of age) are underweight (BMI less than 18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>).
- The five States/UTs having highest percentage of malnutrition among women are Jharkhand (31.5%), Bihar (30.4%), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (28.7%), Madhya Pradesh (28.4%), Gujarat (27.2%) and Rajasthan (27%).

- Schemes like Anganwadi Services, Scheme for Adolescent Girls and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna (PMMVY) and POSHAN Aabhiyaan are being implemented to address the problem of malnutrition among women.

### A FUTURE FOR THE WORLD'S CHILDREN?

The report, titled "A Future for the World's Children" was recently released by a Commission of health experts from around the world. The Commission was convened by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and The Lancet. **Key Findings:**

- Children in Norway, the Republic of Korea and the Netherlands have the best chance at survival and well-being, while children in the Central African Republic, Chad, Somalia, Niger and Mali face the worst odds.
- Out of 180 countries, **India stands 77th (sustainability index) and is at 131st position on a ranking that measures the best chance at survival and well-being for children.**
- Globally, the number of children and adolescents who are obese has increased from 11 million in 1975 to 124 million in 2016 — an 11-fold increase.

### #ShelnspiresUs

- **On International Women's Day, PM Modi handed over his social media accounts for one day** to seven ladies who are well known for their contribution in diverse fields to enable them to share their thoughts and ideas with the world.
- This was part of his **#ShelnspiresUs campaign** on 'Nari Shakti' (Women's Empowerment).

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (IWD), 2020

- **Theme of International Women's Day (IWD) 2020 was "I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights".** IWD is celebrated on March 8 every year to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.
- **Organized by:** IWD is not country, group or organization specific. IWD belongs to all groups collectively everywhere.
- **History:** IWD has occurred for well over a century, with the first IWD gathering in 1911 supported by over a million people in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland.

### TIME '100 WOMEN OF THE YEAR'

- **TIME magazine** released its **'100 Women of the Year' project**, under which it named world's 100 powerful women who defined the last century.
- TIME said that for last century, Person of the Year "was almost always a man." With this project, it aims to spotlight influential women who were often overshadowed.
- To recognize these women, TIME created 89 new TIME covers. The publication left intact the 11 covers for women who had been named Person of the Year.

Time is an American weekly news magazine and news website published in New York. It was founded in 1923.

### Prominent Names:

- The project has named several prominent women leaders through the century including Greta Thunberg, author Virginia Wolf, Queen Elizabeth, former First Lady Michelle Obama etc.
- From India, **Former PM Indira Gandhi and freedom fighter Amrit Kaur** have been named among world's 100 powerful women who defined the last century. TIME named Amrit Kaur as 'Women of the Year' for 1947 and Gandhi for 1976.

## EDUCATION

### YUKTI

- Union HRD Minister has launched a web-portal named **YUKTI (Young India Combating COVID with Knowledge, Technology and Innovation)** to monitor the initiatives of HRD Ministry taken in the wake of COVID-19.
- This portal will help in critical issues related to student promotion policies, placements related challenges and physical and mental well-being of students in these challenging times. The portal will also allow various institutions to share their strategies for various challenges because of coronavirus.

### SAMADHAN CHALLENGE

- **Innovation Cell of the HRD Ministry and AICTE** in collaboration with Forge and InnovatioCuris launched a mega online challenge – SAMADHAN.
- The students participating in this challenge will develop measures that can be made available to the government agencies and health services for quick solutions to the Coronavirus epidemic and other such calamities.

### Do You Know

- **The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** is the statutory body and a national-level council for technical education, under Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- It was established in 1945 and in 1987 it was given statutory status by an Act of Parliament

### EDUCATION BUDGET

- **The Union Budget 2020-21 lays special emphasis on the employability and quality aspects of education.** About **150 Higher Educational Institutions** will start apprenticeship embedded degree/diploma courses by March 2020-21.
- **Degree level full-fledged online education programme** will start to provide quality education to students of deprived sections. These shall be offered only by institutions who are ranked within top 100 in the National Institutional Ranking Framework.
- Under its **“Study in India” programme**, an **Ind-SAT** is proposed to be held in Asian and African countries for benchmarking foreign candidates who receive scholarships for studying in Indian higher education centres.
- **A National Police University and a National Forensic Science University** have also been proposed in the domain of policing science, forensic science, cyber-forensics etc.

### DELHI'S HAPPINESS CURRICULUM

- US First Lady Melania Trump visited a School in Delhi, and the central focus of her visit were the “happiness classes”, which are held in Delhi government schools every morning for students from Class I to Class VIII.
- The happiness curriculum class is one of the flagship schemes of the Delhi government in the education sector launched in July 2018 in all government schools.

The curriculum was launched after the **World Happiness Report, 2018** ranked India 133 among 155 nations.

**#StayHomeIndiaWithBooks**

- **National Book Trust (NBT) launched #StayHomeIndiaWithBooks initiative in the wake of Preventive Measures by Government to contain the spread of Covid-19.**
- To encourage people to read books while at home, NBT is providing its select and best-selling titles for FREE Download as part of its initiative of #StayHomeIndiaWithBooks!
- The 100+ books, in PDF format, can be downloaded from the NBT's website.
- Available in various languages, the books cover all genres of fiction, biography, popular science, teacher's handbook, and majorly books for children and young adults.

National Book Trust is the national body for book publishing and book promotion under the Ministry of HRD. It was founded in 1957.  
**HQ:** Delhi.

**CORONA STUDIES SERIES**

- **National Book Trust (NBT) will launch Corona Studies Series books to provide relevant reading materials for all age-groups for the post-Corona readership needs.**
- Realising the extraordinary psychological, social, economic and cultural significance of Corona Pandemic for the human society in times to come, NBT will launch this series.
- The 'Corona Studies Series' will be the long-term contribution to prepare and engage readers with the various aspects of the Corona times by bringing out affordable books in various Indian languages in the identified subject areas.

**NEW DELHI WORLD BOOK FAIR**

- The 28th edition of annual New Delhi World Book Fair was held with the **theme "Gandhi:The Writers' Writer"**.
- New Delhi World Book Fair, started in the year **1972**, is held annually in the month of January at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi.
- **Organizers:** The Fair is organized by **National Book Trust (NBT)** with the **India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO)** as the co-organizer of the Fair.

**PARIKSHA PE CHARCHA**

- The third edition of Pariksha pe Charcha was held on 20th January. It was earlier held in 2018 and 2019.
- Pariksha pe Charcha is a programme in which Prime Minister interacts with the cross section of Students and Teachers from India and abroad to beat exam stress.

**MINORITY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

- **The Supreme Court has held that state can regulate minority educational institutions.** It held that the State is well within its rights to introduce a regulatory regime in the "national interest" to provide minority educational institutions with well-qualified teachers in order for them to "achieve excellence in education."
- The managements of minority institutions cannot ignore such a legal regime by saying that it is their fundamental right under **Article 30** of the Constitution to establish and administer their educational institutions according to their choice.

**Article 30: Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.**

1. All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

2. The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.

### **ASER 2019 'EARLY YEARS'**

**The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2019 'Early Years' was released by NGO Pratham.**

#### **Key Highlights:**

- At least 25% of school children in the four-eight age group do not have age-appropriate cognitive and numeracy skills.
- Just 37.4% of children below six are able to recognize at least letters and only 25.6% can do additions. Only 34.8% of children in Class II can read a text meant for the level below. At Class III, only 50.8% can read texts meant for their juniors two levels below.
- More than a quarter of Class 1 students in government schools are only 4 or 5 years old, younger than the recommended age. The government-run preschool system is losing out to private schools in terms of enrolment.
- A better education level among mothers can lead to better outcomes among children in preschools and early schools. Numeracy skills among Class III children of illiterate mothers are much lower than those whose mothers had studied till Class XI or above.
- More girls are enrolled in government institutions and more boys in private institutions.

#### **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)**

- ASER is a nation-wide household survey that provides data on children's schooling and learning for a representative sample of children across rural India.
- Children in the age group 3 to 16 are surveyed to find out their enrollment status in pre-school or school. Children in the age group 5 to 16 are assessed one-on-one to understand their basic reading and arithmetic abilities.
- Since 2016, ASER switched to an alternate-year cycle, where the 'basic' ASER described above is conducted every other year (2016, 2018, and next in 2020). In alternate years, ASER focuses on a different aspect of children's schooling and learning.

### **E-LEARNING PLATFORMS**

Union HRD Minister asked students to use the available digital e-Learning platforms during the nationwide lockdown period due to COVID-19.

#### **Few Digital Initiatives/Platforms Of Ministry of HRD**

- **DIKSHA:** Diksha has more than 80000 e-Books for class 12th created by CBSE, NCERT and States/UTs which are available in multiple languages.
- **e-PATHSHALA:** In this web portal NCERT has deployed 1886 audios, 2000 videos, 696 e-books (e-Pubs) and 504 Flip Books for classes 1st to 12th in different languages.
- **National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER):** NROER portal has a total of 14527 files including 401 collections, 2779 documents, 1345 interactive, 1664 audios, 2586 images and 6153 videos on different languages.
- **SWAYAM:** SWAYAM is the national online education platform hosting 1900 courses covering both school (class IX to XII) And Higher Education (under graduate, post graduate programs) in all subjects including engineering, humanities and social sciences, law and management courses.



- **SWAYAM PRABHA:** It has 32 D2H TV channels transmitting educational contents on 24/7 basis. These channels are available for viewing all across the country using DD free Dish set top box and antenna. The channels cover both school education and Higher Education.
- **National Digital Library** is a digital repository of a vast amount of academic content in different formats and provides interface support for leading Indian languages for all academic levels including researchers and life-long learners.
- **Shodhganga** is a digital repository platform of 2,60,000 Indian Electronic Theses and Dissertations for research students to deposit their Ph.D. theses and make it available to the entire scholarly community in open access.
- **e-Shodh Sindhu** provides current as well as archival access to more than 15,000 core and peer-reviewed journals and a number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases in different disciplines.
- **Vidwan** is a database of experts which provides information about experts to peers, prospective collaborators, funding agencies policy makers and research scholar.
- **UG/PG MOOCs** hosts learning material of SWAYAM UG & PG (Non-Technology) archived courses.

#### **UKIERI-UGC HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ADMINISTRATORS**

- The Union HRD Minister launched 'Higher Education Leadership Development Programme for Administrators.'
- **Bodies Involved:** The programme is a joint initiative of UGC and British Council in India under the auspices of UK India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI).
- **Programme Objective:** To train the senior and middle level academic administrators in Indian Universities to enable them to bring about systemic changes with renewed approaches, capacity, tools and skill in Universities in India.

#### **THE CENTRAL SANSKRIT UNIVERSITIES BILL, 2019**

- Parliament passed the Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019. It converts 3 deemed-to-be Sanskrit universities into Central Sanskrit Universities: (i) **Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi**, (ii) **Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi**, and (iii) **Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Tirupati**.
- **The proposed central universities will:** (i) disseminate and advance knowledge for the promotion of Sanskrit, (ii) make special provisions for integrated courses in humanities, social sciences, and science, and (iii) train manpower for development of Sanskrit.
- **President of India** will be the Visitor of the central Sanskrit universities.
- **An Executive Council will be the principal executive body.** The 15-member council will include the Vice-Chancellor appointed by the Centre, who will be the chairperson; a joint secretary of the HRD Ministry and two eminent academics from the field of Sanskrit.

#### **PROJECT 'ISAAC'**

- **Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IITGN)** has launched Project 'ISAAC' to engage its students in creative projects to enhance their critical skills while they are confined to their homes because of Corona virus.
- The project is inspired by Sir Isaac Newton, who was similarly sent home by Trinity College, Cambridge, because of the Great Plague of London in 1665.

- During this year, Newton developed some of his most profound discoveries, including early calculus, as well as his theories of optics and gravity.
- As part of the project, four different competitions are being organized by IIT, Gandhinagar to cultivate new skills among students regarding writing, painting, coding, music, creative expression, and so on. Students can take part in competitions online.

### STUDENT SUICIDE

- HRD Ministry tabled data on student suicide in Parliament.
- Between 2016 and 2018, nearly 10,000 students committed suicide every year.
- Maharashtra accounted for 1 in every 7 student suicides in the country — 4,235 out of 29,542 in the three years combined, or about 1,400 a year.
- In the overall three-year totals, **Maharashtra** was followed by Tamil Nadu (2,744), MP (2,658) and West Bengal (2,535).
- **Steps to prevent it:** Under Samagra Shiksha, funds are provided to States/UTs to encourage teachers to function as the first-level counsellors in schools.

STATE	2016	2017	2018	3-YR TOTAL
Maharashtra	1,350	1,437	1,448	4,235
Tamil Nadu	981	810	953	2,744
Madhya Pradesh	843	953	862	2,658
West Bengal	1,147	779	609	2,535
Karnataka	540	702	755	1,997
Gujarat	556	638	570	1,764
Chhattisgarh	633	524	603	1,760
Telangana	349	504	428	1,281
Odisha	390	361	501	1,252
Uttar Pradesh	263	436	513	1,212
Kerala	340	410	375	1,125
Andhra Pradesh	295	392	360	1,047
<b>ALL INDIA</b>	<b>9,478</b>	<b>9,905</b>	<b>10,159</b>	<b>29,542</b>

### INDIAN INSTITUTES OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020

- **Lok Sabha passed the IIIT Laws (Amendment) Bill 2020** to amend the Indian Institutes of Information Technology Act, 2014 and the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (Public-private Partnership) Act, 2017.
- It seeks to declare five IIITs set up under the PPP mode in Surat, Bhopal, Bhagalpur, Agartala, and Raichur as **institutions of national importance** along with existing 15 IIITs.
- Currently, these institutes are registered as **Societies under the Societies Registration Act, 1860** and do not have the power to grant degrees or diplomas. On being declared institutions of national importance, they will have the power to grant degrees.
- Central government will contribute 50% towards the expenses of institutes functioning under the PPP mode. 35 % will be borne by the states and 15% by industries.
- As a special impetus to north eastern states, central government will bear over 57% of the expenses whereas industries will contribute around 7% to the Institutes there.

### QS (QUACQUARELLI SYMONDS) WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2020

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford University and University of Cambridge have secured top three positions in the **Engineering and Technology category**. IIT Bombay (44), IIT Delhi (47), IIT Kharagpur (86), IIT Madras (88) and IIT Kanpur (96) found place in top 100 of this category.
- In the **Natural Sciences category**, three Indian institutions made it to the top 200: IIT-Bombay at 108th rank, closely followed by the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore at the 111th position, while IIT-Madras scraped in at the 195th rank.
- Jawaharlal Nehru University remained the country's top institution in the **Arts and Humanities category**, with a global ranking of 162, followed by Delhi University at 231.
- Delhi University topped the **Social Sciences and Management category**, with a global ranking of 160, followed by IIT-Delhi at 183.

- There are no Indian institutions in the world's top 200 when it comes to **Life Sciences and Medicine**. The top institution in the country is the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, which had a global ranking of 231.
- The Jindal Global Law School (JGLS) has been ranked in the 101-150 band across all **Law Schools** that have been ranked in the world while the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru has been ranked in the 151-200 band.

### DROPOUT RATE IN SCHOOLS

- HRD Ministry released state-wise figures of the dropout rate in schools. The dropout rate in schools is the **highest in Assam**, at both primary and secondary levels.
- The dropout rate in Assam at primary level was 10.1% in 2017-18, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (8.1), Mizoram (8), Uttar Pradesh (8) and Tamil Nadu (5.9).
- At secondary level, Assam's dropout rate was 33.7%, followed by Bihar (32), Odisha (28.3), Tripura (27.2) and Karnataka (24.3).

### Gender Breakup

- The dropout rate among boys in primary schools in Assam was 11.2%, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (10). For girls at primary level, the highest five dropout rates were in Assam (8.9), followed by Mizoram (7.4).
- At secondary level, the dropout rates for boys were 32.1% in Assam, followed by Bihar (30.3). Among girls in secondary school, the highest five dropout rates were in Assam (35.2%), followed by Bihar (33.7).

### GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO (GER) FOR FEMALES

- HRD Minister informed Lok Sabha about Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for females.
- As per **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2018-19**, majority of the colleges provide higher education to both males and females and 11.04% colleges are exclusively for females.
- Additionally, as per AISHE 2018-19, females constitute 48.6% of the total enrolment in higher education and the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for females in higher education at 26.4% is higher than the national GER of boys at 26.3%.
- Also, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) has increased during the last 5 years, from 0.92 in 2014-15 to 1 in 2018-19.

### SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development (HRD) submitted its report to the Rajya Sabha on school education.

### Key Findings

- Only **56% of schools have electricity**, with the lowest rates in Manipur and Madhya Pradesh, where less than 20% have access to power.
- **Less than 57% of schools have playgrounds**, including less than 30% of schools in Odisha and Jammu and Kashmir, according to the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) 2017-18 survey.
- Budgetary allocations saw a 27% cut from proposals made by the School Education Department. Despite proposals for ₹82,570 crore, only ₹59,845 crore was allocated. There was a similar 27% reductions for the central and centrally sponsored schemes.

**AI BASED MODULE**

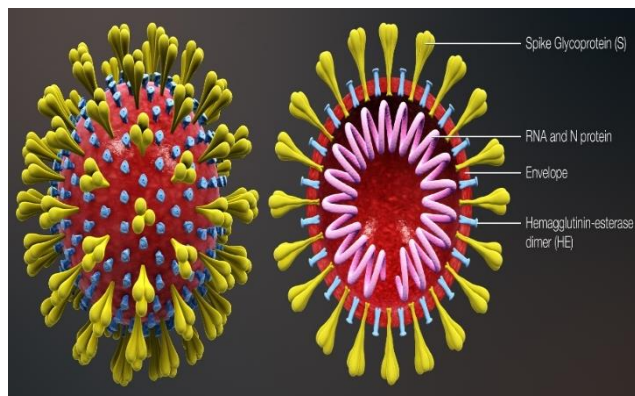
- NITI Aayog, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) in collaboration with the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) launched an Artificial Intelligence (AI) based Module rolled out for students in Indian schools.
- The AI-Base Module has been introduced with an objective for students to leverage the full potential of AIM's Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) and further empowers them to innovate and create valuable solutions benefiting societies at large.

Atal Innovation Mission housed at NITI Aayog is the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. At the school level, AIM is establishing Atal Tinkering Lab (ATLs) in all districts across India.

## CORONAVIRUSES (COVID-19)

### CORONAVIRUS

- Coronaviruses are a specific family of viruses, with some of them causing less-severe damage, such as the common cold, and others causing respiratory and intestinal diseases.
- A coronavirus has many “regularly arranged” protrusions on its surface, because of which the entire virus particle looks like an emperor’s crown, hence the name coronavirus.
- Apart from human beings, coronaviruses can affect mammals including pigs, cattle, cats, dogs, martens, camels, hedgehogs and some birds.
- So far, there are four known disease-causing coronaviruses, among which the best known are the **SARS corona virus** and the **Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronavirus**, both of which can cause severe respiratory diseases. The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease **COVID-19**.
- While the SARS coronavirus is thought to be an animal virus from an as-yet-uncertain animal reservoir, perhaps bats, that spread to other animals (civet cats) and first infected humans in the Guangdong province of southern China in 2002, the MERS coronavirus was passed on from dromedary camels to humans in Saudi Arabia in 2012.



### COVID-19

- COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the recently discovered coronavirus. These were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.
- Is COVID-19 the same as SARS?** No. The virus that causes COVID-19 and the one that caused the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 are related to each other genetically, but the diseases they cause are quite different.
- The most common symptoms of COVID-19** are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose or diarrhea.
- The “**incubation period**” means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for COVID-19 range from 1-14 days, most commonly around five days.
- Who is at risk of developing severe illness?** Older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

### How Does WHO Name New Disease

- WHO gave an official name for the illness caused by the new coronavirus: COVID-19** where the “CO” stands for coronavirus, “VI” for virus, “D” for disease and “19” for 2019, as the illness was first detected toward the end of last year.



- Under international guidelines, the WHO had to find a name that did not refer to a geographical location, an animal, an individual or group of people, and which is also pronounceable and related to the disease.
- Name should be consistent with the guidelines under the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) Content Model Reference Guide, which is also managed by the WHO,

## **COVID-19 AND INFLUENZA: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

### **How are COVID-19 and influenza viruses similar?**

1. **They both cause respiratory disease**, which presents as a wide range of illness from asymptomatic or mild through to severe disease and death.
2. Both viruses are **transmitted by contact, droplets and fomites**. As a result, the same public health measures, such as hand hygiene and good respiratory etiquette are important actions all can take to prevent infection.

### **How are COVID-19 and influenza viruses different?**

1. Influenza has a shorter median incubation period (time from infection to appearance of symptoms) and shorter serial interval (time between successive cases) than COVID-19.
2. Reproductive number – the number of secondary infections generated from one infected individual – is between 2 and 2.5 for COVID-19 virus, higher than for influenza.
3. Children are important drivers of influenza virus transmission in the community. For COVID-19 virus, initial data indicates that children are less affected than adults.
4. Those most at risk for severe influenza infection are children, pregnant women, elderly, those with underlying chronic medical conditions and those who are immunosuppressed. For COVID-19, older age and underlying conditions increase the risk for severe infection.
5. Mortality for COVID-19 appears higher than for influenza, especially seasonal influenza.

## **SPREAD**

### **How Does COVID-19 Spread**

- The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.
- These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching them and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

### **How Long Does The Virus Survive On Surfaces**

Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

### **Can Humans Catch COVID-19 From Pet**

- A zoonosis (zoonotic disease or zoonoses -plural) is an infectious disease that is transmitted between species from animals to humans. A zoonotic agent may be a bacterium, a virus, a fungus or other communicable disease agent.
- Some 60% of emerging infectious diseases globally are zoonoses and of the over 30 new human pathogens detected over the last three decades, 75% originated in animals.
- Human coronaviruses most commonly spread from an infected person to others through the air by coughing and sneezing and through close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.

- There are instances of animals and pets of COVID-19 patients being infected with the disease. A Malayan tiger at New York's Bronx Zoo has been infected with the COVID 19.
- There is a possibility for some animals to become infected through close contact with infected humans. **It is still too early to say whether cats could be the intermediate host in the transmission of the COVID-19.**

### Can COVID-19 Be Passed From A Woman To Her Unborn Or Newborn Baby

- According to WHO, it is still not known if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus to her foetus or baby during pregnancy or delivery. To date, the virus has not been found in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk.
- However, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recently said that it is possible for a pregnant woman who is positive for COVID-19 to pass on the virus to her child.

### How To Handle Bodies Of Covid-19 Patients?

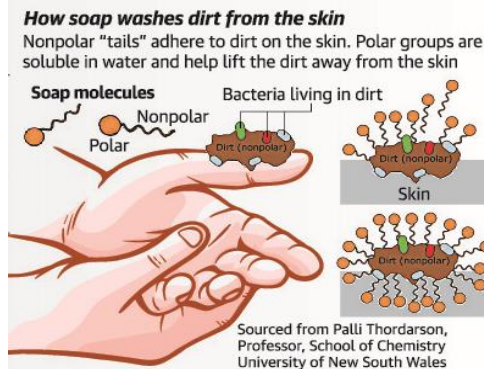
- The Union Health Ministry's guidelines for handling of bodies of COVID-19 patients allow both cremation and burial. It makes no mention of any risk of contamination from bodies if buried. Bodies of people infected with microbes such as HIV & SARS-CoV-2 come under **Biosafety Levels II & III.**
- If all precautions are followed, then both burial and cremation are considered safe.

## PREVENTION

The most effective ways to protect oneself against COVID-19 are to:

### A. Avoid Touching Eyes, Nose & Mouth And Washing Hands Regularly

- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
- Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- To be effective, the sanitisers should contain at least 60% alcohol.



### Ignaz Semmelweis

- Ignaz Semmelweis is regarded as the **first doctor** to recommend 'wash your hands' by scrubbing hands with soap and water as one of the most effective methods to stop the spread of several illnesses including COVID-19.
- Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis (1818 – 1865) was a Hungarian physician and scientist, now known as an early pioneer of antiseptic procedures.
- Described as the "saviour of mothers", Semmelweis discovered that the incidence of puerperal fever (also known as "childbed fever") could be drastically cut by the use of hand disinfection in obstetrical clinics.

### B. Social Distancing

Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing. When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus.

### **C. Use Of Mask**

A mask should be used by health workers, care takers, and individuals with COVID-19 symptoms. It prevents the spread of virus through droplets.

#### **N95 Respirators**

- An N95 respirator is a respiratory protective device designed to achieve a very close facial fit and very efficient filtration of airborne particles.
- The 'N95' designation means that when subjected to careful testing, the respirator **blocks at least 95 percent of very small (0.3 micron) test particles**.
- **N95 respirators are not designed for children or people with facial hair.** Because a proper fit cannot be achieved on children and people with facial hair, the N95 respirator may not provide full protection.

### **D. Use Of Technology In Containing Community Transmission Of Covid**

Technology can come in very handy to prevent the spread of infections. It can be used for cleaning air, disinfecting areas, tracking & surveillance, creating awareness etc.

#### **AarogyaSetu App**

- The Government of India launched AarogyaSetu. This mobile app will enable people to assess themselves the risk for their catching the Coronavirus infection.
- It will calculate this based on their interaction with others, using cutting edge Bluetooth technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence.
- Once installed in a smartphone through an easy and user-friendly process, the app detects other devices with Aarogya Setu installed that come in the proximity of that phone. The app can then calculate the risk of infection based on sophisticated parameters if any of these contacts is tested positive.

#### **Scitech Airon**

- **Scitech Park, a Pune-based company has developed Scitech Airon**, a negative ion generator which reduces the viral load of infected areas within a room within an hour.
- It could clean up the air and disinfect areas which are exposed to the infection through Covid 19 positive cases and suspects thus ensuring the wellbeing of the staff & doctors
- It has been developed under the **NIDHI PRAYAS program** initiated by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).



#### **Covid-19 Quarantine Alert System (CQAS)**

- Government of India is using a Geo-fencing app called COVID-19 Quarantine Alert System (CQAS) to locate quarantine violators.
- It triggers e-mails and SMS alerts to an authorised government agency if a person has jumped quarantine or escaped from isolation, based on the person's mobile phone's cell tower location. The "geo-fencing" is accurate by up to 300 m.
- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and C-DOT, in coordination with telecom service providers, have developed and tested the application.

**CovidGyan (<https://covid-gyan.in>)**

- CovidGyan website has been developed by Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), and Tata Memorial Centre (TMC).
- Apart from being an authentic source of information on COVID-19 outbreak, it seeks to create public awareness and bring in a holistic approach to the understanding of this disease and potential means to mitigate it.

**NAADI for Dealing with Intelligent Tracing, Tracking and Containment**

- The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) has prepared a data science-based tool to make easy the task of tracking the movements of Covid-19 patients or quarantined people across the country.
- The system has been named National Analytical Platform for Dealing with Intelligent Tracing, Tracking and Containment (NAADI).

**SAMHAR Project**

- It has been developed by C-DAC under Supercomputer using Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Healthcare Analytics based Research, Covid-19 (SAMHAR).
- The SAMHAR project is in partnership with the National Supercomputing Mission established in association with startups and industries to build a rapid supercomputing system and research community for India to fight Covid-19.

**TREATMENT**

- There is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019.
- **Antibiotics do not work against viruses, they only work on bacterial infections.** COVID-19 is caused by a virus, so antibiotics do not work.

**Ambu Bags**

- **IIT-Hyderabad has urged the government to consider the use of ‘bag valve masks’ as an alternative to meet demand for ventilators, in the wake of the COVID-19.**
- ‘Bag valve masks’ are small devices used to deliver breathing support in emergency situations. They are also known as “ambu bags”.
- ‘Bag valve masks’ are currently hand-powered and therefore not suitable for continuous use as a ventilator. But this could easily be remedied by designing similar devices powered by an electrical source, which could be a car battery or conventional power supply. Conventional ventilators are expensive, hard to produce and not portable.

**CoNTec**

- **The Union Minister of Health** launched the “**COVID-19 National Teleconsultation Centre (CoNTeC)**” at AIIMS, New Delhi.
- It is a Telemedicine Hub to connect the Doctors across the country to AIIMS in real time for treatment of the COVID-19 patients. Expert doctors from various clinical domains will be available 24x7 to answer the questions from specialists from all over the country.

**MINAL DAKHAVE BHOSALE**

- Virologist Ms. Minal Dakhave Bhosale and her team at **Mylab Discovery Solutions, Pune** developed **India's first testing kit for COVID-19**.
- The Maylab test kit will cost Rs 1,200, a quarter of Rs 4,500 per kit that the government has been spending on testing so far. The low cost kit can test 100 samples. Her achievement will hugely benefit India's fight against Corona.

**SODIUM HYPOCHLORITE**

- In India, migrant workers travelling to their home states were sprayed with a disinfectant containing sodium hypochlorite solution to sanitise them.
- Sodium hypochlorite is commonly used as a **bleaching agent**, and also to sanitise swimming pools. The concentration of the chemical in the solution varies according to the purpose it is meant for.
  - A normal household bleach (for disinfecting buildings and solid surfaces) usually is a 2-10% sodium hypochlorite solution.
  - At 0.25-0.5%, this chemical is used to treat skin wounds like cuts or scrapes.
  - An even weaker solution (0.05%) is sometimes used as a handwash.
- **Health impact:** Sodium hypochlorite is corrosive, and is meant largely to clean hard surfaces. It is not recommended to be used on human beings as it can damage skin.

**OPERATION SANJEEVANI**

- An Indian Air Force (IAF) C-130J transport aircraft delivered 6.2 tonne of essential medicines and hospital consumables to **Maldives** under Operation Sanjeevani.
- These medicines procured from suppliers in India couldn't be transported through any other means due to the 21-day lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19.

**POWER SYSTEM OPERATION CORPORATION (POSOCO)**

- **PM Modi's call for switching off electric lights at homes across the nation for nine minutes at 9 p.m. on April 5, as a mark of demonstrating a collective will to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, has prompted POSOCO to swing into action.**
- POSOCO is a wholly owned Government of India enterprise under the Ministry of Power. It was earlier a wholly owned subsidiary of Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL). It was formed in 2009.
- It is responsible to ensure the integrated operation of the Grid in a reliable, efficient, and secure manner. It consists of 5 Regional Load Despatch Centres and a National Load Despatch Centre (NLDC).

**HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE**

- **India has decided to ease its ban on the export of hydroxychloroquine, a drug that has garnered global interest in the treatment and prevention of COVID-19.**
- It has allowed the use of Hydroxychloroquine in combination with Azithromycin for patients affected with COVID-19. Azithromycin is a commonly used antibiotic
- Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) is an anti-malarial drug which is also used in treatment of autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis.

**PRAFULLA CHANDRA RAY**

- Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) has put the spotlight on Kolkata-based Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals Limited, the only public sector unit that manufactures this anti-malarial drug in India.



## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- Prafulla Chandra Ray (1861–1944) was an eminent Indian Bengali chemist who is regarded as the father of chemical science in India. He was the founder of **Bengal Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals**, India's first pharmaceutical company.
- In 1896, he published a paper on preparation of a new stable chemical compound: **mercurous nitrite**. He also proved that the pure ammonium nitrite is indeed stable by bring to pass a lot of experiments and explained that it can be sublimed even at 60 °C without decomposition.
- He authored the '**History of Hindu Chemistry – From the Earliest Times to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century AD**', a book that documented India's indigenous chemical practices starting from the Vedic era. He published his autobiography '**Life and Experience of a Bengali Chemist**' in 1932.
- Royal Society of Chemistry dedicated its coveted Chemical Landmark plaque to Ray, the first non-European to be conferred the honour, in 2011 on his 150th birth anniversary.

## CARUNA

- Associations representing officers of Central Civil Services, including the IAS and IPS, have formed an initiative called 'Caruna' to support and supplement the government's efforts in fighting coronavirus.
- The acronym 'Caruna' stands for **Civil Services Associations Reach to Support in Natural Disasters**. It represents a collaborative platform, on which civil servants, industry leaders, NGO & IT professionals among others have come together to contribute their time and abilities.

## iGOT e-learning Platform

- The **Department of Personnel and Training** has announced the launch of a learning platform (<https://igot.gov.in>) to combat COVID 19 for **all front-line workers** to equip them with the **training and updates in coping with Pandemic**. The platform delivers curated, role-specific content, to each learner at his place of work or home.
- The target group is Doctors, Nurses, Central & State Govt. Officers, Civil Defence Officials, various Police Organisations, National Cadet Corps (NCC), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme (NSS), Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), Bharat Scouts & Guides (BSG) and other volunteers.

## CENTRE FOR AUGMENTING WAR WITH COVID-19 HEALTH CRISIS (CAWACH)

- **Department of Science & Technology (DST)** has approved setting up of a Centre for Augmenting WAR with COVID-19 Health Crisis (CAWACH) to scout, evaluate and support the innovations and start-ups that address COVID-19 challenges.
- The **Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE)**, a technology business incubator at IIT Bombay supported by DST, is the Implementing Agency of CAWACH.

## UNITED AGAINST COVID – EXPRESS THROUGH ART

- **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)** has 'United against COVID', a unique Art initiative open to all amateur and professional artists from India and the world.
- The event encourages submissions of artistic expressions to present their thoughts on the COVID-19 and fight against the virus through Digital Art Graphic Posters & Paintings.
- The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) is an **autonomous organisation of the Government of India**, involved in India's external cultural relations, through cultural exchange with other countries and their peoples.
- Headquartered at New Delhi, it was founded on 9 April 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first Education Minister of independent India.

**OPERATION SHIELD**

- The **Delhi government** carried out 'Operation SHIELD' against COVID-19 at 21 locations identified as containment zones in the Capital.
- 'Operation SHIELD' includes sealing, identifying and quarantining people in containment zones, doorstep delivery of essential items and door-to-door checking of people in those areas, will be undertaken by the Delhi government.

**COVID19 FACT CHECK UNIT**

- The **Press Information Bureau's** COVID-19 Fact Check Unit (FCU) became operational.
- It will check facts related to the novel coronavirus pandemic. It will receive messages by email and will send a response in a stipulated time-frame. The official version of any news on COVID-19 can be obtained from the unit.
- **Press Information Bureau (PIB)**, established in 1919, is a nodal agency of the Government of India based in New Delhi. It disseminates information on government plans policies and initiatives.

**SAFE PLUS**

- The **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** announced that the SIDBI Assistance to Facilitate Emergency response against Corona virus (SAFE PLUS) will be offered collateral free and disbursed within 48 hours.
- The loans will be offered at an interest rate of five per cent. The limit of SAFE loans has been enhanced from 50 lakh rupees to two crore rupees.
- The scheme was launched to provide financial assistance to MSMEs engaged in manufacturing of hand sanitizers, masks, gloves, head gear, bodysuits, shoe-covers, ventilators and goggles used in dealing with COVID-19.

**Do You Know**

- Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) set up in 1990 under an **Act of Indian Parliament**, acts as the Principal Financial Institution for Financing and Development of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector.
- It is Headquartered in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

**EXERCISE NCC YOGDAN**

- National Cadet Corps (NCC) has offered its help to civilian authorities in fight against COVID-19 by extending the services of cadets under 'Exercise NCC Yogdan'.
- Acc. to guidelines, cadets should not be employed in handling of law and order situation or for active military duties or at hot spots. Only Senior Division volunteer cadets above 18 years of age will be employed.

NCC, which operates under Ministry of Defence, is the largest uniformed youth organisation of the country and has been engaged in conducting various social service and community development activities.

**PANDEMIC**

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** declared the novel coronavirus a '**pandemic**' i.e., the worldwide spread of a new disease.
- Pandemic is a concept where there is a belief that the whole world's population will likely be exposed to this infection and potentially a proportion of them fall sick.

- **Criteria For Pandemic:** While the WHO looks for sustained outbreaks causing a larger-than-expected number of cases on multiple continents, there is no specific number of countries that a disease must touch for WHO to classify it as a pandemic.
- The 'pandemic' status has **to do more with the spread of disease, than its severity.**
- Declaring it a pandemic won't mean the WHO gets more funds or more powers to fight it. However, it is a formal announcement that the impact of COVID 19 reached a new level.
- **Stages of a Pandemic**
  1. In the first stage of a disease epidemic that eventually takes the form of a pandemic sweeping the globe, **cases are imported into a country in which the infection did not originate.**
  2. The second stage is of **local transmission.** It means that the **source of the infection is from within a particular area** and the trajectory the virus has taken from one person to the next is clearly established.
  3. The third stage is that of **community transmission.** Community transmission is when people begin to catch a disease from those who do not know they have the infection. In layman terms, it means that the virus is now circulating in the community, and can infect people with no history either of travel to affected areas or of contact with an infected person. If and when community transmission happens, there might arise the need for a full lockdown because in that situation it is theoretically possible for every person, regardless of where they are from and who they have been in contact with, to spread the disease.
  4. The fourth stage is **when the disease becomes endemic** in some countries. Among diseases that are currently endemic in India, that is they occur round the year across the country, are malaria and dengue.

#### POOLED TESTING

- **ICMR issued an advisory for using pooled samples for testing of COVID-19 to increase the number of tests conducted by laboratories across the country.**
- In a pooled testing algorithm, samples of multiple individuals are put together in a tube and screened through the PCR test. In case the pooled test turns out to be positive, individual samples are tested, which is referred to as pool de-convolution. If there's no positive result, all individual samples in the pool are regarded as negative.
- **Benefits:** Using this method, substantial costs and testing kits are saved.

#### ICMR Recommendations

- While more than two samples can be pooled together, the number should not exceed five samples to avoid sample dilution, which can lead to false negatives.
- This method can be used in areas where the prevalence of COVID-19 is low, which means a positivity rate of less than 2 %.
- In areas with a positivity rate between 2 to 5 %, sample pooling of PCR screening may be considered in a community survey of surveillance among asymptomatic individuals
- Sample Pooling is not recommended in areas/population with positivity rates of over 5 %.

#### PCR TEST

- ICMR has said designated labs will use the conventional real-time **polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test** to test for the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19.
- Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test is conducted on swab collected from the back of the throat, a liquid sample from the lower respiratory tract, or a simple saliva sample.

- Such tests are commonly used in Influenza A, Influenza B and H1N1 virus detection.
- The PCR test uses a technique that creates copies of a segment of DNA.
  - ‘Polymerase’ refers to the enzymes that make the copies of DNA.
  - The ‘chain reaction’ is how the DNA fragments are copied, exponentially — one is copied into two, the two are copied into four, and so on.
- Kary Mullis, the American biochemist who invented the PCR technique, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1993.

### Reverse Transcription

- However, SARS-COV-2 is a virus made of RNA, which needs to be converted into DNA. For this, the technique includes a process called reverse transcription.
- A ‘reverse transcriptase’ enzyme converts the RNA into DNA. Copies of the DNA are then made and amplified. A fluorescent DNA binding dye called the “probe” shows the presence of the virus. The test also distinguishes SARS-COV-2 from other viruses.

### EPIDEMIC DISEASE ACT, 1897

- The Central government decided to invoke a provision of a nearly 125-year-old **Epidemic Disease Act, 1897** to ensure that multiple government advisories on COVID-19 becomes enforceable.
- “It was decided that all States and Union Territories should be advised by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to invoke provisions of **Section 2 of Epidemic Disease Act, 1897** so that all advisories being issued from time to time by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare/State/UTs are enforceable.
- The Epidemic Diseases Act is routinely enforced across the country for dealing with outbreaks of diseases such as **swine flu, dengue, and cholera**.

### History Of 1897 Epidemic Diseases Act

- The colonial government introduced the Act to tackle the epidemic of **bubonic plague** that had spread in the erstwhile **Bombay Presidency** in the 1890s.
- The Governor-General of colonial India used the act to **confer special powers upon the local authorities** to implement the measures necessary for the **control of this epidemic**.
- Using powers conferred by the Act, **colonies authorities would search suspected plague cases in homes and among passengers**, with forcible segregations, evacuations, and demolitions of infected places.
- Historians described the law as “one of the **most draconian pieces of sanitary legislation** ever adopted in colonial India”.
- The law that has **enormous potential for abuse**: In 1897, the year the law was enforced, freedom fighter **Bal Gangadhar Tilak was punished with 18 months’ rigorous imprisonment** after his newspapers **Kesari and Mahratta** admonished imperial authorities for their handling of the plague epidemic.

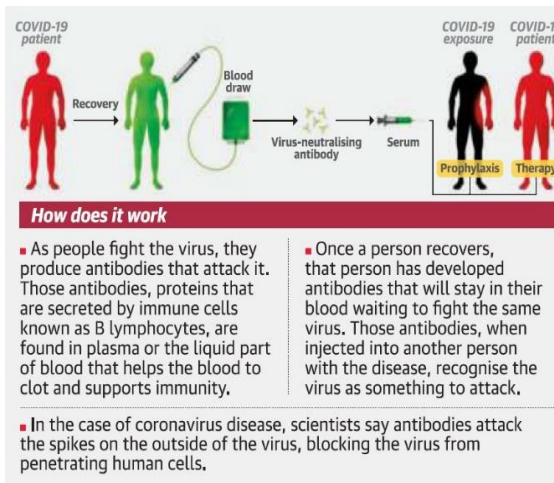
### Provisions of The Act

- In case of any disease outbreak of epidemic proportions, the law **empowers the State to take measures going beyond the scope of the ordinary law** after issuing public notices prescribing such temporary regulations that are to be observed by the public

- Under the law, the state government may prescribe appropriate regulations for the **inspection of persons travelling by railways (or any other transportation)**.
- A subsequent **section (Sec-2A)** allows the government to **inspect any ship leaving or arriving at any port** and detention of any person intending to sail or arriving.
- **Penalty:** Any person disobeying any regulation or order made under this Act shall be deemed to have committed an offence punishable under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant)
- **Protection to persons acting under Act:** No suit or other legal proceeding shall lie against any person for anything done or in good faith intended to be done under this Act.

### CONVALESCENT PLASMA THERAPY

- **Kerala** has got the Indian Council of Medical Research's approval to explore the feasibility of administering convalescent plasma therapy on critically ill patients.
- Convalescent plasma therapy seeks to make use of the antibodies developed in the recovered patient against the coronavirus. The whole blood or plasma from such people is taken, and the plasma is then injected in critically ill patients so that the antibodies are transferred and boost their fight against the virus.
- **Antibodies** are one of the front-line immune response to an infection by a microbe. They are a particular type of proteins secreted by immune cells called B lymphocytes when they encounter an invader, such as a novel coronavirus.
- A COVID-19 patient usually develops primary immunity against the virus in 10-14 days. Therefore, if the plasma is injected at an early stage, it can possibly help fight the virus.



### Past Incidents Of Convalescent Plasma Therapy

- Way back in 1890, Emil von Behring, a German physiologist, discovered that the serum obtained from a rabbit infected with diphtheria was effective in preventing the diphtheria infection. Behring was awarded the first-ever Nobel prize for medicine in 1901.
- The United States used plasma of recovered patients to treat patients of Spanish flu (1918-1920) and Hong Kong used it to treat SARS patients in 2005.
- In 2009, H1N1 patients were also treated with plasma and a study in Oxford University found that convalescent plasma reduced respiratory tract viral load and mortality in H1N1 patients.
- In 2014, the World Health Organization released guidelines to treat Ebola patients with convalescent whole blood and plasma and Democratic Republic of Congo and Guinea eventually did so. More recently, plasma was also used for treating MERS patients as well.

### HERD IMMUNITY

The government of United Kingdom recently suggested a strategy that would allow the novel coronavirus to infect 60% of the country's population so that a degree of herd immunity could be achieved.

- Herd immunity refers to preventing an infectious disease from spreading by immunising a certain percentage of the population. While the concept is most commonly used in the context of vaccination, herd immunity can also be achieved after enough people have become immune after being infected.



- The idea is that if a certain percentage of the population is immune, members of that group can no longer infect another person. This breaks the chain of infection through the community (herd), and prevents it from reaching those who are not immune and most vulnerable.
- To estimate the extent of spread and immunity, experts use a measure called the basic reproductive number- **RNought (R0)**. In simple terms it indicates how contagious and infectious disease is. As an infection spreads to new people, it reproduces itself. It tells the average number of people who will catch a disease from one contagious person. It specifically applies to a population of people who were previously free of infection and haven't been vaccinated.
- Scientific evidence shows that a person with measles can infect around 12-18 persons; and a person with influenza can infect around 1.2-4.5 persons, depending on season. On the basis of the available evidence from China, and according to various experts, R0 of COVID-19 ranges between 2 and 3.

### **Herd Immunity Of A Population**

- The possibility of a population achieving herd immunity depends on multiple factors viz. how effective the vaccine for a given disease is, how long-lasting immunity is from both vaccination and infection, and which populations form critical links in transmission of the disease.
- Mathematically, it is defined on the basis of a number called herd immunity threshold, which is the number of immune individuals above which a disease may no longer circulate.
- The higher the R0, the higher the percentage of the population that has to be immunised to achieve herd immunity. Polio has a threshold of 80% to 85%, while measles has 95%.
- With the current data for COVID-19, experts have estimated a threshold of over 60%. That means more than 60% of the population needs to develop immunity to reach the stage of herd immunity.

### **Issues With Using Herd Immunity Against Covid-19**

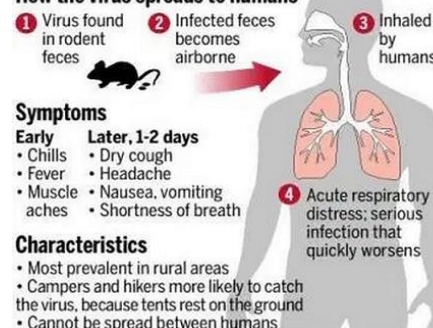
- Experts have underlined, that it is very risky to seek herd immunity by allowing a large proportion of the population to get infected, as such a strategy at this stage, would be based on many unknowns and variables.
- To begin with, much about the behaviour of the pathogen is still unclear. There isn't enough statistically significant data to estimate conclusively how many persons can get the virus from a single infected person.
- While herd immunity may come about from a pandemic because the people who survive may develop immunity but it is also likely that people may not develop immunity against it.
- Hence, it is important to note that for COVID-19, it is still not clear whether one can become immune to the virus, nor is it clear whether a person who develops immunity will remain permanently immune.
- Further, it can take months, or even longer, to build group immunity to COVID-19 and during that time, the need is to protect people who are at greater risk.
- Trying to achieve herd immunity would put a huge burden on the healthcare system, as allowing the virus to pass through the population means a significant increase of patients, putting pressure on existing ICU and emergency beds.

## HEALTH

## HANTAVIRUS

- China's English daily Global Times has reported death of a person who tested positive for hantavirus.
- The hantaviruses are a family of viruses spread mainly by **rodents**. A person can get infected if he/she comes in contact with a rodent that carries the virus.
- The hantavirus is not novel and its first case dates back to 1993.
- Cases of hantavirus in humans occur mostly in rural areas where forests, fields & farms offer suitable habitat for infected rodents.
- Hantaviruses in the Americas are known as **"New World" hantaviruses** and may cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). Other hantaviruses, known as **"Old World" hantaviruses**, are found mostly in Europe and Asia and may cause hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS).

## How the virus spreads to humans



## WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

- World Tuberculosis Day-2020 was observed with the theme "It's Time".**
- Date of observance:** It is observed every year on 24th March, to commemorate the anniversary of Dr. Robert Koch's discovery of the Tuberculosis (TB) bacteria in 1882.

India has committed to end TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global targets.

## New WHO Recommendations To Prevent Tuberculosis

- WHO recommends that either a tuberculin skin test or interferon-gamma release assay (IGRA) be used to test for TB infection.
- WHO recommends new shorter options for preventive treatment in addition to the widely used 6 months of daily isoniazid.

## TrueNat

- WHO's Global TB Programme has included an Indian Molecular assay TrueNat as initial test for TB and MDR-TB in view of its high diagnostic accuracy, in the rapid communication document.
- What is it?** The TrueNat TB test is a new molecular test that can diagnosis TB in one hour as well as testing for resistance to the drug rifampicin.
- Who has developed it?** The TrueNat test has been developed by the Indian firm MolBio Diagnostics Pvt Ltd Goa. Its development has been funded by Bigtec Labs, India.
- Working?** The test works by the rapid detection of TB bacteria using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technique. Any resistance to rifampicin (RR) is detected by doing a second RTPCR (Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction)
- Genexpert versus TruNat?** The Genexpert machine is designed for larger volumes and needs a reliable electricity supply. The TrueNat machine is more of a point of care machine, which is not fully automated. It is designed for situations where there may not be electricity and where the need is for one test to be done at a time.

**INSTITUTE OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH IN AYURVEDA BILL, 2020**

- Lok Sabha passed the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill, 2020.
- Under it, the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Jamnagar will be granted institution of national importance by conglomerating the cluster of Ayurveda institutes at Gujarat Ayurveda University campus in Jamnagar.
- The three institutes which would be clubbed are (1) Institute of Post Graduate Teaching and Research in Ayurveda, (2) Gulabkunwerba Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya and (3) Institute of Ayurveda Pharmaceutical Sciences.

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HOMOEOPATHY MEDICINE BILL 2019**

Rajya Sabha passed the National Commission for Homoeopathy Medicine Bill 2019.

- The Bill seeks to repeal the **Homoeopathy Central Council Act, 1973**.
- It proposes to setup a **National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH)** which will replace the existing regulator *Central Council for Homoeopathy (CCH)* so as to ensure transparency. The NCH will consist of 20 members, appointed by the central government.
- **Under NCH, three autonomous boards will be setup:**
  - **Homoeopathy Education Board** will be entrusted with conducting overall education of Homoeopathy.
  - **The Board of assessment and rating** will assess and grant permission to educational institutions of Homoeopathy.
  - **Board of ethics and registration of practitioners of Homoeopathy** will maintain National Register and ethical issues relating to practice.
- Under the Bill, the central government will constitute an **Advisory Council for Homoeopathy**. The Council will be the primary platform through which the States/Union Territories can put forth their views and concerns before the NCH.
- It proposes a **common entrance exam and an exit exam** which all graduates will have to clear to get practicing licenses.
- Further, a **teacher's eligibility test** has been proposed to assess the standard of teachers before appointment and promotions.

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR INDIAN SYSTEM OF MEDICINE BILL 2019**

Rajya Sabha passed the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill 2019.

- The Bill seeks to **repeal the Indian Medicine Central Council Act, 1970**. It provides for the establishment of the **National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM)**. The NCISM will consist of 29 members, appointed by the central government.
- **Functions of the NCISM include:** (i) framing policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals of Indian System of Medicine and (ii) ensuring coordination among the autonomous boards set up under the Bill.
- The Bill sets up following **autonomous boards** under the supervision of the NCISM:
  - the Board of Ayurveda and the Board of Unani, Siddha, and Sowa-Rigpa,
  - the Medical Assessment and Rating Board for Indian System of Medicine and
  - the Ethics and Medical Registration Board:

- The central government will constitute an **Advisory Council for Indian System of Medicine**, which will be the primary platform through which the states/union territories can put forth their views and concerns before the NCISM.
- There will be a uniform **National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test** for admission to under-graduate education in each of the disciplines of the Indian System of Medicine in all medical institutions regulated by the Bill.

#### **ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY REGULATION BILL 2020**

- The Union Cabinet has approved Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill 2020. The bill makes provisions for safe and ethical practice of ART services in the country.
- Under it, the **National Board** shall lay down code of conduct to be observed by persons working at clinics, to set the minimum standards of physical infrastructure, laboratory and diagnostic equipment and expert manpower to be employed by clinics and banks.
- The **State Board** shall have the responsibility to follow the policies and plans laid by the National Board for clinics and Banks in the State.
- The Bill also provides for **National Registry and Registration Authority** to maintain a Central database and assist the National Board in its functioning.
- It proposes for a **stringent punishment** for those practising sex selection, sale of human embryos or gametes, running agencies/rackets/organisations for such unlawful practices.

ART services used to treat persons suffering from infertility includes:  
**gamete donation, intrauterine insemination (IUI), In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF), ICSI, PGD and gestational surrogacy.**

#### **MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020**

Lok Sabha passed the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971. **Salient Features**

- Proposes requirement for opinion of one provider for termination of pregnancy, up to 20 weeks of gestation and introducing the requirement of opinion of two providers for termination of pregnancy of 20-24 weeks of gestation.
- Enhances **upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks** for special categories of women including survivors of rape, victims of incest & other vulnerable women (differently-abled women, Minors) etc.
- Upper gestation limit not to apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by Medical Board. The composition, functions and other details of Medical Board to be prescribed subsequently in Rules under the Act.
- Name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated shall not be revealed except to a person authorised in any law for the time being in force.

#### **SCHOOL HEALTH AMBASSADORS**

- NCERT, along with Health Ministry and HRD Ministry, has prepared a curriculum for the School Health Ambassadors. The Curriculum has been released nearly two years after the launch of the **School Health Programme** which was launched in 2018 under the Ayushman Bharat Programme.
- Under the scheme, two teachers, preferably one male and one female, will be appointed as **Health and Wellness Ambassadors**, who will teach students about the promotion of health as well as prevention of diseases.
- The programme will also have class monitors playing the role of **Health and Wellness Messengers** who would assist the two ambassadors.

- For the training purposes, the NCERT has constituted a 40-member **National Resource Group (NRG)** who will further train State Resource Groups comprising of six persons from each selected district at 5 Regional Institute of Education (RIE) at Mysore, Shillong, Bhubaneshwar, Ajmer & Bhopal.
- Initially, the curriculum will be implemented in the public **upper primary, secondary and senior secondary schools** of those districts which volunteer. The remaining districts will be covered in the second year.

### WORLD CANCER DAY

- Theme: **"I am and I will."**
- It is observed on the 4th of February every year by the **Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)** to create awareness about cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection, and treatment.
- On February 4, 2000, World Cancer Day was written into the **Charter of Paris Against Cancer**. The document was signed in between then French President and UNESCO General Director.

**The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)** is a membership-based NGO that exists to help the global health community accelerate the fight against cancer. It was founded in 1933 and is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

**On World Cancer Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) released two reports that stated that 1 in 10 Indians will develop cancer during their lifetime, and 1 in 15 Indians would die of cancer.**

- India had an estimated 1.16 million new cancer cases, 7,84,000 deaths and 2.26 million five-year prevalent cases in 2018.
- Globally in 2018, there were 9.6 million cancer deaths, out of which the most were due to lung cancer at 18.4%, followed by colorectum cancer (9.2%), stomach cancer (8.2%), liver (8.2%), breast (6.6%) and cancer of the oesophagus (5.3%).
- In India, the six most common cancer types are breast, at 1,62,000, followed by oral (1,20,000), cervical (97,000), lung (68,000) and stomach and colorectal, at 57,000 each. These accounted for 49% of all new cancer cases.

### SUPOSHIT MAA ABHIYAN

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla launched "Suposhit Maa Abhiyan" to provide nutritional support to pregnant women and adolescent girls in Kota.
- Under this Abhiyan, 1,000 women would be given food items for one month. At the same time, the health of the child, including medical examination, blood tests, medicines, delivery, would be covered.
- Only one pregnant woman would be adopted from a family. In the first phase, 1,000 kits of 17 kg balanced diet each were provided to 1,000 pregnant women.

### AYUSH HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTRE (AYUSH HWC)

- Union Cabinet has approved the inclusion of AYUSH Health and Wellness Centre (AYUSH HWC) component of Ayushman Bharat in **National AYUSH Mission (NAM)**.
- The proposal entails an expenditure of Rs. 3399 Crore for operationalization of AYUSH HWCs within a period of five years (2019-20 to 2023-24).
- The Ministry of AYUSH has proposed following two models for operationalization of 12,500 AYUSH Health & Wellness Centres throughout the country:
  - Upgradation of existing AYUSH dispensaries (approximately 10,000)
  - Upgradation of existing Sub Health Centres (SHCs) (approx. 2,500)



## TOBACCO USE PREVALENCE

- A recent report released by the World Health Organization (WHO) projected what it calls “a powerful shift in the global tobacco epidemic”.
- Overall global tobacco use fell from 1.397 billion in 2000 to 1.337 billion in 2018 (around 60 million people). The fall was driven by reductions in the number of females using tobacco with their numbers shrinking from 346 million in 2000 to 244 million in 2018.
- In India, which had a 44% prevalence of tobacco use (male and female combined) in 2000, this is expected to reduce almost by half to 22.3% by 2025. Globally, the prevalence was at 33.3% in 2000, and is projected to reach 20.9% in 2025.
- Current tobacco use rates in India in 2018 for people aged 15 years and older were higher than global rates among both males and females. However, the rates of tobacco smoking were lower than global rates.

## LORCASERIN

- Indian doctors have cautioned against the use of lorcaserin (brand name **Belviq or Belviq XR**), a **weight-loss drug** that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently said is linked to a “possible increased risk of cancer.”
- Lorcaserin is used long term for weight loss in those who are obese. It reduces appetite by activating a type of **serotonin receptor** in a region of the brain called the **hypothalamus**, which is known to control appetite.

## AROGYA SANJEEVANI POLICY

- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) issued guidelines on standard individual health insurance, asking insurers to cover basic health needs.
- Under it, IRDAI asked the general and health insurers to offer product that can take care of basic health needs of customers with maximum sum insured of Rs 5 lakh and a minimum of Rs 1 lakh. The standard product shall be offered on indemnity basis only and the policy tenure shall be for a period of one year.
- The product will be named as **Arogya Sanjeevani Policy**, succeeded by the name of the insurance company. No other name is allowed in any of the documents.
- The standard product should have the basic mandatory covers, no add-ons or optional covers are allowed to be offered along with the standard product and the insurer may determine the price keeping in view the covers proposed to be offered.

## YADA YADA VIRUS

- Researchers who recently reported the discovery of a new virus conceded that the discovery wasn't a big deal, with new viruses being announced every day. Therefore, the researchers have named their discovery “Yada Yada virus” (YYV).
- Yada Yada Virus (YYV) is an **alphavirus**, a group of viruses that the researchers described as small, *single-stranded positive-sense RNA viruses* (that) include species important to human and animal health and which are transmitted primarily by **mosquitoes** and (are) pathogenic in their vertebrate hosts.
- Unlike some other alphaviruses, Yada Yada does not pose a threat to human beings.
- The virus was detected in mosquitoes trapped in three locations in Victoria, Australia.

**Do You Know**

- YYV takes its name from 'The Yada Yada', an episode of the television sitcom Seinfeld, which aired on the American network NBC on April 24, 1997.
- Merriam-Webster says yada yada is "boring or empty talk", a way to recount words that are "too dull or predictable to be worth repeating".

**E-CIGARETTE OR VAPING PRODUCT USE-ASSOCIATED LUNG INJURY (EVALI)**

- As of December 31, 2019, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a US federal agency, reported over 2,500 cases across U.S. who suffered from EVALI.
- EVALI is the name given to the dangerous, newly identified lung disease linked to **vaping/e-cigarettes**.
- It is unclear how the condition develops or why, in the most severe and life-threatening cases, it causes the lungs to stop functioning altogether.
- CDC urge everyone to avoid e-cigarette or vaping products that contain tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC (a high-inducing chemical derived from marijuana).

**NATIONAL POLICY FOR TREATMENT OF RARE DISEASES**

- Union Health Ministry published a national policy for treatment of rare diseases, **listing 450 diseases as rare** but not providing a detailed roadmap on treatment.
- In India, Haemophilia, Thalassemia, Sickle cell anaemia and Primary Immuno Deficiency in children, auto-immune diseases, Lysosomal storage disorders such as Pompe disease and Gaucher's disease are in the rare diseases list.
- The latest policy creates **three categories of rare diseases**: (1) diseases requiring one-time curative treatment, (2) diseases which need long-term treatment but the cost is low, and (3) diseases that require life-long treatment and the cost is high.
- Under it, Centre will provide assistance of Rs 15 lakh to patients suffering from rare diseases that require one-time curative treatment under the Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi scheme. The treatment is limited to beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.
- It also recommends crowd funding as a source to fund treatment of rare diseases.
- The policy also intends to kick-start a **registry of rare diseases that Indian Council of Medical Research will maintain**.

**MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AS 'DRUGS'**

- Union Health Ministry has notified that **medical equipment would qualify as 'drugs'** under Section 3 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, w.e.f April 1, 2020.
- Medical equipments under this definition include implantable medical devices such as knee implants, CT scan, MRI equipment, defibrillators, dialysis machine, PET equipment, X-ray machine etc.
- The manufacture, import and sale of all medical devices will now need to be certified by the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation**.
- This will ensure that these equipments follow quality standards. The move comes in the wake of years of controversy about faulty hip implants of J&J.

**PNEUMOSIL**

- **Pneumococcal vaccine** developed by the **Pune-based Serum Institute of India** has been pre-qualified by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

- The pneumococcal vaccine PNEUMOSIL is a conjugate vaccine to help produce stronger immune response to a weak antigen. In 2017, pneumococcal conjugate vaccine was included in India's Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

**Do You Know**

- To be "pre-qualified" means that the vaccine can be **sold internationally** to several countries in Africa and South America.
- According to a 2019 UNICEF report, pneumonia caused 1,27,000 deaths in India in 2018, the second highest number of child mortality under the age of five in the world. In India, pneumonia and diarrhoea cause the most deaths in children under five years.

**DOMESTIC MANUFACTURING OF CRITICAL STARTING MATERIALS/DRUG INTERMEDIATES AND APIs**

Union Cabinet has approved the following schemes for promotion of domestic manufacturing of critical Key Starting Materials/Drug Intermediates in the country.

- **The scheme on Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks** for financing Common Infrastructure Facilities in 3 Bulk Drug Parks with financial implication of Rs. 3,000 crore for next five years. Parks will have common facilities such as solvent recovery plant, distillation plant, power & steam units, common effluent treatment plant etc.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for promotion of domestic manufacturing of critical KSMs/Drug Intermediates and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)** in the country with financial implications of Rs6,940 crore for next eight years.

**LIVE ATTENUATED CLASSICAL SWINE FEVER VACCINE (IVRI-CSF-BS)**

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) released the Live attenuated Classical Swine Fever Vaccine (IVRI-CSF-BS) Technology developed by **ICAR -Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Izatnagar**.
- Classical Swine Fever (CSF) is one of the most important diseases of pigs causing high mortality with annual loss of approx. Rs.4.299 billion.
- A lapinized CSF vaccine (Weybridge strain, UK) is being used in India since 1964 for controlling the disease. The vaccine is produced by sacrificing large numbers of rabbits for each batch.
- In order to do away with sacrificing of rabbits and increase the productivity, IVRI has developed a new CSF Cell Culture Vaccine by attenuating an indigenous virulent CSF virus in cell culture.

**NEONATAL DEATHS**

- According to the National Health Mission (NHM), **Madhya Pradesh** has recorded the highest percentage of newborn deaths of 11.5% against the total admissions to government-run sick newborn care units (SNCUs) in the past three years across the country. The country's average is 7%.
- In Bhopal, **one in every five children admitted to a unit** died in three years — the highest death percentage of 19.9%, ten times above the NHM's mandated key performance indicator of below 2%.
- Meanwhile, West Bengal, where 34,344 neonatal deaths occurred in the period, the most in the country, the declining percentage of deaths from 9.2% in 2017 to 8.9% in 2019 coincided with a slump in admissions.

**ICoSDiTAUS-2020**

- ICoSDiTAUS-2020, the two-day International Conference on Standardisation of Diagnosis and Terminologies in Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha Systems of Medicine was recently held in New Delhi.

- The conference was jointly organized by the **Ministry of AYUSH and the WHO**.
- It adopted the “**New Delhi Declaration on Collection and Classification of Traditional Medicine (TM) Diagnostic Data**” which emphasised the commitment of the countries to Traditional Medicine (TM) as a significant area of health care.
- It further sought the opportunity for including traditional systems of medicine like Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) of WHO which is the standard diagnostic tool for health management across the world.

## HEALTH BUDGET

- About Rs. 69,000 crore have been provided for health care in Union Budget 2020-21. It includes Rs. 6400 crores for **Prime Minister Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)**. PM-JAY is a health assurance scheme that covers 10.74 crores households across India or approx **50 crore Indians**. It provides a **cover of 5 lakh per family per year** for medical treatment in empanelled hospitals, both public and private.
- **Viability Gap Funding Window** is proposed for Setting Up Hospitals under Prime Minister Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) in PPP Mode.
- The Finance Minister also announced to **expand Jan Aushadhi Kendra Scheme to all districts** offering 2000 medicines and 300 surgicals by 2024.
- To meet the requirement of qualified medical doctors, it is proposed to **attach a medical college to an existing district hospital in PPP mode**.
- The Government will also encourage large hospitals with sufficient capacity to offer resident doctors DNB/FNB courses under the National Board of Examinations.

## ANOSMIA; AGEUSIA

- Anosmia and ageusia have emerged as **peculiar tell-tale signs of COVID-19** and possible markers of infection. British ENT doctors called on adults who lose their senses of smell to isolate themselves for seven days, even if they have no other symptoms, to slow the disease's spread.
- **Anosmia** is loss of sense of smell. Ageusia is accompanying diminished sense of taste.

## NetSCoFAN

- Union Health Minister launched **NetSCoFAN (Network for Scientific Co-operation for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition)**, a network of research & academic institutions working in the area of food & nutrition.
- The NetSCoFAN would comprise of eight groups of institutions working in different areas viz. biological, chemical, nutrition & labelling, food of animal origin, food of plant origin, water & beverages, food testing, and safer & sustainable packaging.

## MEDICAL DEVICES NOTIFIED AS DRUGS

- With effect from 1st April, 2020, all Medical Devices shall be regulated by the Government as Drugs for quality control and price monitoring. Therefore, the Maximum Retail Prices (MRPs) of all the Medical Devices would be monitored by the Government under the provisions of Para 20(1) of the **Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013**.
- This will ensure that no manufacturer/importer increases the MRP of a drug more than 10% of MRP during preceding 12 month.

## INTERNATIONAL

## WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2020

- The World Happiness Report is a publication of the **Sustainable Development Solutions Network**, which operates under the auspices of the United Nations since 2012 to mobilize scientific and technical expertise in support of the SDGs.
- It looks at the state of global happiness in 156 countries, ranking countries using the Gallup World Poll and six factors- **levels of GDP, life expectancy, generosity, social support, freedom and corruption income.**
- For the third year in a row, **Finland** was placed at the top of the list as the happiest country in the world, with **Denmark** coming in second, followed by **Switzerland**, which pushed Norway out of the top three this year.
- **India, previously ranked at 140 dropped to 144.** Its rank is lower than its neighbours like **Pakistan (66), Nepal (92), Bangladesh (107) and Sri Lanka (130).**
- Besides the happiest countries, the report also looked at the places where people are the unhappiest. This year, **Afghanistan** was named the unhappiest place in the world, followed by **South Sudan** and **Zimbabwe.**

The World Happiness Report 2020 for the first time ranks cities around the world by their subjective well-being and digs more deeply into how the social, urban and natural environments combine to affect our happiness.

## RECIPROCATING TERRITORY

- Ministry of Law and Justice declared UAE a “reciprocating territory” under Section 44A of the CPC, 1908. The notification also declared a list of courts in the UAE to be “superior Courts” under the same section.
- **Section 44 of the Civil Procedure Code, 1908** titled “Execution of decrees passed by Courts in reciprocating territory”, provides the law on the subject of execution of decrees of Courts in India by foreign Courts and vice versa.
- Essentially, orders passed by certain designated courts from a ‘**reciprocating territory**’ can be implemented in India, by filing a copy of the decree concerned in a District Court here. The courts so designated are called ‘**superior Courts**’.
- The decision is believed to help bring down the time required for executing decrees between the two countries. Indian expatriates in the UAE would no longer be able to seek safe haven in their home country if they are convicted in a civil case in the UAE.

**Other countries declared to be “reciprocating territories” are:** United Kingdom, Singapore, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Trinidad & Tobago, New Zealand, the Cook Islands and the Trust Territories of Western Samoa, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Aden.

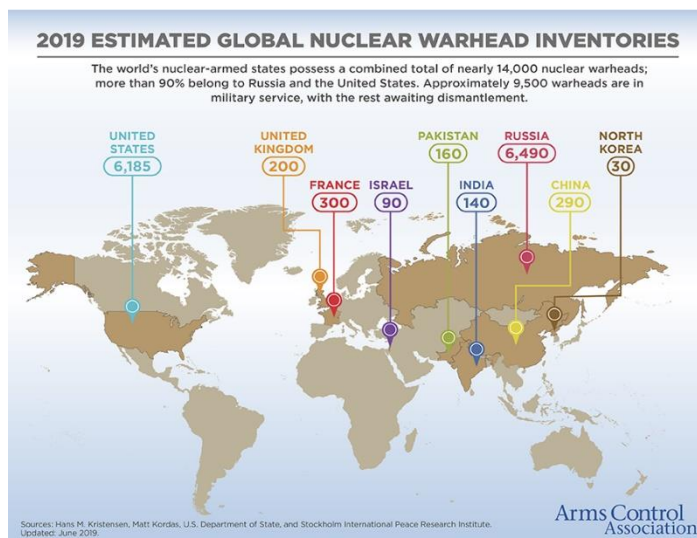
## ‘STRANDED IN INDIA’ PORTAL

- **Ministry of Tourism** launched ‘Stranded in India’ portal to help foreign tourists stuck in various parts of the country due to coronavirus-led lockdown.
- It consists of the information around COVID-19 helpline numbers and Ministry of External Affairs control centers that will be useful for the tourists.



## 50 YEARS OF NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY (NPT)

- Recently, foreign ministers of the five permanent members (P5) of UN Security Council issued a joint statement on the successful implementation 50 years ago of the Nuclear NPT.
- Objectives:** The NPT is an international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.
- Significance:** The Treaty represents the **only binding commitment** in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States.
- Timeline:** Opened for signature in 1968, the Treaty entered into force in 1970. On 11 May 1995, the Treaty was extended indefinitely.
- A total of 191 States** have joined the Treaty, including the five nuclear-weapon States.
- Safeguards:** The Treaty establishes a safeguards system under the responsibility of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Safeguards are used to verify compliance with the Treaty through inspections conducted by the IAEA.



### Nuclear-weapon States

- The treaty defines nuclear-weapon states as those that have built and tested a nuclear explosive device **before 1 January 1967**; these are the US, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China.
- Four other states are known or believed to possess nuclear weapons: India, Pakistan, and North Korea have openly tested and declared that they possess nuclear weapons, while Israel is deliberately ambiguous regarding its nuclear weapons status.

### INDIAN OCEAN COMMISSION

- India has been approved as an **observer state** for the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).
- Members:** It is an intergovernmental organization that is composed of **five African Indian Ocean nations**: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion (an overseas region of France), and Seychelles.
- Background:** It was created in 1982 and was institutionalized in 1984 by the **Victoria Agreement**.
- Mandate:** To serve as platform of solidarity for the entire population of the African Indian Ocean region.
- Secretariat:** It is located in Port Louis, Mauritius.
- Observers:** With the decision, India will join China, which was made an observer in 2016, as well as the "International Organisation of the Francophonie", the European Union (EU) and Malta, which were all admitted in 2017.



## HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX 2020

- **The latest edition of the Henley Passport Index was released recently.**
- According to Henley & Partners, the residence and citizenship planning firm that publishes the ranking, the Index lists the world's passports "according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa".
- The ranking is based on data from the **International Air Transport Association (IATA)**, a trade association of some 290 airlines, including all major carriers.

### **Key Findings**

- **Japan** topped the Index for third straight year. **Singapore** is second. **Germany and South Korea** are ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>. **Afghanistan**, ranked 107, has the world's weakest passport.
- Indian passport is **ranked 84th** in the world. It was ranked higher in both 2019 (82 rank) and 2018 (ranked at 81).

## WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF)

- The 50th World Economic Forum (WEF) was held at Davos in Switzerland with the theme '**Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World**'.
- **HQ:** Cologny-Geneva, Switzerland; **Founded:** 1971.
- **Status:** Not-for-profit organization. Under the Swiss Host-State Act, it is recognized as an International Institution for Public-Private Cooperation.
- **Mission:** Improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.
- **Davos meet:** Annually, it organizes a meeting at the end of January in Davos, a mountain resort in Graubünden, in the eastern Alps region of Switzerland. The meeting brings together top business leaders, international political leaders, economists to discuss the pressing global issues.
- **It produces annual reports such as:** Global Competitiveness Report, Global Gender Gap Report, Global Information Technology Report, Global Risks Report, Global Travel and Tourism Report, Financial Development Report and Global Enabling Trade Report.

**Indian actress Deepika Padukone was presented WEF crystal award for her work on mental health.**

## WORLD FUTURE ENERGY SUMMIT-2020

- Theme: "**Rethinking Global Consumption, Production, and Investment.**"
- World Future Energy Summit is the Middle East's largest future energy and sustainability event.
- It is held annually at Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre under the patronage of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of UAE Armed Forces.
- Also held alongside the World Future Energy Summit are the **Climate Innovations Exchange (CLIX)** for short and the Future Sustainability Summit.

## 3rd GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON ROAD SAFETY

- The "3rd High Level Global Conference on Road Safety for Achieving Global Goals 2030" was held in **Stockholm, Sweden** with the objective of bringing road safety on the global agenda for reaching the United Nation's goal set under the UN Decade of Action of reducing road crashes by 2030.
- **Organizers:** The conference was organised in active collaboration with World Bank, World Health Organisation (WHO) and other agencies.

- The **Stockholm Declaration**, created on the basis of the Moscow Declaration of 2009 and the Brasilia Declaration of 2015, calls for a **50% reduction in Road deaths and injuries from 2020 to 2030 on way to Vision Zero by 2050**.
- It recognised that **SDG target 3.6 will not be met by 2020** (Target 3.6 is: By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents).

### Do You Know

- **India is a signatory to the Brasilia Declaration** – signed during the 2nd High Level Global Conference on “Traffic Safety-Time of Results” in 2015 in Brazil – which committed the world community to reducing the number of deaths in road accidents.
- UN has included **Road Safety as part of the Sustainable Development Goals**.

### GRAND ETHIOPIAN RENAISSANCE DAM

- The Grand Renaissance Dam, which Ethiopia is building, has caused a row between Egypt and Ethiopia, with Sudan caught in between, which some fear could lead to war, and the U.S.A is now helping to mediate.
- The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, sometimes referred to as **Hidase Dam**, was formerly known as the Millennium Dam.
- **Location:** It is an under-construction gravity dam on the *Blue Nile River in Ethiopia*.
- **Size:** At 6.45 gigawatts, the dam will be the largest hydroelectric power plant in Africa when completed, as well as the seventh largest in the world.
- **Dispute:** Egypt, located over 2500 kms downstream of the site, opposes the dam, which it believes will reduce the amount of water available from the Nile.



### KURZARBEIT SCHEME

- Amid the all-round disruption caused to the economy by the coronavirus outbreak, various governments have unveiled various measures to address such concerns, and one of the most talked about is Germany's Kurzarbeit scheme.
- Kurzarbeit is German for “short-work”. The policy provides for a **short-time work allowance**, called kurzarbeitgeld, which partially compensates for lost earnings during uncertain economic situations.
- The policy was rolled out during the 2008 economic crisis while its origins date back as far as the early 20th century, before and after World War I.

### OPERATION VANILLA

- Indian Navy Launched ‘Operation Vanilla’ to provide assistance to the affected **population of Madagascar** post devastation caused by **Cyclone Diane**.
- The Indian Navy Ship is geared to set up medical camp and provide food, water and other necessary relief material



### PROTECTING POWER

- Following the killing of Iranian military and intelligence commander Major General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad in a drone attack carried out by the United States, the Iranian government registered its protest with the Swiss Embassy in Tehran.
- **Switzerland represents the interests of the US in Iran**. In an arrangement such as this, Switzerland is the “Protecting Power” of the United States’ interests in Iran.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- The instrument of Protecting Powers is provided for under the **1961 and 1963 Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations**. They state that if diplomatic relations are broken off between two States, the sending State may entrust the protection of its interests and those of its nationals to a third State acceptable to the receiving State.

### MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE (MGICC)

- India and **Niger** jointly inaugurated the first Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre (MGICC) established in Africa by India in Niger to honour the memory of Mahatma Gandhi.
- The convention centre has been designed to witness high-level and wide-ranging participation from African Union member states and other high-level conventions.



### JOINT EXERCISES IN NEWS

Exercise name	Participants
<b>Indradhanush</b>	A joint air force exercise conducted by the Royal Air Force (RAF) of United Kingdom and the Indian Air Force (IAF).
<b>Sampriti</b>	A joint military exercise between armies of India and Bangladesh.
<b>Ajeya Warrior</b>	A joint military exercise between armies of India and United Kingdom.
<b>Sea Guardians</b>	Bilateral naval exercise between China and Pakistan.

### PRAVASI BHARTIYA DIWAS

- Indian embassies in different countries celebrated Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas.**
- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India.
- January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since **it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa**, led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.
- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention** is celebrated once in every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots.
- During the Convention, selected overseas Indians are also honored with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to recognize their contributions to various fields.

### STCW CONVENTION

- Union Cabinet has approved the Model MoU with foreign countries for recognition of seafarers' competency certificates, pursuant to STCW Convention, 1978.
- International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978** sets minimum qualification standards for masters, officers and watch personnel on seagoing merchant ships and large yachts.
- STCW was adopted in 1978 by conference at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London, and entered into force in 1984.

The Convention applies to ships of non-party States when visiting ports of States which are Parties to the Convention.



## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- The Convention did not deal with manning levels: IMO provisions in this area are covered by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (**SOLAS**), 1974.

### STAFFORD ACT

- In response to the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic, United States President Trump declared a national emergency under the Stafford Act.
- Official name:** The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.
- Common name:** Stafford Act. It is named for Vermont Sen. Robert Stafford (in Senate 1971–89), who helped pass the law.
- It is a 1988 U.S. federal law designed to bring federal natural disaster assistance for state and local governments in carrying out their responsibilities to aid citizens.
- It created the system by which a presidential emergency declaration triggers financial assistance through the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**. The Act gives FEMA the responsibility for coordinating government-wide relief efforts.

### INDIA-FRANCE DEFENCE RELATIONS/ RÉUNION ISLANDS

- Indian and French Navy conducted joint patrols from the Reunion Island for the first time.** France is also the first country to deploy a liaison officer at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre (IFC-IOR) to improve maritime domain awareness (MDA).
- Réunion** is an overseas department and region of France and an island in Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar and southwest of Mauritius.
- It is above a hotspot in the Earth's crust. The **Piton de la Fournaise**, a shield volcano on the eastern end of Réunion Island, rises more than 2,631 m above sea level.



### ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENT FUND MANAGERS DIRECTIVE (AIFMD)

- Union Cabinet has approved updating of AIFMD MoU signed between Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), UK. The decision was taken pursuant to UK's exit from the European Union on 31st January 2020.
- AIFMD is a major European Union (EU) regulatory initiative to extend appropriate regulation and supervision to the alternative investment fund management industry.
- To establish supervisory cooperation arrangements between EU and non-EU authorities under the European Union AAIFMD, a bilateral MoU was signed by SEBI with securities regulators of EU members including Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), UK In 2014.

### INDIA PORTS GLOBAL LIMITED (IPGL)

- The Union Cabinet has approved the exemption of the India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) from the DPE Guidelines, except reservation and vigilance policies.
- IPGL was incorporated under Companies Act 2013, as a Special Purpose Vehicle jointly promoted by Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) and Deendayal Port Trust (DPT), under Administrative control of Ministry of Shipping, for development and management of Shahid Beheshti Port of Chabahar in Iran.
- In 2018, all the shares of JNPT & DPT were purchased by "Sagarmala Development Company Ltd" (SDCL). SDCL is a CPSE and therefore IPGL being subsidiary of SDCL has also become a CPSE. As a result, Guidelines of DPE are technically applicable on IPGL which has slowed down the progress of project.





**ICP BIRATNAGAR**

PM Modi and his Nepali counterpart K P Sharma Oli inaugurated Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Biratnagar. Jobgani-Biratnagar international trade point is one of the important trade points between the two countries.

- **Facilities: Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)** house all regulatory agencies like Immigration, Customs, border security, etc. together with all support facilities like parking, warehousing, banking, hotels etc. in a single complex.
- **Objective of ICPs:** To secure the country's borders while facilitating legitimate trade.
- **Implementing agency:** Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI), under Department of Border Management (Ministry of Home Affairs).

**COMMONWEALTH**

- **Maldives rejoined the Commonwealth.** It had left the Commonwealth in 2016.
- The Commonwealth, formally constituted by the London Declaration in 1949, is a voluntary association of 54 independent and equal sovereign states, nearly all of them former territories of the British Empire. All members have an equal say – regardless of size or economic stature.
- **HQ:** London
- Every two years, members meet to discuss issues affecting the Commonwealth and the wider world at the **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)**.

**INDIAN DIASPORA**

- There are **over 1.36 crore Indian nationals living abroad**, according to data tabled by the Ministry of External Affairs in Lok Sabha.
- The highest number of Indians abroad are living in the **UAE**, where the 34,20,000 Indians comprise about one-fourth of all Indians abroad. The UAE is followed by **Saudi Arabia** (25,94,947) and the **US** (12,80,000).
- During 2018-2019, \$76.4 billion was received as remittances from Indians abroad. During 2019-2020 (April-September), \$41.9 billion was received.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FEE (SDF)**

- Ending decades of free entry to Indian tourists visiting Bhutan, the Bhutanese Government has decided to levy a **daily ₹1,200 (\$17) fee** for “regional tourists” from **India, Maldives and Bangladesh**, beginning July 2020.
- The fee, called a Sustainable Development Fee (SDF), is meant to help the government deal with burgeoning numbers in tourist traffic, which it is seeking to regulate. The decision was passed as a ‘Tourism Levy and Exemption Bill of Bhutan’, 2020.

**DONALD TRUMP'S VISIT TO INDIA**

**U.S. President Donald Trump, paid a State Visit to India. Key highlights of the visit:**

- The two sides decided to elevate their ties to a “**comprehensive global strategic partnership**”, giving it broader scope and scale.
- **No trade deal was signed during the visit.** The two leaders said they looked forward to “early conclusion” of defence cooperation enabling agreements including **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)**.
- The two sides also “expressed interest in **Blue Dot Network**.”

- Trump announced that **US International Development Finance Corporation** will be establishing a permanent presence in India.
- A MoU was signed on **mental health** between the health departments of two countries.

### **Defence Deal**

- It was announced that India will purchase more than \$3 billion of advanced American military equipment, including **24 multi-role MH-60 Romeo helicopters**, through the Foreign Military Sale government-to-government route, and **six Apache AH 64E Apache helicopters** for the Army.
- The six choppers for the Army will be in addition to the 22 Apache helicopters that have already been ordered for the Air Force. The MH-60 Romeo Seahawk, made by Lockheed Martin, can hunt ships and also be used as anti-submarine weapon.

### **Blue Dot Network**

- It is a multi-stakeholder initiative to bring together governments, private sector and civil society to promote high-quality, trusted standards for global infrastructure development.
- The proposal, **which is part of the US's Indo-Pacific strategy**, will evaluate projects on various parameters, including level of public consultation, transparency in funding, debt traps and basic environment norms. Projects that meet the norms will get a "blue dot", which will enable them to attract private funding.
- The proposal is aimed at countering **China's One Belt One Road initiative (OBOR)**.

### **INDIA-US TRADE RELATIONS**

- The US Trade Representative (USTR) removed India from its list of developing countries that are exempt from investigations into whether they harm American industry with unfairly subsidised exports.
- For purposes of *US Countervailing Duty (CVD) law*, the USTR considers countries with **a share of 0.5% or more of world trade** to be developed countries. The US removed India from the list for having a share of 0.5% or more of world trade.
- The move has cast a shadow on India being able to restore preferential benefits under the Generalised System of Preference (GSP) as part of its trade talks with the US, as only developing countries are eligible for it.

### **BILATERAL VISITS**

1. **President of Myanmar, U Win Myint, paid a State Visit to India.** Bus service between Manipur's Imphal and Myanmar's Mandalay will be started. India will offer medical radiation equipment Bhabhatron II for treatment of cancer patients. India will also extend the Quick Impact Project schemes to Myanmar.
2. **During the State visit of President of Portugal to India**, an MOU for Setting Up a National Maritime Museum Heritage Complex in Lothal (Gujarat) was signed between Portuguese Ministry of Defence and Indian Ministry of Shipping.
3. **Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was the chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations.** The two sides agreed on an action plan to deepen their strategic partnership which will be monitored by the India-Brazil Joint Commission. MoU for establishing a nodal institution in India to carry out research on Bioenergy was signed.

### **OPEC-PLUS**

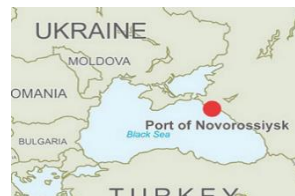
- OPEC-Plus cooperation collapsed after Russia rejected Saudi Arabia's request to effect more cuts in output given the fall in demand owing to the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- After 2014 “glut” diplomacy which brought down prices below \$30 a barrel, Saudi Arabia and Russia came together to cut output and steady prices. This was known as the “OPEC Plus” arrangement (as Russia is not a member of OPEC).
- **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** is an intergovernmental organization of 13 oil-exporting nations that coordinates and unifies the petroleum policies of its Member Countries. It was founded in 1960 and is headquartered in Vienna, Austria.

### INDIA – RUSSIA ENERGY TIES

- **Indian Oil Corp (IOCL) signed a deal with Russia’s Rosneft** for the annual purchase of 2 million metric tonnes of Urals grade crude oil from Rosneft.
- Crude oil, sourced under the contract, will be loaded in vessels at Novorossiysk port of Russia and will come to India, bypassing Straits of Hormuz. This is the **first ever annual oil purchase deal between Russia and India**.
- Novorossiysk Sea Port of Russia is located on the Northeast coast of the Black Sea, in the Tsemes Bay (also called Novorossiysk Bay).



### ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)

The OPCW has for the first time explicitly blamed Syria for toxic attacks, saying President Bashar al-Assad's air force used the **nerve gas sarin and chlorine** three times in 2017.

#### About OPCW

- OPCW is an intergovernmental organisation and the implementing body for the **Chemical Weapons Convention**, which entered into force in 1997. It oversees the global endeavour to permanently and verifiably eliminate chemical weapons.
- **Established:** 1997 **Headquarters:** The Hague, Netherlands.
- **Member states:** 193 (All states party to the CWC are automatically members. 4 UN Member States are non-members: Egypt, Israel, North Korea and South Sudan. Of these Israel signed CWC but didn't ratify it, rest 3 are non-signatories).
- The organisation was awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize "for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons with most recent being in Syria civil war".
- **The OPCW–The Hague Award** is an annual award founded by it to honour individuals and institutions who contributed towards the goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

### GISAID

- India shared nine whole genome sequences of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) with the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID).
- **What is it?** GISAID, a Non-profit organization, is a public–private partnership between the German government and the non-profit organization Friends of GISAID.
- **Functions:** It provides public access to the most complete collection of genetic sequence data of influenza viruses and related clinical and epidemiological data through its database (named EpiFlu). The database is hosted by the German government.
- **Formed:** 2008; **Headquarters:** Munich, Germany.
- In 2020, GISAID entered into the global research effort to understand the virus causing COVID-19 disease, making available over 2,600 genomic sequences that are modeled in real time, helping to track movement of the virus across the planet.

## ECONOMY

### PRADHAN MANTRI GARIB KALYAN PACKAGE

Union Finance Minister announced **Rs 1.70 Lakh Crore relief package** under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana for the poor to help them fight the battle against Corona Virus. Following are the components of the Package:

- **Insurance cover of Rs 50 Lakh per health worker** fighting COVID-19 to be provided under Insurance Scheme
- 80 crore poor people will to get 5 kg wheat or rice and 1 kg of preferred pulses for free every month for the next three months under **PM Garib Kalyan Ann (अन्न) Yojana**.
- The first instalment of Rs 2,000 due in 2020-21 will be front-loaded and paid in April 2020 itself under the PM KISAN Yojana. It would cover 8.7 crore farmers
- A total of 20.40 crores **PMJDY women account-holders** would be given an ex-gratia of Rs 500 per month for next three months. **Gas cylinders**, free of cost, would be provided to 8 crore poor families for the next three months.
- **Wage-earners below Rs 15,000 per month** in businesses having less than 100 workers are at risk of losing their employment. Under this package, government proposes to pay 24 percent of their monthly wages into their PF accounts for next three months.
- Government will give Rs 1,000 to **senior citizens (above 60 years), widows and Divyang** tide over difficulties during next three months.
- **MNREGA wages would be increased by Rs 20** with effect from 1 April, 2020. Wage increase under MNREGA will provide an additional Rs 2,000 benefit annually to a worker. This will benefit approximately 13.62 crore families.
- Women organised through 63 lakhs **SHGs** support 6.85 crore households. Limit of collateral free lending to them would be increased from Rs 10 to Rs 20 lakhs.
- **Employees' Provident Fund Regulations will be amended to include Pandemic as the reason to allow non-refundable advance** of 75 percent of the amount or three months of the wages, whichever is lower, from their accounts.
- **Welfare Fund for Building and Other Constructions Workers** has been created under a Central Government Act. State Governments will be given directions to utilise this fund to provide assistance.
- The State Government will be asked to utilise the funds available under **District Mineral Fund (DMF)** for supplementing and augmenting facilities of medical testing.

### INDIAN ACADEMY OF HIGHWAY ENGINEERS (IAHE)

- The report of the **YS Malik Committee**, constituted to give recommendations to transform the IAHE into a world class premier institute on highway sector was submitted to the Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways.
- IAHE is the premier institute for pooling of experience and sharing of knowledge on entire range of subjects involving management of highways.
- It was created by Ministry for Road Transport & Highways in 1983.

- It is located in **NOIDA** (Uttar Pradesh).

### **FULLY ACCESSIBLE ROUTE (FAR)**

- RBI has introduced a separate channel, namely '**Fully Accessible Route**' (**FAR**), to enable Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to invest in specified government securities without being subject to any investment ceilings with effect from April 1.
- This scheme shall operate along with the two existing routes, viz., the **Medium Term Framework (MTF)** and the **Voluntary Retention Route (VRR)**.
- This will substantially ease access of non-residents to Indian government securities markets and facilitate inclusion in global bond indices.

### **INDIA VIX**

- In the current calendar year, the **India VIX index has jumped fivefold, from around 12 levels to the current 67 levels**, which clearly hints that the market perceives that volatility will only increase in the coming days due to coronavirus.
- India VIX, also known as '**fear gauge**' or '**fear index**', is an index that serves as a measure of market expectation of volatility in the near term.
- While volatility signifies the rate and magnitude of change in the stock price or index value, the movement in the VIX index reflects the overall market volatility expectations over the next 30 days. So, a spike in the VIX value means the market is expecting higher volatility in the near future.

### **Timeline**

- The VIX index was first created by the Chicago Board Options Exchange (CBOE) and introduced in 1993 based on the prices of S&P 500 index.
- The India VIX was launched in 2010 and is based on the computation methodology of CBOE though amended to align with the Indian markets.

### **COMPANIES FRESH START SCHEME, 2020; LLP SETTLEMENT SCHEME, 2020**

- In the wake of COVID 19, Ministry of Corporate Affairs has introduced "**Companies Fresh Start Scheme, 2020**" and revised the "**LLP Settlement Scheme, 2020**."
- The Schemes gives longer timelines for **law abiding companies and Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs)** to comply with various filing requirements under the Companies Act 2013 and LLP Act, 2008.
- The USP of both the schemes is a one-time waiver of additional filing fees for delayed filings by the companies or LLPs with the Registrar of Companies during the period starting from 1st April, 2020 and ending on 30th September, 2020.
- They also contain provision for giving immunity from penal proceedings, including against imposition of penalties for late submissions and also provide additional time for filing appeals before the concerned Regional Directors against imposition of penalties.
- However, the immunity is only against delayed filings in MCA21 and not against any substantive violation of law.

### **Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs)**

- LLP is an alternative corporate business form that gives the **benefits of limited liability of a company** and the **flexibility of a partnership**. Hence LLP is called a hybrid between a company and a partnership.



- **Legislation in India:** All limited liability partnership is governed under the limited liability partnership act of 2008. The Corporate Affairs Ministry implements the Act.

### NON-DELIVERABLE FORWARD (NDF) MARKET

- RBI has decided to permit banks in India, which operate International Financial Services Centre Banking Units (IBUs), to participate in the non-deliverable forward (NDF) market with effect from June 1, 2020.
- NDFs are foreign exchange derivative instruments on non-convertible or restricted currencies traded over the counter (OTC) mainly at offshore centres outside the direct jurisdiction of the respective national authorities.
- RBI took the decision despite the recommendation by a task force set up by it against allowing banks in the NDF market. The task force submitted its report in July 2019.
- **The Task Force on Offshore Rupee Markets, set up by the RBI**, had proposed that Indian banks should not be permitted to deal in the offshore rupee derivative market — or the NDF market — for the present as the downside of permitting them to deal in this market outweighs the advantages.

### IFSC BANKING UNITS (IBUs)

- RBI has notified IFSC Banking Units (IBUs) participation in Rupee exchange traded currency derivatives.
- RBI had earlier accepted the recommendation made by the Task Force on Offshore Rupee Markets chaired by Usha Thorat following which it permitted rupee derivatives (with settlement in foreign currency) to be traded in IFSC.
- In April 2015, the Reserve Bank had formulated a scheme for setting up of International Financial Services Centres (IFSC) Banking Units (IBUs) by banks in IFSCs.
- An IBU is equivalent to an Overseas Branch for all practical purposes. It facilitates a base for world class International Banking services in the country.

### SHORT SELLING

- SEBI has imposed some curbs on short-selling to curb the ongoing volatility and equity sell-off in the stock market.
- Short selling refers to a strategy by which traders bet on a decline in prices and try to profit at a time when the markets are falling.

#### NEW RULES FROM MAR 23 TO APR 22

Sebi has made short selling tougher by:

➤ Raising margin requirement for cash segment

➤ Requiring traders to have more capital to play in the market

➤ Reducing monetary limit for each entity (position limit) in the derivatives segment

➤ Increasing penalties for flouting position limits

- Indian indices have fallen more than 25% from their record highs reached in January. In market parlance, **a fall of over 20% is looked upon as a sign of the markets entering a bear market.**
- During the global financial crisis of 2008, the US Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) had banned short-selling in financial stocks.

### RECESSION

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that the world is in the face of a devastating impact due to the coronavirus pandemic and has clearly entered a recession, but projected a recovery next year.
- **There is no official definition of recession**, but there is general recognition that a recession is a period of declining economic performance across an entire economy that lasts for several months.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- This decline is visible in real GDP, real income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales. A recession begins when the economy reaches a peak of activity and ends when the economy reaches its trough.
- **A depression** is a deep and long-lasting recession that lasts for many years. In a depression the decline in GDP exceeds 10 percent.

### INVEST INDIA BUSINESS IMMUNITY PLATFORM

- **Invest India** has launched The Invest India Business Immunity Platform.
- The platform, hosted on the Invest India website, is designed as a comprehensive resource to help businesses and investors get real-time updates on India's active response to Coronavirus. It is operating 24/7, with a team of dedicated sector experts.

**Invest India**, set up in 2009, is India's national Investment Promotion & Facilitation Agency. It is a non-profit venture under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

### REGIONAL RURAL BANKS (RRBs)

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved **recapitalization of those RRBs which are unable to maintain minimum Capital to Risk weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of 9%**, as per the regulatory norms prescribed by RBI.
- Consequent upon RBI's decision to introduce disclosure norms for CRAR of RRBs in 2008, a committee was set up under the Chairmanship of **Dr. K.C. Chakrabarty**. Based on the Committee's recommendations, a Scheme for Recapitalization of RRBs was approved by the Cabinet in 2011.
- Based on the CRAR position of RRBs, as on 31st March of every year, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) identifies those RRBs, which require recapitalisation assistance to maintain the mandatory CRAR of 9%.

#### Do You Know

- RRBs are jointly owned by the Central government, the State government concerned and sponsor (usually public sector) bank with the issued capital shared in the proportion of 50 %, 15 % and 35 %, respectively.
- Government has initiated structural consolidation of RRBs in three phase, thereby reducing the number of RRBs from 196 in 2005 to the present 45.
- As per RBI guidelines, RRBs have to provide 75% of their total credit under Priority Sector Lending.

### PAYMENT AGGREGATORS (PAs)

RBI has formalised guidelines for regulating the activities of payment aggregators (PAs). **Salient features of new guidelines** are:

- PAs are entities that facilitate e-commerce sites and merchants in accepting payment instruments from the customers for completion of their payment obligations.
- Payment gateways will be considered as **technology providers or outsourcing partners** of banks or non-banks, as the case may be.
- A Payment Aggregator should be a company incorporated in India under the **Companies Act, 1956 / 2013**.
- Non-bank entities offering payment aggregator services will have to apply for authorisation on or before June 30, 2021.

- E-commerce marketplaces, according to the guidelines, providing payment aggregator services will have to be separated from the marketplace business and they will have to apply for authorisation on or before June 30, 2021.
- It has also specified financial requirements for aggregators- payment aggregators existing today will have to achieve a **net worth of ₹15 crore** by March 31, 2021 and a net worth of ₹25 crore by the end of third financial year, which means or before March 31, 2023. **The net-worth of ₹25 crore** shall be maintained at all times thereafter.

### **GREAT DEPRESSION**

- **With the novel coronavirus pandemic severely affecting the global economy, some experts have begun comparing the current crisis with the Great Depression.**
- The Great Depression was a major economic crisis that began in the United States in 1929, and went to have a worldwide impact until 1939.
- It began on **October 24, 1929 (also known as “Black Thursday”)**, when a monumental crash occurred at the New York Stock Exchange (stock prices fell by 25%).
- While the Wall Street crash was triggered by minor events, the extent of the decline was due to more deep-rooted factors such as a **fall in aggregate demand, misplaced monetary policies, and an unintended rise in inventory levels.**
- The havoc caused in the US spread to other countries mainly due to the **gold standard**, which linked most of the world's currencies by fixed exchange rates. Later on, the **gold standard was abandoned.**
- In almost every country of the world, there were massive **job losses, deflation, and a drastic contraction in output.** In Europe, economic stagnation that the Depression caused was the **principal reason behind the rise of fascism, and consequently the Second World War.**

### **DIRECT OVERSEAS LISTING OF INDIAN FIRMS**

- **Union Cabinet has allowed direct listing of Indian companies** on stock exchanges in foreign jurisdictions. **For this**, amendment would be made in Section 23 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- Currently, few Indian companies have American Depository Receipts (ADRs) that are traded in the US. Some other corporates have their Global Depository Receipts (GDRs).
- Apart from providing an additional fund raising avenue for the corporates looking to expand and boost their business activities, overseas listing of shares would also help in bringing more capital into the country.

**Depository Receipt** is a foreign currency denominated instrument, listed on an international exchange, issued by a foreign depository to a domestic custodian and includes GDRs.

### **INTEREST RATE ON PROVIDENT FUND DEPOSITS**

- Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) lowered the interest rate on provident fund deposits to 8.5 % for the current financial year. This is the lowest interest on provident fund in seven years. Earlier it was 8.65 %.
- The announcement was made after the meeting of the EPFO apex decision making body – the Central Board of Trustee (CBT).

#### **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)**

- EPFO, **established in 1952**, is under the administrative control of **Union Ministry of Labor and Employment.**

- It assists the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) in implementing the following three schemes for the workforce engaged in the organized sector in India: **(1) EPF Scheme 1952; (2) Pension scheme 1995 (EPS); and Insurance scheme (EDLI).**
- It is also the nodal agency for implementing **Bilateral Social Security Agreements** with other countries on a reciprocal basis.
- In 2014, union government launched **Universal Account Number (UAN)** for Employees covered by EPFO to enable PF number portability.

#### **FDI IN AIR INDIA**

- **The Union Cabinet has decided to allow Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), who are Indian nationals, to own up to 100% stake of Air India ‘under automatic route.’**
- The Government is in the process of selling Air India.
- Air India is the flag carrier airline of India, headquartered at New Delhi. It is owned by Air India Limited, a government-owned enterprise.
- The airline was founded by **J. R. D. Tata** as Tata Airlines in 1932. The airline became a member of Star Alliance in 2014.

#### **VIRTUAL CURRENCY**

- The Supreme Court has set aside a ban by the RBI on banks and financial institutions from dealing with virtual currency holders and exchanges.
- The court held that the ban did not pass the **“proportionality” test**. The test of proportionality of any action by the govt must pass the test of **Article 19(1)(g)**, which states that all citizens of the country will have the right to practise any profession, or carry on any occupation or trade and business.
- In 2018, RBI had banned banks from dealing with virtual currency exchanges and individual holders on the grounds that these currencies had no underlying fiat.
- **An Inter-Ministerial Committee on Virtual Currencies** submitted its Report in 2019 which recommended banning of the cryptocurrencies in India. However, it has also proposed that the Government keeps an open mind on official digital currency.

#### **Do You Know**

- Virtual currency is currency held within the **blockchain network** that is not controlled by a centralized banking authority.
- **Virtual currency is different than digital currency** since digital currency is simply currency issued by a bank in digital form.
- Virtual currency is unregulated and therefore experiences dramatic price movements since the only real force behind trading is consumer sentiment.

#### **HAULAGE CHARGES**

- To make the business of running trains more viable for private operators in the future, the government has decided to delink the cost of energy consumed by the private trains from the overall haulage charges payable to Railways.
- Haulage charge is the money private players will have to pay to Railways, on a per-km basis, for using its infrastructure in operating the trains – track, signaling, associated manpower and the like.

#### **RENEWABLE ENERGY MANAGEMENT CENTERS (REMCs)**

- Union Power Minister dedicated 11 Renewable Energy Management Centers (REMCs) to the nation.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- REMCs are equipped with Artificial Intelligence based RE forecasting and scheduling tools and provide greater visualization and situational awareness to the grid operators.
- Government of India had approved the implementation of the REMCs as a Central Scheme and had mandated POWERGRID, a Maharatna CPSE under Ministry of Power as Implementing Agency.
- These REMCs are being managed by Power System Operation Corporation of India Ltd. (POSOCO) at Regional and National level and at State level by State Load Despatch Centres (SLDCs).

### HURUN GLOBAL RICH LIST 2020

#### The ninth edition of the Hurun Global Rich List was released. Key findings:

- It lists 2,817 individuals across the globe having a networth of USD 1 billion or more.
- **China and the US** occupied the first and second spot with 799 and 626 billionaires, respectively. India added 34 new billionaires to take the count to 138 on the list which has helped the country to feature at the third position globally.
- **Mumbai** is the home to more than a third of the richest individuals in the country with 50 of them living in the megapolis, making it the ninth richest city globally, followed by New Delhi with 30, Bengaluru with 17 and Ahmedabad with 12.
- With USD 67 billion in networth, **Mukesh Ambani is the ninth richest in the world which is topped by Jeff Bezos of Amazon** with USD 140 billion.

The Hurun report is a luxury publishing and events group set up in London in 1998 with strong presence in China.

### FPIs FROM MAURITIUS

- SEBI clarified that foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) from Mauritius will continue to be eligible for registration as foreign investors in India but subject to increased monitoring.
- The clarification was necessitated after Mauritius was placed in the list of '**jurisdictions under increased monitoring**', commonly referred to as the '**Grey List**'. This led to apprehensions that the Mauritius-based FPIs will not be able to trade in India.
- As per data from the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL), **Mauritius accounts for the second-largest chunk of foreign investments after U.S.**

### G SRINIVASAN COMMITTEE

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has set up a nine-member committee under Chairmanship of G Srinivasan to study the feasibility of allowing life insurers to offer indemnity-based health policies.
- As of now, only general insurance firms and specialised health insurance companies are allowed to offer **indemnity-based health policies**.
- IRDAI (Health Insurance) Regulations 2016 allow life insurance companies to offer benefit-based health insurance products only.

In an **Indemnity-Based Health Insurance Plan**, the policyholder is reimbursed the cost of medical expenses. These plans will reimburse the policyholder with the actual amount incurred as expenses during a hospitalisation stay up to the sum insured under the policy.

### SCIENCE AND APPLIED RESEARCH ALLIANCE AND SUPPORT (SARAS)

- **NCL (Northern Coalfields Limited)** has set up a centre named "Science and Applied Research Alliance and Support"(SARAS) to promote Innovation and improve NCL's operational efficiency.
- NCL is a flagship subsidiary of Coal India. This Miniratna Company was founded in 1985 and is **Headquartered in Singrauli**.



**STEEL INDUSTRY**

- As per World Steel Association data, **India became the second largest steel producer of crude steel after China in 2018 and 2019, by replacing Japan.** The United States and South Korea rank fourth and fifth respectively.
- **World Steel Association** is the international trade body for the iron and steel industry. It is a non-profit organisation with its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.
- Steel being a **deregulated sector**, the Government does not set any annual targets for steel production. Decision on quantity of steel production is taken by individual companies based on commercial considerations and market requirements.

**TILHAN MISSION**

- Union Agriculture Minister announced that the government will launch Tilhan Mission to make the country self-reliant in **oilseed production.**
- The Government is already implementing the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) – Oilseeds and Oil Palm to increase production of oilseeds.

**FORCE MAJEURE**

- Union Finance Ministry said that the COVID-19 outbreak in China will be considered a 'force majeure' situation. This would avoid imposition of penalties on the companies executing government contracts who may be dependent on supplies from affected areas.
- Force majeure refers to a clause that is included in contracts to remove liability for natural and unavoidable catastrophes that interrupt the expected course of events and restrict participants from fulfilling obligations.
- Force majeure is a French term that literally means "greater force." A 'force majeure' situation refers to extraordinary events and circumstances beyond human control.
- It is related to the concept of an act of God, an event for which no party can be held accountable, such as a hurricane or a tornado.
- Force majeure **also encompasses human actions, however, such as armed conflict.**

**SANJIV PURI EXPERT GROUP**

- **The Fifteenth Finance Commission has constituted a High Level Expert Group on Agriculture Exports to be chaired by Sanjiv Puri (CMD of ITC Group).**
- **Mandate:** To recommend measurable performance incentives for States to encourage agriculture exports as well as to promote crops to enable high import substitution.

**DAIRY PROCESSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND (DIDF)**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved upward revision of interest subvention from "upto 2%" to "upto 2.5% p.a." under the DIDF scheme Dairy with the revised outlay of Rs 11184 Crore.
- Under DIDF, Government of India will provide Interest subvention upto 2.5% to NABARD from 2019-20 to 2030-31 and in case there is any further increase in the cost of funds, it shall be borne by the end borrowers themselves.
- The funding period (2017-18 to 2019-20) of the scheme is revised to 2018-19 to 2022-23 and the repayment period to be extended upto 2030-31.

**Background:**

- DIDF scheme is implemented by Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DADF).
- Under it, milk cooperatives are provided financial assistance at the interest rate of 6.5% in the form of financial assistance loan to be returned over a period of 10 years. With this investment, 95,00,000 farmers in about 50,000 villages would be benefitted.
- **Major activities covered under DIDF are:** Modernizations creation of new milk processing facilities and manufacturing facilities for Value Added Products, Chilling Infrastructure, Electronic Adulteration testing kit and Project Management & Learning.

**FARMER PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS (FPOs)**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved a scheme for "Formation and Promotion of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) " to form and promote 10,000 new FPOs during 2019-20 to 2023-24.
- **The three implementing Agencies to promote FPOs are:** Small Farmers Agri-business Consortium (SFAC), National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).
- FPOs will be formed and promoted through **Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs)** engaged at the State/Cluster level by implementing agencies.
- FPOs will be promoted under "**One District One Product**" cluster to promote specialization and better processing, marketing, branding & export by FPOs.
- **Benefits:** Through formation of FPOs, farmers will have better collective strength for better access to quality input, technology, credit and better marketing access through economies of scale for better realization of income.

**SPICe+**

- **The Corporate Affairs Ministry (MCA)** has come out with the format of the new web form — **SPICe+ — for incorporation of companies with effect from February 15.**
- The web form has replaced the existing electronic form SPICe (Simplified Proforma for Incorporating Company Electronically).
- The 22-page integrated web form will, among other things, offer 10 services by three Central Government Ministries and Departments (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Department of Revenue in the Finance Ministry) and one State Government (Maharashtra).
- The Ministry has also come up with an **AGILE PRO form**, part of SPICe+, for GSTIN/ EPFO/ ESIC/ Profession Tax/ Bank Account.

**INTERNATIONAL IP INDEX 2020**

- International IP Index was released by Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) of the US Chambers of Commerce, a top American industry body.
- India has been ranked **40th out of 53 countries** on the 2020 index. India was placed at 36th position among 50 countries in 2019.
- India's score, however, increased from 36.04 % (16.22 out of 45) in 2019 to 38.46 % (19.23 out of 50) in 2020, a 2.42 % jump in absolute score. However, India's relative score increased by 6.71 %.
- **U.S. tops the scorecard** with 95.28% out of an 100% scale, while the UK (93.92%), France (91.50%), Germany (91.08%), Sweden (90.56%) and Japan (90.40%) follow.

## PUNJAB KINNOW

- The Punjab Agri Export Corporation recently launched the '**Punjab Kinnow**' brand at the kinnow festival in Abohar.
- **Punjab is the largest producer of kinnow in the country.** This brand of kinnow, which is considered the 'king fruit' of Punjab, is "**pesticide-free**".
- The plant starts flowering in February-end, grows till July-August, turning from green to yellowish in September-October till the pre-harvesting stage in November. Kinnow crop harvesting starts in the first week of December in Punjab and continues till mid-March.

This has been done along the lines of the region-specific branding of several other fruits like the '**Nagpur orange**' (which even has a GI tag) and 'Australian kiwi'.

## COAL SECTOR

**Union Minister of Coal and Mines made the following announcements:**

- India will **stop importing thermal coal** from Financial Year 2023-24.
- The Ministry of Coal will introduce a "**Coal Minister's Award**" to recognize best practices in coal production, productivity, safety etc. by the coal companies.
- CIL could generate 5 GW of solar power by FY 2023-24 and could diversify into coal gasification with a target of 50 Million Tonnes by 2030.

## ARUN JAITLEY NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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

Late Arun Jaitley – a Padma Vibhushan awardee – during his tenure as Finance Minister oversaw introduction of GST, IBC merger of Railway Budget with General Budget etc.

## RBI ACCOUNTING YEAR

- On the recommendation of "**Bimal Jalan Committee on Economic Capital Framework (ECF)**", RBI has decided to change its accounting year **from July-June to April- May.**
- Accordingly, the next accounting year will be a nine-month period which starts from July 2020 and ends on March 31, 2021. Thereafter, all the financial years will start from April.
- While the RBI accounts will now be aligned with the central government accounts, experts said the change in the fiscal year could reduce the need for interim dividend being paid by the RBI. The payment of an interim dividend may then be restricted to extraordinary circumstances.

**KVIC launched Honey Mission in 2017** and has been training beekeepers, distributing Bee Boxes and helping rural youth to earn extra income through beekeeping activities.

## APIARY ON WHEELS

- **Union MSME Minister launched Apiary on Wheels in Delhi.** Apiary on Wheels is a platform which can carry 20 Bee Boxes from one place to another.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- 'Apiary on Wheels' is a unique concept designed by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) for the easy upkeep and migration of Bee Boxes having live Bee colonies.

### NEW UMBRELLA ENTITY (NUE)

- RBI has proposed to set up a new pan-India new umbrella entity (NUE) or entities focussing on retail payment systems with a minimum paid-up capital of Rs 500 crore.
- The proposed entity will set up, manage and operate new payment systems especially in the retail space comprising of ATMs, white label PoS, Aadhaar-based payments and remittance services, develop payment methods etc.
- No single promoter or promoter group should have more than 40 % investment in the capital of the entity.
- The promoter or the promoter group shareholding should be diluted to a minimum of 25 % after 5 years of the commencement of business. A minimum net worth of Rs 300 crore should be maintained.
- The entity eligible to apply as promoter or the promoter group for the NUE should be 'owned and controlled by residents' with 3 years' experience in the payments ecosystem as Payment System Operator (PSO) or Payment Service Provider (PSP).

### WEB PORTAL FOR STAR RATING OF MINES

- In order to promote sustainable mining practices using technology as a tool, **Ministry of Coal (MoC) has launched a web portal for star rating of coal mines.**
- Based on the star ratings obtained through a well-defined mechanism on this web portal, the highest scoring mines in the country will be awarded in a public ceremony.
- The mines that score from 91 to 100% will get 5 star, 81 to 90% 4 star, 71 to 80% 3 star, 61 to 70% 2 star, 41 to 60% 1 star and mines that score from 0 to 40% will get No star.

### PUBLIC ENTERPRISES SURVEY- 2018-19

- The Public Enterprises Survey- 2018-19 was tabled in Parliament. It was prepared by the **Department of Public Enterprises (DPE), Ministry of Heavy Industries.**
- As per the Survey, there were total 348 Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) as on 31st March, 2019 out of which 249 were operational. Remaining 86 CPSEs were under construction and 13 CPSEs were under closure or liquidation.
- **Total paid up capital** in all CPSEs as on 31.3.2019 stood at Rs. 2,75,697 crore as compared to Rs. 2,53,977 crore as on 31.3.2018, showing a growth of 8.55%.
- **Overall net profit** of operating CPSEs during 2018-19 stood at Rs. 1,42,951 crore as compared to Rs. 1,23,751 crore during 2017-18 showing a growth of 15.52%.
- **ONGC, Indian Oil Corporation and NTPC** were the top three profitable PSUs, whereas BSNL, Air India and MTNL incurred highest losses for a third consecutive year.

### TAXATION OF NRIs

- Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) issued a clarification on the new provision in Finance Bill 2020.
- It said that The Finance Bill, 2020 has proposed that an Indian citizen shall be deemed to be resident in India if he or she is not liable to be taxed in any country or jurisdiction.
- It said that the new provision in Finance Bill, 2020 is not intended to include in tax net those Indian citizens who are bonafide workers in other countries. This is an anti-abuse provision since it is noticed that some Indian citizens shift their stay in low or no tax jurisdiction countries to avoid payment of tax in India.

## BASMATI RICE (BASMATI 334; DOM SUFID)

- **Scientists have mapped the complete genome of two basmati rice varieties.**
- The researchers focused on two basmati rice varieties: **Basmati 334 from Pakistan**, known to be drought tolerant and resistant to rice-killing bacterial blight, and **Dom Sufid from Iran**, an aromatic long-grain rice.
- The findings show that basmati rice is a hybrid of two other rice groups. Most genetic material in basmati comes from japonica —a rice group found in East Asia — followed by the rice group aus found in Bangladesh.

### Do you know?

- Basmati is a variety of long, slender-grained aromatic rice which is traditionally from the Indian subcontinent. As of 2018-19, India exported to 65% of the overseas basmati rice market, while Pakistan accounted for the remainder.
- In 2016, the APEDA registered **Basmati Rice as a product with GI Tag**.
- According to the Indian Government agency APEDA, a rice variety is eligible to be notified as Basmati if it has a minimum average precooked milled rice length of 6.61 mm and average precooked milled rice breadth of up to 2 mm, among other parameters.

## INDIA INTERNATIONAL SEAFOOD SHOW (IISS) 2020

- The 22nd edition of India International Seafood Show (IISS) was held in Kochi with the theme “**Blue Revolution- Beyond Production to Value Addition**”.
- The India International Seafood Show (IISS) 2020 is being organized by the **Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)**, under **Ministry of Commerce** in association with the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI).
- The 21st edition of this **biennial show** was held in Goa in January 2018.

## GLOBAL MISERY INDEX (GMI)

- The Congress Party demanded that India’s economy needs to be evaluated in terms of the Global Misery Index (GMI). **American economist Steve Hanke of Johns Hopkins University**, an applied economist has popularised the GMI concept.
- He has ranked **India a measly 44 out of 95 countries on GMI**. The benchmark index measures people’s “misery score” instead of the conventional gross domestic product (GDP).
- **Methodology:** It is based on the three parameters namely **unemployment rate, inflation rate and lending rate**. To calculate misery index, the annualised growth of GDP is subtracted from the sum total of these three rates. That gives a score which really defines how miserable people living in a particular geography are.

## GOTT PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT (PMU)

- Government eMarketplace (GeM), under the Department of Commerce and Government of Uttar Pradesh, signed a MoU to set up a **GeM Organizational Transformation Team (GOTT) Project Management Unit (PMU)** in the State.
- It will make it easier for MSMEs of U.P. to onboard and transact on GeM. GOTT will assist the buyer agency to redesign the procurement processes to derive maximum benefit from the online marketplace.

UP is the second State after Punjab to establish a GOTT-PMU. Among the CPSEs, SAIL has already signed MoU for setting up a PMU.



## CROP INSURANCE SCHEMES

The Union Cabinet has approved revamping of "Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)" and "Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)" to address the existing challenges in implementation of Crop Insurance Schemes.

**It is proposed to modify following provisions of PMFBY and RWBCIS:**

- Allocation of business to Insurance Companies to be done for **three years**.
- Option shall be given to States/UTs to choose Scale of Finance or district level Value of Notional Average Yield (NAY) i.e. Minimum Support Price (MSP) as Sum Insured for any district crop combination.
- Central Subsidy under PMFBY/RWBCIS to be limited for premium rates **upto 30% for unirrigated areas/crops and 25% for irrigated areas/crops**.
- Enrolment under the Scheme to be made **voluntary for all farmers**.
- Central Share in Premium Subsidy to be **increased to 90% for North Eastern States** from the existing sharing pattern of 50:50.
- **Provisioning of at least 3% of the total allocation for the Scheme** to be made by Government of India and Implementing States for administrative expenses. This shall be subject to an upper cap fixed by DAC&FW for each State.
- These changes are proposed to be implemented from Kharif 2020 Season.

## 3rd GLOBAL POTATO CONCLAVE

- PM Modi addressed the 3rd Global Potato Conclave at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- **Bodies involved:** The Conclave was organized by Indian Potato Association (IPA) in collaboration with Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, and **ICAR-Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla** and **International Potato Center (CIP), Lima, Peru**.
- **Background:** This was the third in the series. During last two decades two Global Potato Conferences were organized during 1999, and 2008.
- **Aim:** The Conclave provides an opportunity so that all the issues are discussed and future plans are made involving everyone related to the potato sector.

### Gujarat and Potato sector:

- Gujarat is one of the leading producers of Potato in the country. In the last eleven years alone, while the area under potato in India has increased by 19%, it has increased by about 170% in Gujarat.
- With a productivity of more than 30t/ha, Gujarat is holding the No. 1 position in India for last one decade.

## INDIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

- According to a report by **the World Population Review**, India's economy is the fifth largest in the world with a GDP of \$2.94 trillion, overtaking the UK and France in 2019 to take the fifth spot.
- In purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, India's GDP (PPP) is \$10.51 trillion, exceeding that of Japan and Germany. However, India's GDP per capita is merely \$2,170 (for comparison, the US is \$62,794).

The US-based World Population Review is a **US-based think tank**. It is an independent organisation without any political affiliations.

**SPECIALIZED SUPERVISORY AND REGULATORY CADRE (SSRC)**

- RBI has decided to **recruit 35% of the specialised supervisory and regulatory cadre (SSRC) from the market** while the remaining 65% will be recruited via internal promotions.
- SSRC will comprise officers in Grade B to Executive Director level. In November 2019, RBI merged the three regulatory departments (department of banking, non-banking and cooperative bank) into one and did likewise for the three supervisory departments.
- Thus, there is only one supervisory department which looks after supervision of banks, NBFCs and cooperative banks and only one regulatory department for these three.

**GLOBAL TALENT COMPETITIVENESS INDEX**

- The 2020 Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI) report, compiled by INSEAD in collaboration with human resource firm Addeco and Google, was released.
- Launched for the first time in 2014, the GTCI is an annual benchmarking report that measures the ability of countries to compete for talent.
- **India has climbed eight places to 72nd rank** in the 2020 GTCI, which was **topped by Switzerland, the US and Singapore**.
- In the **BRICS grouping**, China was ranked 42nd, Russia (48th), South Africa (70th) and Brazil at 80th position.
- **India's highest-ranked sub-pillar is employability**, but the ability to match labour market demand and supply stands in contrast to the country's poor "mid-level skills", which result in a mediocre score in vocational and technical skills.

**INSEAD** is a graduate business school with locations in Europe (France), Asia (Singapore), the Middle East (Abu Dhabi), and North America (San Francisco). The name "INSEAD" originated as an acronym of Institut Européen d'Administration des Affaires (French for "European Institute of Business Administration").

**INTEREST RATE FUTURES (IRF) CONTRACTS**

- **The Metropolitan Stock Exchange (MSE)** has become the **first bourse in the country** to get a regulatory approval from the SEBI to launch **weekly interest rate futures (IRF) contracts**.
- IRFs are futures contracts wherein the underlying financial instrument pays interest.
- In the Indian market, exchange traded IRFs are based on 6-year, 10-year and 13-year government bonds and 91-day government treasury bills.

**Monthly versus Weekly:**

- Currently, both the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and the BSE offer trading facilities in such instruments but the contracts have a monthly tenor.
- It is expected that weekly contracts would give market players an avenue to hedge their risk exposure in the short term, especially during events such as central bank policy reviews, growth data releases and global events.

**NATIONAL STOCK EXCHANGE OF INDIA LTD (NSE)**

- National Stock Exchange of India Ltd (NSE) is now **world's largest derivatives exchange by volume**.
- It has emerged as world's largest derivatives exchange in 2019 by number of contracts traded, **surpassing the CME Group**, according to Futures Industry Association (FIA), a derivatives trade body.

NSE is the leading stock exchange of India, located in Mumbai. The NSE was established in 1994 as the first materialised electronic exchange in the country.

- **NSE is also ranked third in the world in the cash equities** segment by number of trades as per the statistics published by the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE).

### WORLD EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL OUTLOOK 2020

The International Labour Organization (ILO) released a new report titled “The World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2020 (WESO)”. **Key highlights are –**

- Due to slowing global economic growth, **Global Unemployment** is projected to increase by around 2.5 million in 2020.
- In addition to the **global number of unemployed (188 million), 165 million people don't have enough paid work and 120 million have either given up actively searching for work or otherwise lack access to the labour market.** In total, more than 470 million people worldwide are affected.
- At the global level, **income inequality** is higher, especially in developing countries. Worldwide, the share of national income going to labour (rather than to other factors of production) declined substantially between 2004 and 2017, from 54 % to 51 %.
- Currently **working poverty** (defined as earning less than US\$3.20 per day in purchasing power parity terms) affects more than 630 million workers, or one in five of the global working population.
- **Around 267 million young people (aged 15-24)** are not in employment, education or training, and many more endure substandard working conditions.

The annual World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO) Trends report released by ILO analyses key labour market issues, including unemployment, labour underutilisation, working poverty, income inequality, labour income share and factors that exclude people from decent work.

### MOBILE AIDED NOTE IDENTIFIER (MANI)

- RBI has launched a mobile app, **Mobile Aided Note Identifier (MANI) to help visually challenged people to identify denomination of currency notes.**
- Through the downloaded app, users can scan the notes using the camera. The audio output will give the result in Hindi and English.

### ADJUSTED GROSS REVENUE (AGR)

- The Department of Telecom (DoT) announced that it will not take ‘coercive’ action against telecom companies that failed to meet the January 23 deadline to pay dues related to AGR as per the Supreme Court’s recent order.
- The order comes as a huge relief for operators that would have otherwise faced possible contempt action for not paying dues by the deadline. Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea together owe the telecom department Rs 88,624 crore.

#### Background:

- **Meaning of AGR:** Telecom operators are required to pay licence fee and spectrum charges in the form of ‘revenue share’ to the Government. The revenue amount used to calculate this revenue share is known as AGR.
- **Debate Over Definition?** While telecom companies argued that AGR should comprise revenue from telecom services, the Department of Telecom (DoT)’s stand was that the AGR should include all revenue earned by an operator, including that from non-core telecom operations.
- **Supreme Court Order:** In October 2019, the Supreme Court of India upheld the DoT’s interpretation of AGR, which came as a huge blow to telecom service providers. Following the order, the telcos are now staring at dues of around ₹1 lakh crore.

## ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

The report titled “Time to Care: Unpaid and Underpaid Care Work and the Global Inequality Crisis” was published by Oxfam, the international non-profit body focussed on the alleviation of global poverty. Key highlights:

- 2,153 individuals, the number of billionaires in the world in 2019, have more wealth among them than 4.6 billion people. The world’s richest 1% have more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people.
- **India’s richest 1% hold more than four times the wealth held by the 953 million who make up for the bottom 70% of the country’s population.**
- Globally, 42% of working age women are outside the paid labour force, compared with 6% of men, due to unpaid care responsibilities.
- Globally, extreme poverty rates are 4% higher for women than men; this gap rises to 22% during women’s peak productive and reproductive ages; that is, 122 women aged 25-34 for every 100 men of the same age group live in extremely poor households, largely due to childcare responsibilities.
- An additional 0.5% tax on the wealth of the richest 1% over the next 10 years can create 117 million jobs in education, health and elderly care, etc.

## ‘MUST RUN’ STATUS

- An expert group reviewing the Indian Electricity Grid Code (IEGC) has asserted that **renewable energy power plants** shall be treated as “must run” and electricity from these plants shall not be curtailed for any commercial reasons.
- A ‘must run’ status means that the concerned power plant has to **supply electricity to the grid under all conditions.**
- Wind, solar, wind-solar hybrid and hydro plants (in case of excess water leading to spillage) shall be treated as MUST RUN power plants and shall not be subjected to curtailment on account of merit order despatch or any other commercial consideration

## Background

- The unplugging, also called backing-down, stems from the poor financial status of discoms, because of which a number of them have started going back on their PPA commitments with solar and wind power producers.
- The renewable sector was previously accorded a ‘must run’ status in the 2010 IEGC, despite which states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have curtailed electricity from such sources.

## 'OPTION IN GOODS' IN COMMODITIES

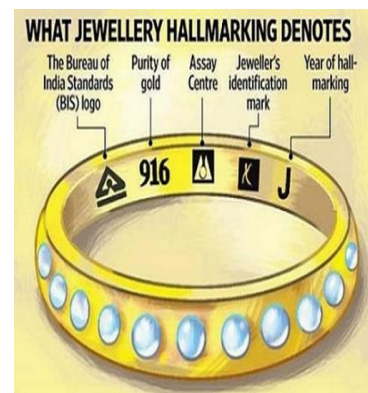
- SEBI allowed stock exchanges to launch ‘option in goods’ in their commodity derivatives segment. This is in addition to ‘options on commodity futures’. Norms for options on goods are liberal compared to those on options on futures.
- The provision shall pave the way for launching options contracts in commodities based on underlying spot market price and settlement through compulsory delivery.
- For the first time, Indian commodity derivatives market will witness both European as well as American options, where as in securities market options are restricted to European style only.
- As of now commodity options are permitted based on futures of that commodity as underlying. This means that on expiry of options, it devolves in futures or every option trade if not squared off on expiry in futures.

## APNA UREA – SONA UGLE

- The Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers launched the "APNA UREA - SonaUgle" brand of **Hindustan Urvarak & Rasayan Limited (HURL)**.
- HURL, established in 2016, is a Joint Venture Company promoted by the three Maharatna Companies i.e. Coal India Limited (CIL), NTPC Limited (NTPC) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) as the lead promoters.
- In 2016, Government of India had approved the revival of three sick Urea plants located at Gorakhpur, Sindri and Barauni, which have been undertaken by HURL.

## HALLMARKING MADE MANDATORY FOR GOLD JEWELLERY

- Consumer Affairs Minister announced that from 15<sup>th</sup> Jan' 2021 onwards, no jeweller will be allowed to sell gold jewellery or artefacts without hallmark from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).
- **What is it?** Gold hallmarking is a purity certification. Mandatory hallmarking will protect the public against lower caratage and ensure consumers do not get cheated while buying gold ornaments.
- **Consumers have to watch out for four marks on hallmarked gold jewellery:** (1) BIS mark, (2) purity in carat, (3) assay centre's name and (4) jewellers' identification mark.
- **Grades Available:** Instead of 10 grades earlier, jewellers will be allowed to sell only 14, 18 and 22 carat gold jewellery.
- **Penalty:** If jewellery or artefacts made of 14, 18 and 22 carat gold are sold without a BIS hallmark, then the jeweller could be charged penalty 5 times the cost of object or even given imprisonment up to one year.



### Do You Know

- The BIS Act 2016 has enabling provisions under Section 14 & Section 16 for mandatory hallmarking of Gold jewellery & artefacts by the Central Government.
- BIS (Hallmarking) Regulations, 2018 were notified w.e.f. 14.06.2018.

## NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION (NSFI): 2019-2024

RBI released the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI) for the period 2019-2024. **Key highlights of the strategy:**

- Strengthen the ecosystem for various modes of digital financial services in all Tier-II to Tier VI centres to move towards a less-cash society by March 2022.
- Increase outreach of banking outlets to provide **banking access to every village within a 5-km radius or a hamlet of 500 households in hilly areas** by March 2020.
- Aim was also to see that **every adult had access to a financial service provider** through a mobile device by March 2024.
- Every willing and eligible adult enrolled under the Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojana, to be enrolled under an insurance scheme and a pension scheme by March 2020.
- Make the Public Credit Registry (PCR) fully operational by March 2022 so that authorised financial entities could leverage it for assessing credit proposals from citizens.

## PURVODAYA

- Ministry of Steel launched 'Purvodaya': Accelerated Development of Eastern Region through an Integrated Steel hub.



- The proposed Integrated Steel Hub would encompass 5 states namely **Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Northern Andhra Pradesh**.
- The Integrated Steel Hub would focus on 3 key elements:
  - Capacity addition through easing the setup of greenfield steel plants
  - Development of steel clusters near integrated steel plants & demand centres
  - Transformation of logistics and utilities infrastructure which would change the socio-economic landscape in the East

**Do You Know**

Eastern states of India (Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Northern Andhra Pradesh) collectively hold ~80% of the country's iron ore, ~100% of coking coal and significant portion of chromite, bauxite and dolomite reserves.

**VOTING AT THE GST COUNCIL**

- Breaking the tradition of consensus-based decisions in its 37 earlier meetings, the GST Council voted for the first time in its 38th meeting. The proposal to have a higher single rate for lotteries went through by a majority, with 21 votes in favour.
- Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is a federal body for bringing states and the Centre on a common platform for the nationwide rollout of the indirect tax reform.
- **It is chaired by Union Finance Minister.** Its members consists of Union Minister of State, in-charge of Revenue and state finance Ministers.
- As per **The Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016**, in case of a voting, every decision of the GST Council has to be taken by a majority of not less than three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present.
- The vote of the central government has a weightage of one-third of the total votes cast, and the votes of all the state governments taken together have a weightage of two-thirds of the total votes cast in that meeting.

**GST RATES**

- **The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council has decided to increase GST rates on mobile phones to 18 per cent from 12 per cent with effect from 1st of April.**
- The Council also decided to slash GST on maintenance, repair and overhaul services for aircraft to 5 per cent from 12 per cent, while the tax rate on handmade and machine-made matchsticks has been rationalized to 12 per cent.
- The council has decided to waive the late fee for delayed filing of annual returns for the financial years 2018 and 2019 by entities with a turnover of less than Rs two crore.
- Interest will be levied on net tax liability from 1st of July for delayed GST payments.
- The council has asked Infosys, which has designed the GSTN, to deploy more skilled manpower and increase capacity of hardware of GST Network to ensure that the system is glitch-free.

**IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF INDIA'S ENERGY POLICIES 2020**

**In partnership with NITI Aayog, the International Energy Agency (IEA) released the first in-depth review of India's energy policies. Key findings:**

- India spent \$25 billion in 2018 on subsidies for the consumption of fossil fuels, mostly supporting oil consumption in the form of LPG (\$17 billion) and gas (\$4 billion).

- While the diesel subsidy ended in 2014-15, government is gradually increasing the prices of kerosene and cooking gas (LPG) to phase out the subsidies.
- India is the world's third-largest consumer of oil, the fourth-largest oil refiner and a net exporter of refined products.
- The government aims to increase the share of natural gas in the country's energy mix to 15% by 2030, from 6% today.
- Both the energy and emission intensities of India's gross domestic product (GDP) have decreased by more than 20% over the past decade. This represents commendable progress even as total energy-related carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions continue to rise.

### SMALL FINANCE BANK

- **Shivalik Mercantile Co-operative Bank Limited** has become the **first urban cooperative bank (UCB)** that has been granted 'in-principle' permission to convert into a small finance bank by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- The 'in-principle' approval will be valid for 18 months, within which Shivalik Mercantile Co-operative Bank had to comply with the norms of an SFB.
- On being satisfied that the applicant has complied with the requisite conditions as part of "in-principle" approval, the RBI would consider granting it a licence for commencement of banking business under Section 22 (1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 as a SFB.

#### Background:

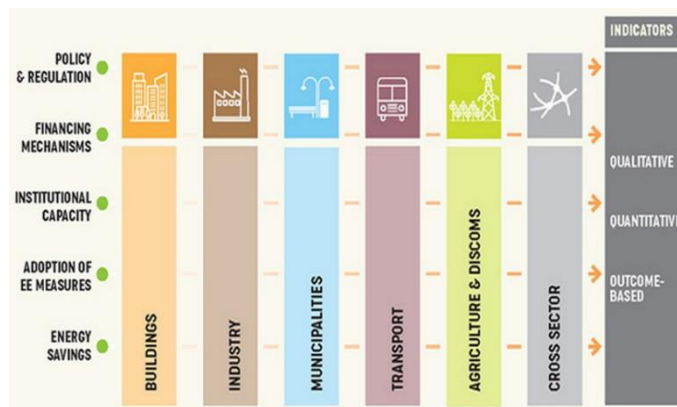
- In June 2018, the RBI had announced that it would allow voluntary transition of UCBs which meet certain conditions into SFBs, in pursuance of the recommendations of **High Powered Committee on UCBs (2015), chaired by R Gandhi**.
- Accordingly, the "Scheme on voluntary transition of Urban Co-operative Bank into a Small Finance Bank" was issued in 2018.

### STATE ENERGY EFFICIENCY INDEX 2019

- Union Government released the State Energy Efficiency Index 2019. The index tracks the progress of Energy Efficiency initiatives in 36 States and Union Territories based on 97 significant indicators.

- The index is developed by **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** in association with **Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE)**. The first such Index was launched in 2018.

- The index this year incorporates **qualitative, quantitative and outcome-based indicators** to assess energy efficiency initiatives, programs and outcomes in five distinct sectors – **Buildings, Industry, Municipalities, Transport, Agriculture & Discoms**.



- New indicators for this year include adoption of Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) 2017, energy efficiency in MSME clusters, etc.
- For rational comparison, States/UTs are categorised as '**Front Runner**', '**Achiever**', '**Contender**' and '**Aspirant**' based on aggregated Total Primary Energy Supply (TPES) required to meet the state's actual energy demand (electricity, coal, oil, gas, etc.).

- The top performing states in the State EE Index 2019 - Haryana, Kerala and Karnataka - are in the 'Achiever' category. **There isn't any 'front runner' state.**
- Manipur, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand and Rajasthan performed the worst in the **Aspirant groups.**

### NEW ENERGY PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR AIR CONDITIONERS

The Central Government in consultation with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) has notified new energy performance standards for Room Air Conditioner (RACs).

#### Key Highlights Of The New Standard

- The **24 Degrees Celsius default setting** has been made mandatory for all Room Air Conditioners (RACs) covered under the ambit of BEE star-labelling program with effect from January 1, 2020.
- The **Indian Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (ISEER)** will range from (3.30 - 5.00) for split and (2.70 – 3.50) for window air conditioners, which will be applicable from 1st January 2021 onwards.

#### Background

- BEE has launched the voluntary star labelling program for fixed-speed room air conditioners (RACs) in 2006, and this program became mandatory in 2009.
- Thereafter, in 2015, voluntary star labelling program for inverter room air conditioners was launched and which was made mandatory with effect from 1st January 2018.
- The BEE star labelling program for Room Air Conditioners now covers both fixed and inverter RAC up to a cooling capacity of 10,465 watts (2.97 TR).
- **ISEER (Indian Seasonal Energy efficiency ratio)** is the energy performance index used for Room Air Conditioners (RACs) and its assessment is based on the bin hours defined in ISO 16358.

### RESIDENTIAL BUILDER FINANCE WITH BUYER GUARANTEE (RBBG) SCHEME

- State Bank of India (SBI) launched 'Residential Builder Finance with Buyer Guarantee' (RBBG) scheme to give a push to residential sales.
- Under this scheme, the SBI will issue a guarantee for completion of select residential projects to customers who have availed home loans from it. The scheme will focus on affordable housing projects priced up to 2.50 crore rupees in 10 cities initially.
- Under RBBG, the guarantee would be given by the bank till the project gets the occupation certificate (OC).
- The guarantee will be available for RERA registered projects and a project will be considered stuck after it crosses the RERA deadline.

The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 establishes Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) in each state for regulation of the real estate sector and also acts as an adjudicating body for speedy dispute resolution.

### SUPERVISORY ACTION FRAMEWORK FOR PRIMARY (URBAN) CO-OPERATIVE BANKS (UCBs)

- RBI has decided to **impose restrictions on urban cooperative banks (UCBs)** for deterioration of financial position, **in line with the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework** that is imposed on commercial banks.
- Under this revised **Supervisory Action Framework (SAF)**, UCBs will face restrictions for worsening of three parameters:
  - when net NPA exceed 6% of net advances,
  - when they incur losses for two consecutive financial years or have accumulated losses on their balance sheets, and

- if capital adequacy ratio (CAR) falls below 9%.
- For breach of such risk thresholds, UCBs will have to submit an action plan to correct the situation within 12 months. The move comes after the recent crisis at the PMC Bank.

### CORPORATE INSOLVENCY RESOLUTION PROCESS (CIRP)

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has amended the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016 (CIRP Regulations).
- It provides that the period of lockdown imposed by the Central Government in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak shall not be counted for any activity that could not be completed due to the lockdown, in relation to a corporate insolvency resolution process.

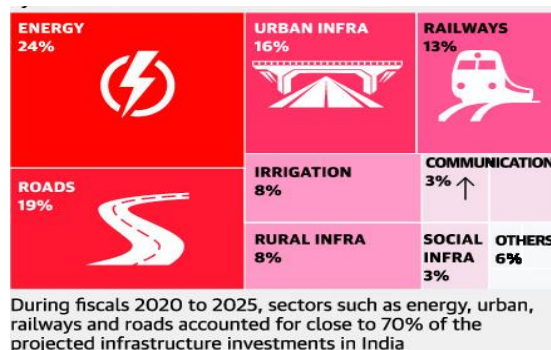
### Do You Know

- Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) is a recovery mechanism for creditors. If a corporate becomes insolvent, a financial creditor, an operational creditor, or the corporate itself may initiate CIRP.
- The CIRP may include necessary steps to revive the company such as raising fresh funds for operation, looking for new buyer to sell the company as going concern.
- CIRP in a case under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC) **needs to be completed in 330 days including time taken for litigation.**

### TASK FORCE ON NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PIPELINE FOR 2019-2025

Union Finance Minister released **Report of the Task Force on National Infrastructure Pipeline for 2019-2025**. The Task Force is chaired by Secretary, Department of Expenditure (DEA). **Key Findings:**

- **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)** includes economic and social infrastructure projects.
- Total project capital expenditure in infrastructure sectors in India during the fiscals 2020 to 2025 is projected at **over Rs 102 lakh crore.**
- During the fiscals 2020 to 2025, sectors such as **Energy (24%), Roads (19%), Urban (16%), and Railways (13%)** amount to around 70% of the projected capital expenditure in infrastructure.
- Out of the total expected capital expenditure of Rs. 102 lakh crore, projects worth Rs 42.7 lakh crore (42%) are under implementation, projects worth Rs 32.7 lakh crore (32%) are in conceptualization stage and rest are under development.
- A monitoring mechanism has also been suggested to ensure timely implementation.



### AIRCRAFT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020

- Lok Sabha passed the **Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to amend Aircraft Act, 1934.**
- **Authorities:** The Bill converts three existing bodies under the Ministry of Civil Aviation into **statutory bodies** under the Act. These three authorities are: (i) the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), (ii) the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), and (iii) the Aircraft Accidents Investigation Bureau (AAIB).
- **Power Of Centre To Make Rules:** Under the Act, the central government may make rules on several matters. The Bill adds the regulation of air navigation services to this list.

- **Adjudicating officers:** The Bill provides for the appointment of designated officers, not below the rank of Deputy Secretary to adjudicate penalties under the Bill.

### **BLCS (TYPE A & B)**

- The **Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India, Ltd. (DFCCIL)** has begun testing a new wagon called **BLCS (type A & B)**.
- **It will help boost the cargo carrying capacity by four times due to increased length of the train, use of double-stack containers and more payload carrying capability.**
- The wagon — used for hauling freight — have been tested by the Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO), Lucknow and are manufactured at the Golden Rock Railway Workshop in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.

### **REITs And InvITs**

SEBI has announced guidelines pertaining to rights issue of units by listed real estate investment trusts (REITs) and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).

#### **Key Highlights**

- The issuer will have to disclose objects of the issue, related-party transactions, valuation, financial details, review of credit rating and the grievance redressal mechanism in the placement document.
- The investment manager on behalf of the REIT and InvIT, in consultation with lead merchant banker(s), will decide the issue price before determining the record date.
- The minimum subscription to be received in the rights issue should be 90% of the issue size through the letter of offer.

#### **Do You Know**

- **Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs):** They are like mutual funds in the stock market in the field of real estate sector. REITS sells units to investors. This money is invested in real estate projects to earn rental income. This income is then distributed to unit holders and the units are listed and traded on stock markets like any other equity share.
- **Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs):** It is a modified REITS type structure for infrastructure projects. It will attract long term finance from foreign and domestic sources including the NRIs. An InvIT would be a trust with parties such as sponsor, investment manager, trustee and project manager.
- **Timeline:** SEBI had first notified REITs and InvIT Regulations in 2014. Since then, the market witnessed listing of two public InvITs — IRB InvIT Fund and India Grid Trust, and three privately placed InvITs — IndInfravit Trust, India Infrastructure Trust, Oriental InfraTrust. On the other hand, Embassy Office Parks REIT is the only listed real estate investment trust.

### **GLOBAL INVESTMENT TREND MONITOR REPORT**

**The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) released the Global Investment Trend Monitor report.**

#### **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**

- The global FDI remained flat in 2019 at \$1.39 trillion, a one % decline from a revised \$1.41 trillion in 2018. The FDI flows to developed countries remained at a historically low level, decreasing by a further six % to an estimated \$643 billion.
- Developing economies continue to absorb more than half of global FDI flows. South Asia recorded a 10 % increase in FDI to \$60 billion.



- **India was among the top 10 recipients of FDI in 2019, attracting \$49 billion in inflows**, a 16 % increase from the previous year, driving the FDI growth in South Asia. The majority went into services industries, including information technology.
- **The United States remained the largest recipient of FDI**, followed by China with flows of \$140 billion and Singapore with \$110 billion. China saw zero-growth in FDI inflows.

#### **Cross-border M&As**

- Cross-border M&As declined 40% in 2019 to \$490 billion – the lowest level since 2014.
- The fall in global cross-border M&As sales was deepest in the services sector which declined 56% to \$207 billion, followed by a 19% fall in manufacturing to \$249 billion and a 14% decrease in primary sector to \$34 billion.

#### **GATI**

- **Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways launched online Web Portal ‘GATI.’**
- The portal has been created by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) taking inspiration from the PRAGATI Portal used by PMO.
- Contractors/concessionaires can raise any project related issues on the Portal. This will speed up the decision making giving real GATI to highway construction.

#### **MERCHANTING TRADE TRANSACTIONS (MTT) – REVISED GUIDELINES**

- RBI has issued the revised guidelines for Merchanting Trade Transactions (MTT) under the **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.**
- In Indian Context, the trade is called Merchanting Trade when,
  - The supplier of goods will be resident in one foreign country.
  - The buyer of goods will be resident in another foreign country.
  - The merchant or the intermediary will be resident in India.
- Merchanting transaction is one which involves shipment of goods from one foreign country to another foreign country involving an Indian Intermediary. Hence, it is also called **Intermediary Trade.**
- According to revised guidelines, for a trade to be classified as merchanting trade, goods acquired shall not enter the Domestic Tariff Area. Also, the entire MTT shall be completed within an overall period of nine months.

#### **WINGS INDIA 2020**

- **The three-day civil aviation business exhibition and air show, Wings India 2020 was held in Hyderabad.** The biennial event was organized by Ministry of Civil Aviation and Airports Authority of India (AAI) along with FICCI.
- Business to Business and Business to Government meetings will take place in which a number of aviation majors including Airbus, Boeing and others are participating.

#### **RESTRUCTURING OF RAILWAYS**

##### **Railway Board**

- The Cabinet approved trimming of the Railway Board, the powerful body that governs the Indian Railways. **From nine, the Board will now have only five Members.**
- The five members of the Board, other than a Chairman-cum-CEO, will now be the Members Infrastructure, Finance, Rolling Stock, Track, and Operations and Business Development.

- The Board will also have independent Members, who will be industry experts with at least 30 years of experience, but in non-executive roles, only attending Board meetings.

**Indian Railways Management Service (IRMS)**

- The Cabinet also decided to merge all central service cadres of Railways officers into a single Indian Railways Management Service (IRMS).
- Now, any eligible officer could occupy any post, including Board Member posts, irrespective of training and specialisation, since they will all belong to IRMS.

**Helpline 139**

- **Indian Railway has announced one integrated Helpline number “139” for any help, enquiry and grievances redressal during travel.**
- As the new helpline number 139 will take over all the existing helpline numbers (except 182), it will be easy for the passengers to remember this number and connect with Railways for all their needs during the travel.

**HRMS MOBILE APP**

- **Railway Board** launched the HRMS Mobile App which has been designed and developed by **Centre for Railway Information System (CRIS)**.
- This application will be single window communication system between Railway employees and Administration. All employees of Indian Railways can now see data related to their service and communicate with administration for any changes.

**CIRCUIT BREAKER IN STOCK MARKET**

- Recently, the President of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) said that safeguards in the US stock market are working as planned, after a 7% drop in the S&P 500 led to a 15-minute halt in trading as circuit breakers were triggered.
- Circuit breakers are triggered to prevent markets from crashing, which happens when market participants start to panic induced by fears that their stocks are overvalued and decide to sell their stocks. When triggered, these circuit breakers bring about a coordinated trading halt in all equity and equity derivative markets nationwide.
- In India, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) implemented **Index-based market-wide circuit breakers** in 2001. This index-based market-wide circuit breaker system applies at three stages of the index movement, at **10, 15 and 20 per cent**.

**MARKET INTELLIGENCE AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (MIEWS) WEB PORTAL**

Union Minister of Food Processing Industries, launched the– Market Intelligence and Early Warning System (MIEWS) Web Portal for ‘real time monitoring’ of prices of tomato, onion and potato (TOP) and for generating alerts for intervention under the Operation Greens(OG) scheme.

**Operation Greens Scheme**

- In the budget speech of Union Budget 2018-19, a new Scheme “Operation Greens” was announced with an outlay of Rs.500 crores to promote Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs), agri-logistics, processing facilities and professional management.
- Accordingly, the Ministry has formulated a scheme for integrated development of Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP) value chain.
- During a glut situation, evacuation of surplus production from producing areas to consumption centres will be undertaken as determined by the following:

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- When the prices fall below preceding 3 years' average market price at the time of harvest;
- When the prices fall more than 50% compared to last year's market price at the time of harvest;
- When the prices fall less than the benchmark, if any, fixed by the State / Central Government for a specified period.

### NATIONAL STARTUP ADVISORY COUNCIL

- The Central Government has notified the structure of the National Startup Advisory Council to advise the Government on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country.
- **The Council will be chaired by** Minister for Commerce. Joint Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade will be the **Convener of the Council**.
- The nominees of the concerned Ministries/ Organisations, not below the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India, will be ex-officio members of the Council.
- The Council will consist of the non-official members, to be nominated by Central Government for a period of two years, from various categories like founders of successful startups and persons representing interests of investors etc.

### VISTADOME COACHES

- Indian Railways unveiled **Him Darshan Express** comprising all-new Vistadome coaches from Kalka railway station to Shimla.
- Him Darshan Express will be the first-ever train with Vistadome coaches by the Indian Railways that will run on a regular basis.
- Vistadome Coach consists of a **glass roof** which has electrically controlled opalescence, that is, it can be made transparent or opaque at the turn of a switch.
- The first Vistadome Coach was commissioned by the Ministry of Railways on the Vishakhapatnam – Araku Valley Route in April, 2017.



### NIDHI COMPANY

- **Government has given one-year time for Nidhi companies to update their details.**
- Under the rules effective from August 15, 2019, a company is incorporated as Nidhi with the object of cultivating the habit of thrift and saving amongst its members, receiving deposits from, and lending to, its members only, for their mutual benefit.
- Under the new provisions, Nidhi companies have to apply to the central government for updation of their status or declaration as "Nidhi Company" in "Form NDH-4".

#### Do You Know

- A Nidhi company is a type of company in the Indian **Non-Banking Finance Sector (NBFC)**, recognized under section 406 of the Companies Act, 2013. Their core business is borrowing and lending money between their members.
- They are regulated by **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**. They have to comply with two set of norms, one of Public limited company as per Companies Act, 2013 and another is for Nidhi rules, 2014.

### MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

- The Union Minister for Skill Development launched the Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship programme in the **Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Bengaluru**.

- The Fellowship is launched as part of the **SANKALP** programme of the Ministry for Skill Development to provide skilled manpower for District Skill Committees to prepare the District Skill Development plan.
- Under the pilot project, IIMB will train 75 graduates for two years in preparing the District skill plan considering the skill gaps and government schemes available in the district.

### **INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE (SECOND AMENDMENT) BILL 2020**

- **Parliament passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill 2020.**
- It seeks to ring-fence new management from offences committed by the erstwhile management. It also seeks to create a threshold of a minimum of 10 per cent of allottees or 100 individual allottees to initiate insolvency proceedings for real estate projects.
- The amendment also seeks to protect the 'going concern' status of companies undergoing insolvency proceedings by allowing a company's resolution professional to require that suppliers continue providing essential goods and services.

### **RECONSTRUCTION SCHEME FOR YES BANK**

- Union Cabinet has approved a reconstruction scheme for Yes Bank as proposed by RBI.
- SBI will invest 49 percent equity in Yes Bank with other investors also being invited.
- The scheme has been approved with the objective of protecting the interest of depositors and providing stability to Yes Bank as well as to the entire financial system.
- There will be a three year lock-in period for all the investors but in case of SBI, the lock-in period would be only for 26 percent of the shareholding.
- Authorised capital of the lender has been raised from 1100 crore rupees to 6200 crore rupees to accommodate immediate and subsequent raising of capital requirements.

#### **Yes Bank Crisis**

- On 5 March 2020, the RBI announced that, in the interest of its customers and depositors, it would suspend and supersede Yes Bank's board and impose a 30-day moratorium on its operations.
- The RBI cited Yes Bank's failures to raise new funding to cover its NPAs, inaccurate statements of confidence in its ability to receive new funding, and its underreporting of its non-performing assets, among other factors, as the impetus for this moratorium.

### **AT-1 BONDS**

- **The RBI reconstruction plan for Yes Bank puts to risk nearly Rs 9,000 crore worth of AT-1 bonds. The bondholders have reportedly postponed their legal challenge to the RBI's scheme.**
- AT-1, short for Additional Tier-1 bonds, are a type of unsecured, perpetual bonds that banks issue to shore up their core capital base to meet the Basel-III norms.
- As per RBI rules based on the Basel-III framework, AT-1 bonds have principal loss absorption features, which can cause a full write-down or conversion to equity on breach of a pre-specified trigger of common Tier 1 capital ratio falling below 6.125 per cent.
- AT-1 bonds have several unusual features:
  - One, these bonds are perpetual and carry no maturity date. Instead, they carry call options that allow banks to redeem them after five or 10 years.
  - Two, banks issuing AT-1 bonds can skip interest payouts for a particular year or even reduce the bonds' face value without getting into hot water with their investors, provided their capital ratios fall below certain threshold levels.

## **MINERAL LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020**

- Parliament passed the Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to amend the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act) and the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015 (CMSP Act).
- The MMDR Act regulates the overall mining sector in India. The CMSP Act provides for the auction and allocation of mines whose allocation was cancelled by the Supreme Court in 2014.
- It provides that companies which do not possess any prior coal mining experience in India and/or have mining experience in other minerals or in other countries can participate in auction of coal/lignite blocks.
- Now, the companies which are **not 'engaged in specified end-use'** can also participate in auctions of Schedule II and III coal mines.
- The Bill also allows **prospecting licence-cum-mining lease (PL-cum-ML)** for coal/lignite which increases the availability of coal & lignite blocks, and coal blocks of varying grades in a wide geographical distribution will be available for allocation.

## **LAND ACQUISITION**

- **Supreme Court held that land acquisition proceedings under the 1894 Act will not be deemed to have lapsed under Section 24(2) of the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, if the authorities have tendered the compensation by deposit in the Treasury.**
- It held that landowners, who had refused to accept compensation or who sought reference for higher compensation, cannot claim that the acquisition proceedings had lapsed under Section 24(2) of the 2013 Act.
- Section 24 (2) concerns land acquisition compensation awards made five years "prior or more" to the coming of existence of the 2013 Act, which replaced the 1894 law.
- The new Act, came into existence on January 1, 2014 replacing the colonial 1894 law.

## **FIRST BANANA CONTAINER TRAIN**

- First Banana Container Train of India was sent from **Tadipatri, Anantpur in Andhra Pradesh to Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT) in Mumbai** for export to international markets.
- This was done by Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), along with State Government of Andhra Pradesh.
- Government of India under Agri Export Policy has notified **banana cluster in Anantpur and Kadapa districts of Andhra Pradesh.**

APEDA, created under APEDA Act 1985, is an apex body under the *Ministry of Commerce*, responsible for the export promotion of agricultural products.

## **OFF-BUDGET TRANSACTIONS**

- S C Garg, former Economic Affairs secretary, has claimed that the actual fiscal deficit for 2018-19 is 4.7% — more than a full percentage point than the number claimed by Union Budget of July 2019.
- According to SC Garg, the official figures hide the true fiscal deficit. That's because some of the government's expenditure was funded by the so-called **"off-budget" items**.
- All government expenditure, revenues and debts are required to be carried out through the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI). If it is done so, the fiscal deficit of the Government should equal to the additional debt incurred during the year, all recorded in the CFI.



- But all these transactions are not recorded through the CFI all the time. Some debt are not assumed outside the CFI, either in the Public Account or totally outside the formal accounting system of the Government i.e. outside CFI and Public Account.
- Such transactions are described popularly as **Below the Line, Off Budget etc.**

### **SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES (SEZs)**

- According to data released by Ministry of Commerce, **SEZs have achieved 100-billion-dollar worth of exports in FY 2019-20.** Number of operational SEZs have also grown to 241 as against 235 at the end of FY 2018-19.
- The services segment, constituting majorly of IT & ITeS services, was driver of the export growth at 23.69 %. There was almost 4% growth in manufacturing segment also.
- Important sectors that saw healthy growth in this financial year include Gems & Jewellery (13.3%), Trading & Logistics (35%), Leather & Footwear (15%), Non-Conventional Energy (47%), Textiles & Garments (17.6%).

SEZs also achieved this land-mark of 100-billion-dollar worth of exports in 2018-19 in full financial year.

### **CESS FUND TO SUPPORT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS**

- Ministry of Labour has issued an advisory to all the States to **use cess fund for Welfare of Construction Workers in the wake of COVID-19.**
- The Cess fund is collected by the **Labour Welfare Boards under the Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996.** About 3.5 crore construction workers are registered with these Boards.

### **LPG PRICES**

**The hike in LPG prices during February 2020 was the sharpest since January 2014.**

#### **Methodology**

- Domestic prices of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) are based on a formula — the **Import Parity Price (IPP)**, which is based on international LPG prices.
- **Saudi Aramco's LPG price acts as the benchmark for the IPP** and includes the free-on-board price, ocean freight, customs duties, port dues and the like.
- This dollar-denominated figure is converted into rupees before local costs — such as local freight, bottling charges, marketing costs and the GST — are added. This helps the government arrive at the retail selling price for LPG.
- The government resets the LPG price every month, the decision being influenced by international prices and how the rupee has behaved against the dollar in the immediately preceding weeks.
- LPG price for cooking for consumers under PAHAL (DBTL) is subsidized by the Government of India.

### **REMISSION OF DUTIES AND TAXES ON EXPORTED PRODUCTS (RoDTEP)**

- **Union Cabinet approved a scheme for “Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)” to boost exports to International Markets.**
- Under this scheme a mechanism would be created for reimbursement of taxes/ duties/ levies, at the central, state and local level, which are currently not being refunded under any other mechanism, but which are incurred in the process of manufacture and distribution of exported products.
- An inter-ministerial Committee will determine the rates and items for which the reimbursement of taxes and duties would be provided.

- Refund under the Scheme, in the form of transferable duty credit/electronic scrip, will be issued to the exporters, which will be maintained in an electronic ledger.

### **RoSCTL SCHEME**

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for continuation of **Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL)** from 1st April, 2020 onward until such time that the scheme is merged with **Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)**.
- Continuation of RoSCTL beyond 31st March, 2020 is expected to make the textile sector competitive by rebating all taxes/levies which are currently not being rebated under any other mechanism.
- Announced on March 7, 2019, RoSCTL was offered for embedded state and central duties and taxes that are not refunded through goods and services tax.

### **SEBI REDEFINES 'PLEDGE'**

- SEBI has redefined 'pledge' in the regulatory laws to protect client securities.
- SEBI has amended the SEBI (Depositories and Participants) Regulations by including an additional explanation that states that 'pledge' would also refer to 're-pledge of securities for margin or settlement obligations.' Onus of bonafide pledge created from margin account of a stock broker will now lie with the depository following the SEBI amendment.
- This will minimise instances where stock brokers misuse client securities by pledging such shares for their own benefit in terms of meeting their margin requirements.

### **COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE FISCAL CONSOLIDATION ROADMAP**

- The Chairman of the Fifteenth Finance Commission has constituted a Committee to review the fiscal consolidation roadmap of the general government.
- The Committee will be chaired by Chairman N. K. Singh.
- It will make recommendations on the –
  - definition of deficit and debt for the Central government, overall states, the General Government and public sector enterprises.
  - debt and fiscal consolidation roadmap for FY21-FY25 for the Central Government, overall States and General Government and attempt building up scenarios for public sector enterprises.

### **UPGRADATION OF NATIONAL HIGHWAYS**

- Union Cabinet has approved Rehabilitation and Upgradation of stretches of various National Highways covering a **total length of over 780 kms in the States of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh**.
- The project includes a loan assistance Rs. 3500 crore from the World Bank under **Green National Highways Corridor Project (GNHCP)** which demonstrating resource efficiency, climate resilience, green and safety aspects in road design and construction.
- **The project comprises following four components:** (1) Sustainable development and maintenance of National Highways; (2) Institutional Capacity Enhancement; (3) Road Safety and (4) Research and Development.

### **FOREIGN TRADE**

- **Government extended the existing foreign trade policy (2015-20) for one year till March 2021 amid coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown.**

- Various other changes are also made like extending the date of exemptions by one year and extending validity of DFIA and EPCG authorisations for import purposes.
- **Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG)** is an export promotion scheme under which an exporter can import certain amount of capital goods at zero duty for upgrading technology related with exports.
- On the other hand, **advance authorisation** is issued to allow duty free import of inputs, which is physically incorporated in export product.
- Under the **Duty Free Import Authorisation (DFIA)** scheme, exporters are allowed to import certain goods like sugar at zero duty.

### Foreign Trade Policy 2015-20: Key Highlights

- FTP 2015-20 introduced two new schemes, namely '**Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS)**' for export of specified goods to specified markets and '**Services Exports from India Scheme (SEIS)**' for increasing exports of notified services.
- Duty credit scrips issued under MEIS and SEIS and the goods imported against these scrips are fully transferable.
- 108 MSME clusters have been identified for focused interventions to boost exports. Accordingly, '**Niryat Bandhu Scheme**' has been galvanised and repositioned to achieve the objectives of 'Skill India'.

### RBI EXEMPTION FROM CRR MAINTENANCE

- RBI has said that the **special lending window with Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) exemption will be open from 14th of February and incremental loans disbursed under this facility will have CRR exemption for the next five years.**
- This means that banks will not be needed to make additional cash reserve ratio against any incremental loans disbursed to the targeted segments.
- The window will open for six months ending 31st of July this year, but the Net Demand and Time Liabilities (NDTL) will be calculated as of 31st of January.
- It asked banks to report the CRR exemption availed at the end of a fortnight under exemptions/others in the Section 42 return, under the provisions of the master circular on CRR and SLR issued on 1st of July, 2015.

### Do You Know?

- In terms of Section 42(1) of the RBI Act, 1934 the Reserve Bank prescribes the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) for Banks.
- CRR is the share of a bank's total deposit that is mandated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to be maintained with the latter in the form of liquid cash.
- CRR ensures that a part of the bank's deposit is with the Central Bank and is hence, secure. Another objective of CRR is to keep inflation under control. During high inflation in the economy, RBI raises the CRR to lower the bank's loanable funds.

### NORTH EAST NATURAL GAS PIPELINE GRID

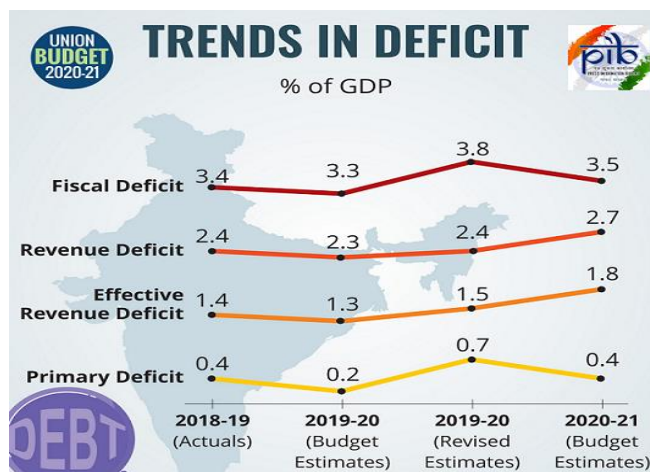
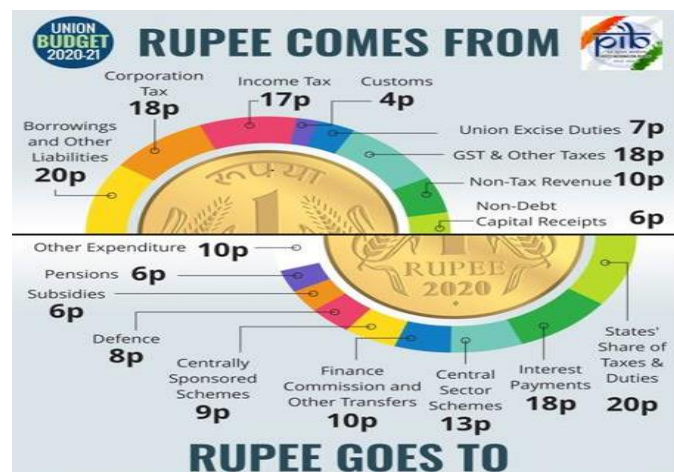
- **Government has approved Viability Gap Funding of Rs. 5,559 crore to Indradhanush Gas Grid Limited to build Natural Gas Pipeline Grid covering 8 North Eastern states.**

**Indradhanush Gas Grid Limited (IGGL)**, a joint venture company of five CPSEs (IOCL, ONGC, GAIL, OIL and NRL) has been incorporated in 2018 to develop Natural gas pipeline grid in North-East region.

- The 1,656-km pipeline will connect Guwahati in Assam to major cities in the region such as Itanagar, Dimapur, Kohima, Imphal, Aizawl and Agartala.
- The project is critical towards implementing the government's Hydrocarbon Vision 2030 for the North-East.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF UNION BUDGET 2020-21

- To achieve higher export credit disbursement, a **new scheme NIRVIK** will be launched which provides for high insurance cover, reduction in premium for small exporters and simplified procedures for claim, settlement.
- **Investment Clearance Cell** will be setup to provide “end to end” facilitation and support to create more opportunities to youth and remove roadblocks. 100 % FDI will be permitted for insurance intermediaries and local sourcing norms will be eased for FDI in single brand retail sector.
- **Macro-economic Framework Statement (MFS) 2020-21:** The government has revised the fiscal roadmap in the near term and limited the fiscal deficit to 3.8% of the GDP in RE 2019-20 and 3.5% in 2020-21. **It proposed a 21% increase in capital expenditure for the FY 2020-21.**
- To improve the physical quality of life, the Government has also announced the **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)** of projects worth Rs. 102 lakh crores, which would commence in phases from 2020-21 to 2024-25.
- **Social Welfare:** There shall be no manual cleaning of sewer systems or septic tanks. Due to ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhao’, Gross enrolment ratio of girls at elementary level is 94.32 % as against 89.28 % for boys.
- The union government allocated Rs 3.37 lakh crore as the **defence budget** for 2020-21, which is a hike of only 5.8 percent over the allocation for this sector for the current financial year. Without the pension, the defence budget is only 1.5 percent of the GDP.



### Taxation

- It proposed to launch a system under which **PAN shall be instantly allotted online on the basis of Aadhaar** without any requirement for filling up of detailed application form.
- To enhance the efficiency of the delivery system of the Income Tax Department, the Income-tax Act will be amended to mandate the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to adopt a **Taxpayers' Charter**.

- It proposed to provide an option to **cooperative societies** to be taxed at 22% + 10% surcharge and 4% cess with no exemption/deductions. These cooperatives are currently taxed at a rate of 30% with surcharge and cess.
- It proposed to exempt these cooperative societies from **Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT)** just like Companies which under the new tax regime are exempted from the Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT).
- **It proposed to remove the Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT)**. The dividend shall be taxed only in the hands of the recipients at their applicable rates. Currently, companies are required to pay DDT on the dividend paid to its shareholders at the rate of 15% plus applicable surcharge and cess in addition to the tax payable by company on its profits.

#### **Custom Duty**

- **Customs duty is being raised on items like footwear (from 25% to 35% on footwear and from 15% to 20% on parts of footwear) and furniture (from 20% to 25%).**
- To give impetus to the domestic medical equipment industry, the Finance Minister proposed to impose a nominal health cess (at the rate of 5%), by way of a duty of customs, on the imports of medical equipment keeping.
- The Union Budget proposed to abolish anti-dumping duty on PTA (Purified Terephthalic Acid). The PTA is critical input for textile fibres and yarns.

#### **Financial Sector**

- Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) has been permitted to **increase Deposit Insurance coverage to Rs. 5 lakh per depositor from Rs. 1 lakh previously.**
- **Limit for NBFCs to be eligible for Debt Recovery Mechanism via SARFAESI Act, 2002**, is proposed to be reduced from existing asset size limits of Rs. 500 crore to Rs. 100 crores or loan size from existing Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 50 lakh.
- Amendments in PFRDAI Act that will also facilitate **separation of NPS trust for Government employees from PFRDAI**. This would also enable establishment of a Pension Trust by the employees other than Government.
- It proposed the **setting up of an International Bullion Exchange at GIFT-IFSC** as an additional option for trade by global market participants.
- **FPI limits in corporate bonds** are proposed to be increased to 15 % of outstanding stocks from the current 9 %. **New Debt-based Exchange Traded Fund (ETF)** consisting primarily of Government Securities will be floated.

#### **Agriculture, Irrigation And Rural Development**

- All eligible beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) will be covered under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme.
- It is proposed to expand PM-KUSUM to 20 lakh farmers for setting up stand alone solar pumps and help another 15 lakh farmers solarise their grid connected pump sets.
- It is proposed to integrate negotiable warehousing receipts (e-NWR) and National Agricultural Market (e-NAM).
- To build a seamless national cold supply chain for perishables, inclusive of milk, meat, Indian Railways will set up **Kisan Rail**-through PPP arrangements.
- To help improve value realization especially in North-East and tribal districts **Krishi Udaan** will be launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation



- Foot and Mouth disease, brucellosis in cattle and also peste des petits ruminants (PPR) in sheep and goat to be eliminated by 2025
- In the Blue Economy, raising of fish production to 200 lakh tonnes is proposed by 2022-23. Youth to be involved in fishery extension through 3477 Sagar Mitras and 500 Fish Farmer Producer Organisations.

#### **DIRECT TAX VIVAD SE VISHWAS BILL 2020**

- Parliament passed The Direct Tax Vivad se Vishwas Bill, 2020 **to provide a mechanism for resolution of pending tax disputes related to income tax and corporation tax.**
- **Appellant:** The Bill defines an appellant as the income tax authority, or the person, or both, whose appeal is pending before any appellate forum as on January 31, 2020.
- **These appellate forums are** the Supreme Court, the High Courts, the Income Tax Appellate Tribunals, and the Commissioner (Appeals).
- **It proposes a resolution mechanism** under which an appellant can file a declaration to the designated authority to initiate resolution of pending direct tax disputes.
- The Principal Chief Commissioner will designate an officer, not below the rank of a Commissioner of Income Tax, to manage the resolution mechanism.
- **The amount payable by the appellant for resolution** of disputes is determined based on whether the dispute relates to payment of tax, or payment of interest, penalty, or fee.
- For dispute resolution, the appellant is required to furnish an undertaking **waiving his rights to seek** any remedy or claim in relation to that dispute under any law, including the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- **Immunity to appellant:** Once a dispute is resolved, the designated authority cannot levy interest or penalty in relation to that dispute. Such matters cannot be reopened in any proceeding under any law, including the IT Act.
- **The resolution mechanism will not cover following disputes:**
  - where prosecution has been initiated before the declaration is filed,
  - which involve persons who have been convicted or are being prosecuted for offences under certain laws, or for enforcement of civil liabilities, and
  - involving undisclosed foreign income or assets.

#### **NATIONAL TECHNICAL TEXTILES MISSION**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has given its approval to set up a **National Technical Textiles Mission** with a total outlay of Rs 1480 Crore to position the country as a global leader in Technical Textiles.
- The Mission would have a **four year implementation period from FY 2020-21 to 2023-24**. The Mission will move into sunset phase after four years period.
- A **Mission Directorate** in the Ministry of Textiles, headed by an eminent expert in the related field, will be made operational.
- The Mission aims at increasing the size of the technical textiles in the domestic market to \$40 billion which would require an average growth of at least 10 per cent per annum.

Technical textiles are materials and products manufactured primarily for technical performance and functional properties rather than aesthetic characteristics. These are divided into **12 broad categories**: Agrotech, Buildtech, Clothtech, Geotech, Hometech, Indutech, Mobitech, Meditech, Protech, Sportstech, Oekotech, Packtech.

**The Mission Will Have Four Components**

- **Component-I:** Promoting both (i) fundamental research at fibre level and (ii) application based research in geo-textiles, agro-textiles, medical textiles, mobile textiles and sports textiles and development of bio-degradable technical textiles.
- **Component-II:** Promotion and Market Development.
- **Component-III:** Export promotion of technical textiles and ensuring 10% average growth in exports per year upto 2023-24. An Export Promotion Council for Technical Textiles will be set up for this purpose.
- **Component-IV:** Promoting technical education at higher engineering and technology levels related to technical textiles.

## INTERNAL SECURITY

## BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

- **March 26 marked the 45th anniversary of the entry into force of the Biological Weapons Convention. The anniversary comes as the world is grappling with the Coronavirus pandemic.**
- **Names:** The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction is usually referred to as the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) or Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC).
- **What Is It?** The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is a **legally binding treaty** that outlaws biological arms. BWC is the first multilateral disarmament treaty to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.
- **Timeline:** The BWC opened for signature in 1972, and entered into force in 1975.
- **Members:** It currently has 183 states-parties, including Palestine, and four signatories. Ten states have neither signed nor ratified the BWC.
- **BWC bans** the development, stockpiling, acquisition, retention, and production of:
  - Biological agents and toxins "of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes;"
  - Weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles "designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict."
- **Exceptions:** It does not ban biodefense programs and use of biological and toxin weapons but reaffirms the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which prohibits such use.

## RASHTRIYA RAKSHA UNIVERSITY BILL, 2020

- The **Rashtriya Raksha University Bill, 2020** was introduced in the Lok Sabha.
- It proposes to establish the Rashtriya Raksha University by upgrading the *Raksha Shakti University*, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, established under the Raksha Shakti University Act, 2009 by the Government of Gujarat as an **institution of national importance**.
- The Rashtriya Raksha University is proposed to be a multi-disciplinary University to help to fulfil the need for a pool of trained professionals in various wings of **policing, the criminal justice system and correctional administration**.

## REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATIONS 2020

**The 71st Republic Day was celebrated at Rajpath, New Delhi. Key highlights:**

- For the first time that the Prime Minister paid homage to martyrs at the National War Memorial (NWM) near India Gate instead of Amar Jawan Jyoti (AJJ). The NWM was built in memory of Indian soldiers who laid down their lives in the post-independence period.
- Anti-satellite weapon – **Mission Shakthi** developed by DRDO, Army's battle tank Bhishma, infantry combat vehicles, Air Forces' newly inducted Chinook and Apache helicopters were showcased during the parade.

- The first contingent in the uniform of the erstwhile Gwalior Lancers was 61 Cavalry, the only active serving horse cavalry regiment in the world. It was raised on August 01, 1953 with the amalgamation of six state forces' cavalry units.

### DefExpo 2020

- The **11th edition of DefExpo**, a flagship biennial event of the Ministry of Defence was held for the **first time in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**.
- It was organized by **Department of Defence Production**, Ministry of Defence with the theme **“India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub.”**
- **Fifth India Russia Military Industry Conference** was held on the sidelines of DefExpo.

### Key Highlights:

- The indigenous **Light Utility Helicopter (LUH)** being developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) received the initial operational clearance (IOC). It is a new generation helicopter in the 3-Ton class with glass cockpit for surveillance roles.
- Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) launched **Amogha-3**, the anti-Tank Guided Missile. It is a man portable fire and forget missile.
- BDL also launched **Varunastra** – the anti-submarine torpedo, manufactured under the technological guidance of DRDO.

### INDIA-AFRICA DEFENCE MINISTERS' CONCLAVE (IADMC 2020)

- **The first India-Africa Defence Ministers' Conclave (IADMC 2020)** held in Lucknow on February 06, coinciding with DefExpo-2020, **adopted the Lucknow Declaration**.
- The leaders recognised the importance of peace and security for both India and the African countries including **"Silence the Guns; Creating Conducive Conditions for African Development"** as the African Union's theme of the year.
- They welcomed the AU vision for peace and security in Africa that coincides with India's vision of **SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region)**.

### DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS (DMA)

- Ministry of Defence (MoD) approved the rules of business for the **newly created Department of Military Affairs (DMA)**, headed by the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)**.
- The DMA is the **fifth department in the MoD** — the others being the Department of Defence, the Department of Defence Production, the Department of Defence Research and Development and the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare.
- The DMA, headed by Gen. Bipin Rawat, will have two Joint Secretaries.
- The Services have been brought under the ambit of the DMA, in addition to the Territorial Army and works relating to the three Services and procurement exclusive to the Services, except capital acquisitions.
- The training policy, most of the training establishments and cadre management of the Services, would be under the purview of the DMA.
- The Defence Ministry has shifted administrative and revenue procurement matters of the armed services to the DMA, but any important matter related to defence policy will be dealt by the defence secretary.

**NATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCES UNIVERSITY BILL, 2020**

- **National Forensic Sciences University Bill, 2020 was introduced in Lok Sabha.**
- It seeks to establish a National Forensic Sciences University as an institution of national importance by upgrading the *Gujarat Forensic Sciences University* in Gandhinagar.
- The proposed University will promote studies and research in forensic science in conjunction with applied behavioural science studies, law, criminology and other allied areas for strengthening criminal justice system in the country.

**DATA ON POLICE ORGANIZATIONS**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah released the Data on Police Organizations (DoPO) as on 1.1.2019” in India. The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) has been publishing the “Data on Police Organizations (DoPO)” annually since 1986.

- **Strength of Women Police Force (Civil + DAR+ Spl. Armed)/ Percentage:** 1,85,696/8.98%
- **Percentage increase of Women Police over previous year:** 9.52%
- **Strength of Women Police in CAPFs/ Percentage:** 29,532/ 2.95%
- **Population Per Police person (PPP) - Sanctioned:** 503
- **Population Per Police person (PPP) - Actual:** 632
- **Police Population Ratio (Per Lakh) (PPR) - Sanctioned:** 198
- **Police Population Ratio (Per Lakh) (PPR) - Actual:** 158
- **Number of Police Districts:** 777; **Number of Police Commissionerates:** 63

**INDIAN CYBER CRIME COORDINATION CENTRE (I4C)**

- Union Home Minister inaugurated the **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** to deal with all types of cybercrimes in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
- **I4C is located in New Delhi.**
- It has seven components viz., National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit; Reporting Portal; Training Centre; Ecosystem Management Unit; Research and Innovation Centre; Forensic Laboratory Ecosystem and Platform for Joint Cyber Crime Investigation Team.

**NATIONAL CYBER CRIME REPORTING PORTAL**

- Union Home Minister dedicated **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal** to the Nation. It was launched on pilot basis in August, 2019. This portal will improve coordination amongst the law enforcement agencies of different States, districts and police stations for dealing with cyber-crimes in a coordinated and effective manner.
- It enables filing of all cyber-crimes with specific focus on crimes against women, children, particularly child pornography, child sex abuse material ETC.

**NATIONAL SECURITY GUARD (NSG) REGIONAL HUB**

- Union Home Minister inaugurated the **National Security Guard (NSG) Regional Hub campus at Kolkata**. It the fourth NSG Hub to have permanent infrastructure after Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad.
- NSG, which comprises of Indian Army and CAPFs, has multi-dimensional responsibility of countering terrorist attacks/hijack attempts and also providing proximate security.
- **Parent agency:** Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA); **HQ:** New Delhi.



## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- **Establishment:** It was raised in 1984, following Operation Blue Star and the assassination of Indira Gandhi.
- **Status:** It has been formed under the National Security Guard Act, 1986. According to Ministry of Home Affairs website, it is a **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)**.

### INDIAN RAILWAY PROTECTION FORCE SERVICE

- Indian Railways renamed the **Railway Protection Force (RPF)** as **Indian Railway Protection Force Service** and accorded it organised Group A status (OGAS).
- **Background:** The Railway Security Force (RSF) was established in **1953**. The **Railway Protection Force Act, 1957** renamed RSF to Railway Protection Force (RPF) and expanded the force's legal powers (**thus it's a statutory body**).
- **Status:** In 1980s, it was transformed into an '**Armed Force of the Union**' by giving enhanced powers.
- **Functions:** It has the primary duty of protection of railway property, passenger area, and passengers. *RPF is **NOT responsible for ALL aspects of railways security** as it shares its duties with the Government Railway Police (GRP) and the District Police.*

### MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

- The Government has decided to **rename 'Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses' (IDSA)** as '**Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses**'.
- The decision has been taken to honour late Manohar Parrikar, the former Raksha Mantri and Padma Bhushan awardee.
- An autonomous body under Ministry of Defence, IDSA was established as a registered society in New Delhi in 1965, to undertake research on all aspects of defence and security. Raksha Mantri chairs the Executive committee of the Institute's society.

### DRAFT DEFENCE PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE(DPP), 2020

- Defence Minister released **Draft Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP), 2020**.
- The Draft proposes **increasing the Indigenous Content (IC)** stipulated in various categories of procurement by about **10%** to support the 'Make in India' initiative.
- **New Category Buy (Global – Manufacture in India)** has been introduced with minimum 50% indigenous content on cost basis of total contract value.
- **Leasing has been introduced as a new category for acquisition** to substitute huge initial capital outlays with periodical rental payments.
- **Scope for Product Support** have been widened to include contemporary concepts namely Performance Based Logistics (PBL), Life Cycle Support Contract (LCSC), Comprehensive Maintenance Contract (CMC), etc.
- To develop a robust defence industrial base, **use of indigenous raw materials, special alloys and software** has been incentivized under the DPP-2020.

### FULL BODY PROTECTOR (प्रबला)

- **Dr Shweta Rawat** from Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences (DIPAS), DRDO, Timarpur, Delhi has developed a female-specific Full Body Protector (प्रबला) to safeguard the Female troops deployed in riot control actions.
- It has been developed in collaboration with Rapid Action Force to assure greater comfort and flexibility to the women forces while deployed in law and order maintenance duties.

## RalDer-X

- RalDer-X, a **new explosive detection device**, was unveiled in Pune. It has been co-developed by High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) Pune and Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. HEMRL Pune is a premier laboratory of DRDO.
- RalDer-X has the capability to detect 20 explosives from a stand-off distance.
- The data library can be built in the system to expand its capability to detect a number of explosives in pure form as well as with the contaminants.

## POLICE COMMISSIONERATE SYSTEM

**Uttar Pradesh Cabinet approved the commissionerate system of policing for state capital Lucknow and Noida.**

### Background

- Under the 7th Schedule of the Constitution, 'Police' is under the State list, meaning individual states typically legislate and exercise control over this subject.
- In the arrangement in force at the district level, a 'dual system' of control exists, in which the Superintendent of Police (SP) has to work with the District Magistrate (DM) for supervising police administration.

As per the Police Act of 1861, the system is to be implemented in cities with more than 10 lakh population. The British brought the system first in Kolkata.

### Police Commissionerate System

- At the metropolitan level, many states have replaced the dual system with the Commissionerate system, under which the Commissioner of Police (CP) is the head of a unified police command structure. The office also has magisterial powers, including those related to regulation, control, and licensing.
- The commissioner does not report to the DM. He reports directly to the government.
- The CP is drawn from the Deputy Inspector General rank or above, and is assisted by Special/Joint/Additional/Deputy Commissioners.

## FATF PLENARY MEET, FEBRUARY 2020

### Key Outcomes of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Plenary meeting:

- FATF placed **Iran on its 'black list'** after it failed to comply with international anti-terrorism financing norms. The **"black list" refers to countries for who there has been a "call to action"** or strict banking and international finance sanctions, a list which at present includes *Iran and North Korea*.
- **Pakistan has been retained on the 'grey list' of the FATF.** Pakistan is one of the 12 countries on the **"grey list" or "other monitored jurisdictions"** that are being reviewed for actions to stop terror financing and money laundering.

### Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- **Mandate:** It is an intergovernmental organization to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering and terrorist financing.
- **Established:** 1989; **HQ:** Paris, France.
- **Members:** The FATF currently comprises 37-member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations (GCC, and European Commission). While India, Russia and China are members, Pakistan is only an associate member of Asia Pacific Group-FATF.

**LAW AND ORDER (DELHI)**

- **Amid the violence that rocked Delhi, a Union Territory, a key question raised was whether or not the Delhi government could have taken any action to bring law and order under control.**
- The National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCT), under Article 239 AA, has been given a special status, which gives powers of law-making and administration to an elected legislature and the council of ministers. The law, however, puts two subjects — **public order and police — directly under the Union government.**
- Even here, there are exceptions. Two sections of CrPC — 129 & 130 — give the Executive Magistrate certain powers relating to “unlawful assembly”.
  - If a group is found in unlawful assembly under Section 129 CrPC, the Executive Magistrate can issue orders to these persons to disperse. If this fails, the magistrate can use the civil force — which is the police.
  - If these efforts too fail, the Executive Magistrate, under Section 130 CrPC, can call an officer of the armed forces of the Union to disperse the assembly.
- This section states that it can be invoked for “public security”. Therefore, under these two limited powers, the Executive Magistrate, who reports to the Chief Minister, can issue orders relating to public security.

**Does a full-fledged state have more powers to call the armed forces ?** The Seventh Schedule of the Constitution — which deals with the subject of public order in the state list — states that use of the armed forces in the maintenance of public order is outside the purview of the states.

**SECTIONS 269 & 270 OF IPC**

- During the coronavirus outbreak, penal provisions, such as Sections 269 and 270 of the IPC, are being invoked to book persons defying quarantine orders for containing the spread of the pandemic.
- **Sections 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life)** provides for a jail term of six months and/or fine.
- **Section 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life)** provides for a jail term of two years and/or fine. In Section 270, the word ‘malignant’ indicates a deliberate intention on the part of the accused.

**K9 VAJRA-T GUN**

- Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh flagged off 51st K9 VAJRA-T Gun **from Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Armoured System Complex at Hazira in Gujarat.**
- K-9 Vajra-T Gun is a 155-mm, 52-calibre self-propelled artillery gun with a maximum range of 40 km. The fire control system has been customised for desert conditions.
- **Executing Agency:** Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Defence is currently executing the ‘K9 VAJRA-T’ Tracked, Self-Propelled Howitzer Guns program - the contract awarded to the company by Ministry of Defence through global competitive bidding.

**ICGS ANNIE BESANT; ICGS AMRIT KAUR**

- Two Indian Coast Guard Ships (ICGS) — **Annie Besant and Amrit Kaur — were commissioned** by Defence Secretary. The ships are built indigenously by the **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) Ltd, Kolkata.**
- Indian Coast Guard Ship Annie Besant and Amrit Kaur are second and third in the series of five **Fast Patrol Vessels.** While Annie Besant will be based at Chennai, Amrit Kaur will be based at Haldia.

**Do You Know**

ICGS Annie Besant has been named in honour of Ms Annie Besant, a theosophist, women's rights activist and supporter of Indian freedom. She contributed in foundation of Banaras Hindu University (BHU). In 1916, she established the Indian Home Rule League, of which she became President.

**HFHSD – IN 512**

- Vice Admiral G S Pabby launched the Upgraded High Flash High-Speed Diesel (HFHSD- IN 512), a special class diesel conforming to NATO grade for use in ships and vessels of Indian Navy.
- **Developers:** The upgraded HFHSD blend has been developed by State-owned Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) and is being supplied from Haldia and Paradip refinery.
- The customized HFHSD- IN 512 has the unique combination of low pour and Cold filter plugging point (CFPP) and High Flash Point.
- **It has the highest cetane number** amongst all marine diesel fuel and exceeds MIL-DTL 16884M specifications in terms of Fuel Hygiene parameters and other critical properties.

**LIGHT COMBAT HELICOPTER (LCH)**

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the new Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Production Hangar at Helicopter Division in Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Complex at Bengaluru.
- Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) is a 5.5-tonne class combat helicopter designed and developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) – a Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU). It is powered by two Shakti engines and inherits many technical features of the Advanced Light Helicopter.

**YARD 45006 VAJRA**

- The **offshore patrol vessel 'Yard 45006 VAJRA'** to enhance coastal security was formally launched. The 'Yard 45006' is the sixth in the series of seven offshore patrol vessels project that is indigenously built by Larsen and Toubro Shipbuilding.
- It is equipped with two diesel driven engines and can reach a maximum speed of 26 knots. The ship would be fitted with CRN-91 and 12.7 mm guns and an integral twin engine helicopter enhancing its operational, surveillance, search and rescue capability.

**ICGS VARAD**

- Union Minister for Shipping commissioned **Indian Coast Guard's Offshore Patrol Vessel ICGS Varad in Chennai**. It has been built indigenously by M/s L&T.
- With gross tonnage of 2100 tons, it is 98 mtrs long and has 15 mtrs breadth. The ship will be fitted with one CRN -91 and two 12.7 mm guns and will be capable of carrying an Integral Twin Engine Helicopter.

**TIGERSHARKS**

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) has inducted its first squadron of Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft carrying the BrahMos missiles at its Thanjavur base in Tamil Nadu.
- The newly reinstated 222-squadron is also known as the Tigersharks, would serve as a lethal weapons platform for carrying aerial and maritime roles in the Indian Ocean.

**INS SHIVAJI**

- President Ram Nath Kovind awarded the **President's Colour to INS Shivaji, the country's premier naval training institute**, at a ceremonial parade in Lonavala, 75 km from Pune city. INS Shivaji was first commissioned in 1945.

## **VAJIRAM & RAVI**

- The President's Colour ranks high among the honours bestowed upon a military unit in recognition of the exceptional service rendered to the nation, in peace or war.

### **DRDO YOUNG SCIENTISTS LABORATORIES**

- PM Modi dedicated **5 DRDO Young Scientists Laboratories to the nation.**
- In 2014, the Prime Minister had suggested that at least five DRDO labs should be identified exclusively for innovation from young scientists upto the age of 35 years.

### **SHARANG**

- **The Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) handed over Sharang, the first 130mm M-46 artillery gun upgraded to 155mm to the Indian Army.**
- The gun's range has now gone from 27 km to over 36 km with the upgrade. It also has more explosive capability and hence and more damage potential. In all, OFB will upgrade 300 130mm guns to 155mm and the contract will be completed in four years.

### **NEGEV 7.62X51 mm LMG**

- Ministry of Defence has signed Rs. 880 crore contract with **Israeli firm for procurement of Negev 7.62X51 mm Light Machine Guns (LMG).**
- It is a combat proven weapon and currently used by several countries around the globe.

### **CRIME MULTI AGENCY CENTRE (Cri-MAC)**

**Union Home Minister launched Crime Multi Agency Centre (Cri-MAC)** to share information between various police forces on heinous crimes and other issues related to inter-state coordination.



## ENVIRONMENT

### COP 13 ON CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES (CMS)

The 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS CoP13) was held in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat**.

- **Logo:** The **Great Indian Bustard** was the mascot of COP13. The CMS COP 13 Logo was also inspired by the traditional 'KOLAM' from southern India, which has a profound significance in the context of living in harmony with nature.
- **Theme:** "Migratory species connect the planet and together we welcome them home."
- India's proposal to include **Great Indian Bustard, Asian Elephant and Bengal Florican** in Appendix I of UN Convention on migratory species was unanimously accepted.
- Ten new species were added to CMS Appendices at COP13.
  - **Seven species were added to Appendix I:** Asian Elephant, Jaguar, Great Indian Bustard, Bengal Florican, Little Bustard, Antipodean Albatross and the Oceanic White-tip Shark.
  - **Three species were added to Appendix II:** Urial, Smooth Hammerhead Shark and the Tope Shark.
- With new additions to the wildlife list put out by the Convention on CMS, scientists say that the total number of migratory fauna from India comes to 457 species. Birds comprise 83% (380 species) of this figure.
- CMS COP13 also adopted the **Gandhinagar Declaration**, which calls for the concept of 'ecological connectivity' to be integrated and prioritized in the new Framework
- **The first ever report on the Status of Migratory Species**, presented to CMS COP13, shows that despite some success stories, the populations of most migratory species covered by CMS are declining.
- Three CMS Ambassadors - for terrestrial, avian, and aquatic species - were named at the relaunch of the **CMS Ambassadors Programme**: Ian Redmond OBE (for terrestrial), Sacha Dench (for avian), and Indian actor Randeep Hooda (for aquatic).
- **Seven new Migratory Species Champions** including the Government of India were named at a special high-level event organized on the sidelines of the conference.
- India, as COP13 host, assumed the role of **COP Presidency for the next 3 years**.

#### Announcements By PM Modi

- He pledged to focus on the conservation of **migratory birds along the Central Asian Flyway**. India has already prepared a 'National Action Plan for conservation of Migratory Birds along the Central Asian Flyway'.
- India by 2020, will be launching its **Marine Turtle Policy and Marine Stranding Management Policy**.
- He mentioned the release of the **Linear Infrastructure Policy Guidelines** to tailor development in ecologically fragile areas.

## Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)?

- The **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**, is an environment treaty under the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
- It is also referred to as the **Bonn Convention** (because the intergovernmental conference where the Convention was negotiated took place in Bonn in 1979) that provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats.
- It also lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.
- There are **130 parties to the convention** and India has been a member since 1983.
- There are now **173 species** in the Appendix 1 of the Convention.
- **What species are covered by CMS?** Mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and one insect are listed on the Convention's two Appendices –
  - **Appendix I** lists migratory species that are endangered.
  - **Appendix II** lists migratory species which have an unfavourable conservation status and which require international agreements for their conservation and management.

## RUBIGULA

- The **flame-throated bulbul**, also called the Rubigula, was chosen as the mascot of the **36th National Games** to be held during November, 2020 in Goa because it is the **State bird of Goa**.
- **Scientific Name:** Pycnonotus gularis.
- **Family:** It is a member of the bulbul family of passerine birds.
- **Physical description:** They are olive backed with yellow undersides and a triangular orange-red throat that stands out against the contrasting black head.
- **Distribution:** It is found in the Western Ghats from southern Maharashtra and Goa southwards.
- **IUCN Red List Status:** Least Concern



## HIMALAYAN IBEX

- A recent study by scientists of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has proved that Himalayan Ibex is a distinct species from the Siberian Ibex.
- Himalayan Ibex is distributed in the trans-Himalayan ranges of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh up to the river Sutlej.
- **IUCN Status:** Least concern.



## Siberian Ibex

- Siberian Ibex is a species of wild goat and is distributed in diverse habitats, ranging from cold deserts, rocky outcrops, steep terrain, high-land flats and mountain ridges to low mountains and foothills.
- From Mongolia, its distribution extends towards Altai, Hangai, Gobi-Altai, the Hurukh mountain ranges as well as Sayan Mountains near Russia and scattered populations in the small mountains of Trans-Altai Gobi.

## WORLD WATER DAY

- The annual World Water Day 2020 was observed on 22nd March with theme "Water and Climate Change." UN-Water is the convener for World Water Day.

- **Objective:** To advocate for universal access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (**WASH**) which is in line with the targets of **Sustainable Development Goal 6**.
- **History:** This day was first formally proposed in Agenda 21 of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. In 1993, the first World Water Day was observed.

**EARTH HOUR 2020**

- **Earth Hour 2020 was held on March 28, from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm.**
- Earth Hour was started as a lights out event in **Sydney, Australia in 2007**.
- It is organized by **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)**.
- Earth Hour is a global grassroots movement uniting people to take action on environmental issues. This event is held worldwide **toward the end of March** to encourage individuals, households, communities and businesses to turn off their **non-essential lights** for one hour as a symbol for their commitment to the planet.
- **Why In End Of March?** The second-to-last and last weekend of March is around the time of the Spring and Autumn equinoxes in the northern and southern hemispheres respectively, which allows for near coincidental sunset times in both hemispheres, thereby ensuring the greatest visual impact for a global 'lights out' event.
- **Earth Hour logo:** Earlier it was 60 (60 symbolizes 60 minutes). But since 2011 it is 60+. Here + represents the commitment to go beyond the earth hour (i.e. switching off non – essential lights in day to day life).

**GreenCo RATING SYSTEM**

- GreenCo Rating system has been acknowledged in India's **Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) document**, submitted to UNFCCC in 2015, as a voluntary action of Indian industry towards combating climate change.
- GreenCo Rating System has been developed by **CII**.
- It helps the industrial units in implementing various measures in terms of energy conservation, material conservation, recycling, utilisation of renewable energy, GHG reduction, water conservation, solid and liquid waste management, green cover etc.

**Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)**, founded in 1895, is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization.

**SYSTEM OF AIR QUALITY AND WEATHER FORECASTING AND RESEARCH (SAFAR)**

According to the Centre-run SAFAR, the COVID-19 led nationwide lockdown has led to reduction in level of PM2.5 (fine particulate pollutant) and Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) pollution in over 90 cities.

- SAFAR has been indigenously developed by **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune** and is run by **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.
- It provides real-time air quality index on 24x7 basis with colour coding along with 72-hour advance weather forecast. It also issue health advisory to prepare citizens well in advance.
- **Parameters Monitored**
  - **Pollutants:** PM1, PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, CO, NOx (NO, NO<sub>2</sub>), SO<sub>2</sub>, BC, Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), NMHC, Black Carbon, VOC's, Benzene and Mercury.
  - **Meteorological Parameters:** UV Radiation, Rainfall, Temperature, Humidity, Wind speed, Wind direction, solar radiation.

## EXTINCTION REBELLION (XR)

- In London, nearly 300 people were arrested in ongoing climate change protests organised by the campaign group Extinction Rebellion, that brought parts of the British capital to a standstill.
- **Type:** Extinction Rebellion (XR) is a civil society campaign group.
- **History:** It was established in 2018 in Britain by academics and has become one of the world's fastest-growing environmental movements.
- **Objective:** To use non-violent civil disobedience to achieve radical change in order to minimise the risk of human extinction and ecological collapse by averting climate breakdown and biodiversity loss.

## RAMSAR SITES

- Ramsar has declared **10 more wetland sites from India as sites of international importance** for the conservation of global biological diversity.
- Maharashtra gets its first Ramsar site (Nandur Madhameshwar), Punjab added 3 more (Keshopur-Miani, Beas Conservation Reserve, Nangal) and UP has added 6 more (Nawabganj, Parvati Agra, Saman, Samaspur, Sandi and Sarsai Nawar).
- With this, the numbers of Ramsar sites in India are now 37.
- Chilika Lake was designated as the **first Indian wetland of international importance** under the Ramsar Convention In 1981.

### Do You Know

- The Convention on Wetlands, known as the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental environmental treaty established in **1971 by UNESCO**, which came into force in 1975.
- It provides for national action and international cooperation regarding the conservation of wetlands, and wise sustainable use of their resources.
- Wetlands declared as Ramsar sites are protected under strict guidelines of the convention.

## POLYCRACK

- Indian Railways has commissioned country's first governmental Waste to Energy Plant, having capacity of 500 Kg waste per day, in **Mancheswar Carriage Repair Workshop at Bhubaneswar** in East Coast Railway.
- This **Waste to Energy Plant**, a patented technology called POLYCRACK, is first-of-its-kind in Indian Railways and fourth in India.
- It is world's first patented heterogeneous catalytic process which converts multiple feed stocks into hydrocarbon liquid fuels, gas, carbon and water. It can also be fed with all types of Plastic.

### Its advantages over the conventional approach of treating solid waste are:

- Pre-segregation of waste is not required to reform the waste. Waste as collected can be directly fed into Polycrack.
- It is an enclosed unit hence the working environment is dust free. All constituents are converted into valuable energy thereby making it Zero Discharge Process.

## HCFC-141b

- India has successfully achieved the **complete phase out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b**, one of the *most potent ozone depleting chemical* after Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).
- HCFC-141 b is used mainly as a blowing agent in the production of rigid polyurethane (PU) foams.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- The Ministry of Environment has brought out a Gazette notification through which import of HCFC-141b is prohibited from 1st January, 2020 under **Ozone Depleting Substances (Regulation and Control) Amendment Rules, 2019** issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- The complete phase out of HCFC 141 b from the country in foam sector is among the first at this scale in Article 5 parties (developing countries) under the Montreal Protocol.

### AFRICAN CHEETAH

- The Supreme Court allowed the Centre to introduce the African cheetah to suitable habitat in India.
- The decision of the apex court was based on the application filed by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**, in which it had sought the court's permission for the introduction of the wild creature.
- **Cheetah** (*Acinonyx jubatus*) is a large cat of the subfamily Felinae.
- **The 4 subspecies are:** Southeast African cheetah, Asiatic cheetah, Northeast African cheetah and Northwest African cheetah. It is the **fastest land animal**.
- It is found in North, Southern and East Africa, and a few localities in Iran. It inhabits a variety of mostly arid habitats like dry forests, scrub forests, and savannahs.
- The cheetah has been classified as **vulnerable** by the IUCN; and listed under **Appendix I of CITES** (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).
- In 1952, the **cheetah was officially declared extinct from India**.

#### NTCA

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change** constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act.
- **Environment Minister is the Chairman** of the NTCA.

#### Objective of the NTCA

- **Providing statutory authority to Project Tiger** so that compliance of its directives become legal.
- Fostering accountability of Center-State in management of Tiger Reserves, by providing a basis for MoU with States within our federal structure.
- Addressing livelihood interests of local people in areas surrounding Tiger Reserves.

#### Power and Functions of the NTCA

- **To approve the tiger conservation plan** prepared by the State Government
- Evaluate and assess various aspects of sustainable ecology and disallow any ecologically unsustainable land use such as, mining, industry and other projects within the tiger reserves;
- Lay down normative standards for tourism activities and guidelines for project tiger
- Provide for management focus and measures for addressing conflicts of men and wild animal.

### LABORATORY FOR CONSERVATION OF ENDANGERED SPECIES (LaCONES)

- According to the Laboratory for Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES), introduction of cheetahs in India will be a big challenge as India first have to adopt IUCN protocol to introduce wild animals in the country.



- **Parent body:** LaCONES is a dedicated Laboratory of CSIR's Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad.
- **Project LaCONES was established in 1998** with support from (i) Dept. of Biotechnology (DBT), Govt. of India, (ii) Central Zoo Authority of India (CZA), Delhi, (iii) Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and (iv) Government of Andhra Pradesh.
- The **laboratory was itself established in 2007**. It is **India's only dedicated laboratory for conservation of endangered species**. It has established Genetic Resource Bank for Indian wildlife.

#### 1t.org

- U.S. President Donald Trump announced that the U.S. will join the **1 Trillion Trees initiative (1t.org)**, which was launched by **World Economic Forum (WEF)** at its Annual Meeting 2020 to support the trillion tree community.
- 1t.org is a platform for leading governments, businesses, civil society and ecopreneurs committed to restoring and reforesting the planet. The initiative is designed.

#### GLOBAL RISKS REPORT 2020

- **World Economic Forum (WEF)** released the 15th edition Global Risks Report.
- **Top 5 risks in terms of likelihood over the next decade are environmental are:**
  - Extreme weather events with major damage to property, infrastructure
  - Failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation strategy
  - Human-made environmental damage and disasters such as oil spills
  - Major biodiversity losses and ecosystem collapse
  - Major natural disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis etc
- **Top 5 risks by severity of impact over the next 10 years: (1)** Failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation, **(2)** Weapons of mass destruction, **(3)** Major biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, **(4)** Extreme weather events (e.g. floods, storms, etc.) and **(5)** Water crises.

#### Do You Know

- The Global Risks Report is an annual study published by the World Economic Forum ahead of the Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland.
- The report is based on the perception of global experts and decision-makers about the likelihood and impact of global risks.

#### NATURE RISK RISING REPORT

- **The World Economic Forum (WEF)** released a report titled '**Nature Risk Rising**', the first in the series of **New Nature Economy (NNE)** reports.
- The report explains how nature-related risks matter to business and why they must be urgently mainstreamed into risk management strategies.

#### Key findings:

- Around \$44 trillion of economic value generation – more than half of the world's total GDP – is moderately or highly dependent on nature and its services and is therefore exposed to nature loss.
- Together, the three largest sectors that are highly dependent on nature generate close to \$8 trillion of gross value added (GVA): construction (\$4 trillion); agriculture (\$2.5 trillion); and food and beverages (\$1.4 trillion), the report says.

**E-WASTE CLINIC**

- India's **first e-waste clinic** was opened in **Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh**. It was jointly set up by the Central Pollution Control Board-CPCB and Bhopal Municipal Corporation-BMC.
- It would enable segregation, processing and disposal of waste from both household and commercial units. Electronic waste will be collected door-to-door or could be deposited directly at the e-waste clinic. The CPCB will provide technical support to the clinic.

**INDIA CLIMATE COLLABORATIVE (ICC)**

- Philanthropy arms of top corporates, including the Tatas, Mahindras, Godrejs and Premjis, announced India Climate Collaborative (ICC), a partnership to minimise the climate change impact.
- It will be working to strengthen the climate community locally, build a climate narrative and drive solutions that will ensure both the natural world and people thrive.

**BIOROCKS**

- The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), with help from Gujarat's Forest Department, installed a biorock structure off the Mithapur coast in the Gulf of Kutch to restore coral reefs using biorock or mineral accretion technology.
- **Biorock** is the name given to the substance formed by electro accumulation of minerals dissolved in seawater on steel structures that are lowered onto the sea bed and are connected to a power source, in this case solar panels that float on the surface.
- When a positively charged anode and negatively charged cathode are placed on the sea floor, with an electric current flowing between them, calcium ions combine with carbonate ions and adhere to the structure (cathode). This results in calcium carbonate formation. Coral larvae adhere to the CaCO<sub>3</sub> and grow quickly.

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

- According to World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the past decade (2010-2019) was the hottest on record and 2019 was the second warmest year ever, just shy of 2016, since records began.
- The average global temperature in 2019 was 1.1 degree Celsius (34°F) above pre-industrial levels. The hottest year on record was in 2016 due to the warming impact of a strong El Nino event. Since the 1960s, each decade has been warmer than the previous one, by significant amounts.

**OLIVE RIDLEYS**

- Recently, **Odisha's Gahirmatha Beach and Rushikulya Rookery**, the most preferred nesting grounds of the Olive Ridley sea turtles, witnessed lakhs of them.
- **Scientific Name:** *Lepidochelys olivacea*; **Common name:** Olive Ridley, Pacific Ridley.
- They are the **smallest of all sea turtles found in the world**.
- **Habitat:** They inhabit warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans. These turtles spend their entire lives in the ocean, and migrate thousands of kilometres between feeding and mating grounds in the course of a year.
- **Arribada:** These turtles, along with their cousin the Kemps ridley turtle, are best known for their unique *mass nesting* called Arribada. i.e. thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- **The coast of Odisha** in India is the largest mass nesting site for the Olive-ridley, followed by the coasts of Mexico and Costa Rica.

- **Usually, olive ridleys prefer to nest in darkness.** Sometimes due to pressure of delivery time, they may be opting to nest at daytime.
- **IUCN Red List Status:** Vulnerable.

#### **OPHICHTHUS KAILASHCHANDRAI**

- **A new snake eel species** residing in the Bay of Bengal has been discovered by Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) at Gopalpur-on-sea in Odisha.
- It has been named *Ophichthus kailashchandrai* to honour the vast contributions of Dr. Kailash Chandra, Director of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), to Indian animal taxonomy.
- *Ophichthus kailashchandrai* is the eighth species of the *Ophichthus* genus found on the Indian coast. In 2019, two new species of marine eel, *Gymnothorax andamanensis* and *Gymnothorax smithi* were been discovered by this ZSI centre.

#### **STAR LABELLING PROGRAMME FOR DEEP FREEZER and LCAC**

- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) launched **Star Labelling Programme for Deep Freezer and Light Commercial Air Conditioners (LCAC).**
- It has been initially launched in voluntary mode from 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2020 to 31st December, 2021. Thereafter, it will be made mandatory after reviewing the degree of market transformation in this particular segment of appliances.
- The program covers hardtop and glass top chest type Deep Freezer of all capacities complying with requirements of IS 302-2-24 for safety and IS 7872 for energy performance.
- Through this initiative, it is expected to save around 6.2 Billion Units by FY2030, which is equivalent to Green House Gas (GHG) reduction of 5.3-million-ton of Carbon Dioxide.

#### **WORLD AIR QUALITY REPORT 2019**

The 2019 World Air Quality Report was released by the pollution tracker **IQAir and Greenpeace**. The ranking is based on a comparison of PM2.5 levels.

##### **Key Findings:**

- According to it, around 90% of the global population is breathing unsafe air.
- India was the **fifth most polluted country** in 2019 with Ghaziabad in the National Capital Region ranking as the most polluted city in the world.
- India accounts for **two-thirds of the world's most polluted cities** — 21 of the most polluted 30 cities; 14 of the highest 20; and 6 of the highest 10.
- Among countries, when population is taken into account, **average PM2.5 pollution is highest in Bangladesh**, followed by Pakistan, while India is at number 5.
- While cities in India, on average, exceed the WHO target for annual PM2.5 exposure by 500%, national air pollution decreased by 20% from 2018 to 2019, with 98% of cities experiencing improvements.

#### **WORLD SPARROW DAY**

- **20th March** was observed as Annual World Sparrow Day with the **theme “I LOVE Sparrows”**.
- **House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)** is listed as **Least Concern** on the IUCN Red List.
- The need for marking this day was felt due to the tremendous decrease in its population due to increased use of pesticides, change in the pattern of buildings and gardens missing from the houses.

- The first World Sparrow Day was celebrated in 2010 in different parts of the world. The initiative was started by **Nature Forever Society (NFS) of India, founded by Mohammed Dilawar**, an Indian conservationist.

### **'WORLD'S LARGEST' SUBTERRANEAN FISH**

- **From deep dark Meghalaya cave**, explorers have discovered 'World's largest' subterranean fish. It is nearly five times the mean length (85mm/8.5 cm) for all known subterranean fish to date.
- The fish species is very similar to **Golden Mahseer**. Unique characters that distinguishes it from the *Golden Mahseer* is the *lack of pigmentation, a lack of eyes and its subterranean habitat* – being locked in caves.

**Subterranean fauna** refers to animal species that are adapted to live in underground environment.

**Subterranean ecosystems** are considered extreme, high-stress environments characterised by darkness, truncated food webs and food scarcity.

### **STATE OF INDIA'S BIRDS 2020 (SoIB)**

The State of India's Birds 2020 (SoIB), a new scientific report, was jointly released by 10 organisations. It was produced using a base of 867 species, and analysed with the help of data uploaded by birdwatchers to the online platform, eBird.

#### **Key Findings**

- **Over a fifth of India's bird diversity**, ranging from the Short-toed Snake Eagle to the Sirkeer Malkoha, has suffered strong long-term declines over a 25-year period.
- More recent annual trends point to a drastic **80% loss among several common birds**.
- **For every bird species** that was found to be increasing in numbers over the long term, **11 have suffered losses**, some catastrophically.
- Of 101 species categorised as being of **High Conservation Concern endemics** such as the Rufous-fronted Prinia, Nilgiri Thrush, Nilgiri Pipit and Indian vulture were confirmed as suffering current decline.
- The **common sparrow**, long seen as declining in urban spaces, has a stable population overall, although they have become rare in cities and urban areas.
- **Raptors** overall are in decline, with 'open country' species such as the Pallid and Montagu Harriers, White-bellied Sea Eagle and Red-necked Falcon suffering the most.
- **Migratory shorebirds, along with gulls and terns**, seem to have declined the most among waterbirds.

### **NEW WETLAND CONSERVATION RULES**

Ministry of Environment notified the new Wetland Conservation Rules.

#### **Salient Features Of The Rules**

- The rules prohibit setting up or expansion of industries and disposal of construction and demolition waste within the wetlands.
- Each state/UT will have to set up an authority that will define strategies for conservation and wise use of wetlands within their jurisdiction. The Authority will prepare a list of all wetlands within three months.
- It will develop a comprehensive list of activities to be regulated and permitted within the notified wetlands. It will also recommend mechanisms for maintenance of ecological character through promotional activities for land within the notified wetlands.

**Do You Know**

- A wetland is a land area that is saturated with water, either permanently or seasonally, and it takes on the characteristics of a distinct ecosystem.
- The Centre had in Sept' 2019, identified 130 wetlands for priority restoration in the next five years.
- The highest number of such identified wetlands are in **Uttar Pradesh (16)**, followed by Madhya Pradesh (13), Jammu & Kashmir (12), Gujarat (8), Karnataka (7) and West Bengal (6).

**'BLUE FLAG' CERTIFICATION**

The Centre issued a Gazette Notification declaring **a list of activities and facilities that would be permissible in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) areas of certain beaches, which have been identified for obtaining the 'Blue Flag' certification.**

- The 'Blue Flag' is a certification that can be obtained by a beach, marina, or sustainable boating tourism operator, and serves as an **eco-label**. The certification is known as an indication of high environmental and quality standards.
- The certification is awarded by the Denmark-based non-profit **Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)** with 33 stringent criteria under four major heads for the beaches: (i) Environmental Education and Information (ii) Bathing Water Quality (iii) Environment Management and Conservation and (iv) Safety and Services.
- The Blue Flag Programme **started in France in 1985** and in areas outside Europe since 2001. 47 countries currently participate in the program.
- In July 2019, the Ministry of Environment had identified 13 beaches across India for the Blue Flag certification.

**TIGER DEATHS**

- According to data from the Ministry of Environment, for the first time in the past three years, the number of tiger deaths in a year in the country has been less than 100.
- In 2019, the number of tiger deaths recorded was 84. The number was 100 in 2018, 115 in 2017, and 122 in 2016.
- **Madhya Pradesh**, which has the highest number of tigers in the country (526, as per the last census), recorded the most number of cases (31) of tiger deaths. This was followed by Maharashtra, which reported 18 deaths.

**Key Facts on Tiger Census Released In July 2019**

- As per the report, the total **population of Tiger in India is 2967**. In 2014, the count was 2,226 which reflected an increase of 741 individuals (aged more than one year), or 33%, in four years.
- **Tiger Population Trend in India** – 1411 (2006), 1706 (2010), 2226 (2014), 2967 (2018)
- India has **achieved the target of doubling the tiger count** four years ahead of the deadline of 2022.
- **Top Tiger States** (by Tiger population) - Madhya Pradesh (526); Karnataka (524); Uttarakhand (442).
- **Top States** (In terms of Percentage increase in Tiger population): MP (71%), Maharashtra (64%), Karnataka (29%).
- **Worst Performing States** - Chhattisgarh and Mizoram saw a decline in tiger population.

**Few Facts About Tiger Sanctuaries**

- Best-managed tiger reserves – **Pench Sanctuary** (Madhya Pradesh) and **Periyar sanctuary** (Kerala)



- Maximum improvement since 2014 - **Sathyamangalam** Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu
- **No tiger** has been found in **Buxa** (West Bengal), **Palamau** (Jharkhand) & **Dampa** (Mizoram) reserves.

### **Tiger Reserves In India**

- There are 50 Tiger Reserves in India.
- The **oldest tiger reserve is Corbett Tiger Reserve** which was declared in the year 1973 under 'Project Tiger', Whereas **Kamlang Tiger Reserve** is the **newest Tiger Reserve of India** declared in the year 2018.

### **CRASPEDOTROPIS GRETATHUNBERGAE**

- **A new species of snails** have been named *Craspedotropis gretathunbergae*, in honour of **Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg**. The species has been described in the Biodiversity Data Journal.
- The new species comes from tropical rainforests and is sensitive to drought and extreme temperatures, which are likely to be more frequent as climate change continues.
- Hence the honour to Thunberg, who has been making efforts to raise awareness about climate change. The two-millimetre-long snails have dark grey tentacles, a pale body and a concave shell, whose outer part is greenish-brown.

### **CHINESE PADDLEFISH**

- The Chinese paddlefish, one of the largest freshwater fish, has been **declared extinct** based on the Red List criteria of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- The Chinese paddlefish (*Psephurus gladius*) was an iconic species, measuring up to 7 m in length, dating back from 200 million years ago, and therefore swimming the rivers when dinosaurs ruled the Earth. Its ancestral home was the **Yangtze River**.
- Between 1981 and 2003, there were just around 210 sightings of the fish. The researchers estimate that it became functionally extinct by 1993, and extinct sometime between 2005-2010.

### **Red List has several categories for extinction, or for how endangered a species is:**

- **Extinct in the wild** means a species survives only in a captive environment.
- **Locally Extinct** means a species has ceased to exist in a particular area but may exist in other areas.
- **Functionally extinct** means the species continues to exist but it has too few members to enable to reproduce meaningfully enough to ensure survival.
- **Globally extinct** means a species has no surviving member anywhere.

### **HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT**

Ministry of Environment provided latest data in the Rajya Sabha on the Human-elephant conflict in the country over the past five years, from 2014-15 to 2018-19.

- Three States in the eastern and northeastern parts of the country — **West Bengal, Odisha and Assam** — account for about half of both human and elephant deaths in the overall human-elephant conflict in the country.
- 2,361 human deaths were recorded in elephant attacks across the country, of which 1,132 (48%) fatalities were from these three States. **West Bengal had the highest number of human casualties: 403**, followed by Odisha with 397, Jharkhand with 349, and Assam with 332 deaths.
- When it comes to unnatural deaths of elephants (mainly due to poaching, train accidents, electrocution and poisoning), the country recorded 510 deaths in the same period (2014-15 to 2018-19). Of these, 259 (53%) occurred in these three States alone.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- Among the reasons for unnatural deaths of elephants, **electrocution is at the top of the list, accounting for 68% of elephant deaths in the country.** Assam accounted for 66 electrocution deaths, followed by Odisha with 57 deaths and Bengal with 39 fatalities.
- **The second most common cause for unnatural deaths of elephants is train accidents.** Between 2014-15 to 2018-19, 77 deaths were due to train accidents.

### SENNA SPECTABILIS

- The Kerala Forest department is taking comprehensive steps to arrest the rampant growth of 'Senna Spectabilis', an invasive plant species in the forest areas of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR).
- Senna spectabilis is a plant species of the **legume family** (Fabaceae) in the subfamily Caesalpinioideae native to South and Central America.
- They are also known as **Golden wonder tree, American cassia, Popcorn tree, Cassia excelsa, Golden shower tree or Archibald's cassia.**
- The plant has become an invasive alien species in parts of Africa and South Asia after it was introduced for resources such as firewood as well as to help combat deteriorating ecosystems affected by deforestation and desertification.
- Currently, S. spectabilis is overtaking native tree species of forestry ecosystems around the world because of its ability to grow quickly.

### COASTAL REGULATION ZONE (CRZ) RULES

- The four illegal apartment complexes in Maradu, Kerala, was razed by controlled implosion on the orders of the Supreme Court for breaching Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms.
- In India, the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Rules govern **human and industrial activity close to the coastline**, in order to protect the fragile ecosystems near the sea.
- Under the rules, the **regulation zone** has been defined as the area up to 500 m from the high-tide line. The Rules have a **no-development zone of 20 m** for all islands close to the mainland coast, and for all backwater islands in the mainland.
- For the so-called **CRZ-III (Rural) areas**, two separate categories have been stipulated.
  - In the densely populated rural areas (**CRZ-IIIA**) with a population density of 2,161 per sq km as per the 2011 Census, the no-development zone is 50 m from the high-tide level, as against the 200 m stipulated earlier.
  - **CRZ-IIIB** category (rural areas with population density below 2,161 per sq km) areas continue to have a no-development zone extending up to 200 m from the high-tide line.
- While the CRZ Rules are made by the Union environment ministry, implementation is to be ensured by state governments through their Coastal Zone Management Authorities.

### SWAMP WALLABY

- Researchers reported that the swamp wallaby, **a marsupial related to the kangaroo**, is pregnant throughout its adult life. The swamp wallaby is likely the only mammal pregnant and lactating all life-long.
- It typically conceives a new embryo days before delivering the newborn from its previous pregnancy.
- Female wallabies have two uteri and two separate ovaries. At the end of a pregnancy in one uterus, a new embryo develops in the other uterus.



- Wallabies regularly have an embryo in the uterus, a young joey in the pouch, and a third semi-dependent young at foot, still drinking its mother's milk.
- In the swamp wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*), the new conception happens one or two days before the previous joey is delivered.

## PLASTIC PACKAGING POLLUTION

A new report by the World Wide Fund (WWF) analyses the volume of plastic packaging placed on the market in six rapidly growing Asian economies — China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

### Key Findings Of The Report

- Globally, 36% of plastic usage is for packaging and over a third of it lands up into the environment. Of the six countries analysed in the report, **Malaysia's per capita plastic packaging consumption** is the highest, at 16.78 kg.
- **China's annual household packaging consumption** is the highest, at 19,765 million tonnes. In China, plastic films and bags are the most used type of packaged plastic, followed by PET bottles and plastic cups and other containers.
- Around 60% of marine plastic pollution originates in these countries and 8 million tonnes of plastic enters the oceans every year. It has projected a 300% increase in plastic packaging between 2010 and 2050.

### WWF

- **Name:** The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) was formerly named the World Wildlife Fund, which remains its official name in Canada and the United States.
- **Status:** It is an international non-governmental organization, working in the field of wilderness preservation.
- **Founded in:** 1961; **Headquarters:** Switzerland.

## STATEMENT ON CLIMATE OF INDIA DURING 2019

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) released its weather summary titled the 'Statement on Climate of India during 2019.'

### Key Findings:

- The average temperature during 2019 rose by 0.36 degrees celsius, making this the seventh warmest year on record. The year **2016 is the warmest year recorded**.
- The **decade 2011-19 was the warmest on record for the country**. The report highlighted that India had warmed by 1 degree Celsius since 1901.
- Arabian Sea brewed more cyclonic storms than the Bay of Bengal in 2019. This was only the second time in 117 years that Arabian Sea saw such intense & frequent cyclones.
- The year 2019 was one of extremes — heat, cold, rain and cyclones — for India, killing a total of 1,562 people as compared to 1,428 in 2018.
- **Causes of deaths due to extreme weather events were:** Heavy rain and floods 849, Heatwave 349, Thunderstorm 210, Lightning 75, Snow avalanche 51 and Cold wave 28.

## R.K. PACHAURI

- Rajinder K. Pachauri passed away at the age of 79. He was the **founder and chief executive of The Energy Resources Institute (TERI)**.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- In 2002, he was elected Chairman of **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**. He had received **Nobel Peace Prize** on behalf of the IPCC, with former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, in 2007.

### Do You Know

- IPCC is an **intergovernmental body of the United Nations**, established in 1988 by **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** and **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **TERI** is a Non Profit research institute in New Delhi that specializes in the fields of energy, environment and sustainable development. It was established in 1974.

### CAUVERY DELTA REGION

- The Tamil Nadu Assembly has passed a bill declaring the Cauvery Delta Region a **Protected Special Agriculture Zone (PSAZ)**.
- The bill seeks to establish a 30-member **Protected Agricultural Zone Authority**, headed by the Chief Minister to advise the Govt on protecting and improving agricultural activities in the region.
- **Projects Banned:** The bill provides for banning certain new industries in the region. They include hydrocarbon exploration, smelting of copper, zinc and aluminium, iron ore processing, tanneries and ship breaking.
- **Projects Exempted:** However, any ongoing projects would not be disturbed. Infrastructure development projects like port development, laying of pipelines, road, telecommunication lines, power and water supply facilities will not be banned.
- **Regions Covered & Exempted:** The whole districts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam and five blocks each of Cuddalore and Pudukkottai districts are brought under the ambit of the bill. However, the more industrialized districts of Trichy, Ariyalur and Karur have been excluded, though they are part of the Delta region geographically.

### WOLLEMI PINE

- The prehistoric Wollemi Pine grove, which exists in a secret location within the **Wollemi National Park northwest of Sydney**, has been saved from Australian bushfires in a covert firefighting mission.
- Wollemia is a genus of **coniferous tree** in the family **Araucariaceae**.
- **Distribution:** Wollemi National Park in New South Wales is the only place in the world where these trees are found in the wild.
- **Common name:** The tree has been almost universally referred to as the Wollemi pine, although it is not a true pine (genus Pinus) nor a member of the pine family (Pinaceae)
- Wollemi Pine is one of the world's oldest and rarest plants dating back to the time of the **dinosaurs**. The oldest fossil of Wollemi tree has been dated to 90-200 million years ago.
- **Conservation Status:** With less than 200 left, the Wollemi pine is classified as **critically endangered** (CR) on the IUCN's Red List. prior to 1994 it was thought to be extinct.

Once thought extinct in the wild, now 200 growing in protection



## SCIENCE & TECH

### NATIONAL MISSION ON QUANTUM TECHNOLOGIES & APPLICATIONS (NM-QTA)

- National Mission on Quantum Technologies & Applications (NM-QTA) was announced in Budget 2020 with outlay of Rs 8000 Crore for a period of five years to be implemented by the Department of Science & Technology (DST).
- Quantum Technology is based on the principles of quantum theory, which explains the nature of energy and matter on the atomic and subatomic level. Quantum computers store and process information using quantum **two level systems (quantum bits or qubits)** which unlike classical bits, can be prepared in superposition states.
- Implementation of the mission would help develop and bring quantum computers and associated technologies within reach in the country.

### VYOMMITRA

- ISRO announced that Vyommitra, **a half-humanoid**, will be sent to space as a trial before Gaganyaan, which will be launched in 2022.
- Vyom Mitra is the result of a year-long effort of the ISRO Inertial Systems Unit in Thiruvananthapuram.
- The humanoid will simulate the human functions required for space before real astronauts take off before August 2022. Two trial flights without crew will take place with a humanoid — the first around December 2020 and the second around July 2021.



### TELECOMMUNICATION CONSUMERS EDUCATION AND PROTECTION FUND (TCEPF)

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) said that telecom service providers will need to deposit all unclaimed money of consumers, including excess charges and security deposit, in the 'TCEPF'.
- TRAI had notified the TCEPF Regulations, 2007 which created the 'TCEPF'.
- Any amount charged in excess of the notified rates by telecom service providers, which they are not able to refund to the concerned subscribers, are credited into the fund.
- The income from the Fund is utilised to undertake programmes to educate consumers of the telecommunication services on the recommendation of a committee.

### PETROLEUM AND EXPLOSIVES SAFETY ORGANIZATION (PESO)

- Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization (PESO) has taken various measures to ensure uninterrupted supply of Oxygen to hospitals and other health care facilities due to nationwide lock down for containment of COVID-19 pandemic.
- Petroleum & Explosives Safety Organization (PESO) is an organization under **Department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP), Ministry of commerce & industry**. It administers the usage of explosives & petrol stations in India.
- It is headquartered at **Nagpur, Maharashtra**.



## THOOTHUKODI LAUNCH PORT / SSLVs

- **ISRO will establish a second launch port in Thoothukodi district in Tamil Nadu exclusively to launch small satellite launch vehicles (SSLVs).**
- SSLV is a launch vehicle being developed by the ISRO with payload capacity to deliver **500 kg to Low Earth orbit or 300 kg to Sun synchronous orbit** for launching small satellites, with the capability to support multiple orbital drop-offs.
- In December 2018, the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) at Thumba completed the design for the vehicle. The maiden flight is expected in early 2020.

## NESYAMUN

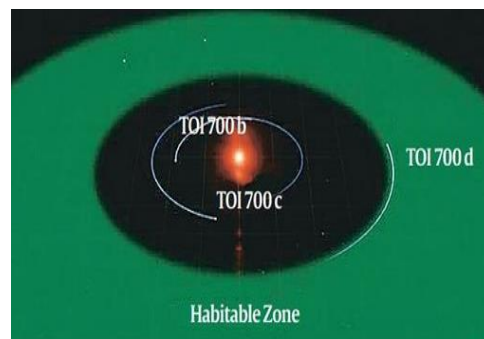
- For the first time, scientists have reconstructed the voice of an ancient human being, that of a **3000-year-old Egyptian mummy named Nesyamun.**
- Nesyamun, also known as **The Leeds Mummy**, is an Egyptian mummy from around 1100 BC held at Leeds City Museum. Nesyamun was a priest, incense-bearer and scribe at the Egyptian temple complex at Karnak. He died in around 1100 BC.
- The sound, which has been reproduced, is “**vowel-like**” and has been produced based on precise measurements of the mummy’s existing vocal tract. These measurements were determined by taking a **Computerised Tomography (CT) Scan** of the mummy.

## NEON

- **Samsung’s Star Labs has officially unveiled Neon as its latest artificial intelligence (AI) powered project.** Neons are Artificial Intelligence virtual beings capable of showing human-like emotions and intelligence.
- Neons can learn new skills and form memories from experiences. Neons are digitally composed next-generation artificial intelligent entities created using Star Labs’ CORE R3 and SPECTRA engines. They can serve as individualised teacher, financial advisor etc.

## TOI 700 d

- **NASA reported the discovery of an Earth-size planet, named TOI 700 d, orbiting its star in the “habitable zone”.** TOI 700 d was found by NASA’s Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) mission, which it launched in 2018.
- TOI 700 d measures 20% larger than Earth. It orbits its star once every 37 days. The star, TOI 700, is an “M dwarf” located 100 light-years away in the southern constellation Dorado, is 40% of our Sun’s mass and size, and has about half its surface temperature.
- Habitable zone, also called “**Goldilocks zone**”, is the area around a star where it is not too hot and not too cold for liquid water to exist on the surface of surrounding planets.



## MACS 4028

- Scientists from *Agharkar Research Institute (ARI), Pune*, an autonomous institute under Department of Science & Technology have developed a **biofortified durum wheat variety MACS 4028.**
- MACS 4028 is a semi-dwarf variety, which matures in 102 days and has shown the superior and stable yielding ability of 19.3 quintals per hectare. It is **resistant to stem rust, leaf rust, foliar aphids, root aphids, and brown wheat mite.**

- The wheat variety shown **high protein content of about 14.7%**, better nutritional quality having **zinc 40.3 ppm**, and **iron content of 40.3ppm and 46.1ppm** respectively, good milling quality and overall acceptability.
- The MACS 4028 variety is also included by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) programme for UNICEF to alleviate malnutrition.

#### **BIOFUEL FROM MICROORGANISMS / Synechococcus sp. PCC 7002**

- Researchers at the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) are developing a method to improve the growth rate and sugar content of a marine microorganism called Synechococcus sp. PCC 7002.
- **Cyanobacteria:** Some bacteria, such as the cyanobacteria (also known as blue-green algae), too can perform photosynthesis and produce sugar by fixing the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Cyanobacteria are found in both fresh and marine waters.
- **Benefits:** Yield of sugars from cyanobacteria could potentially be much higher than that of land-based crops. Unlike plant-based sugars, cyanobacterial biomass provides a nitrogen source in the form of proteins. This could give a boost to the biofuel sector.

#### **2020 CD3**

- **Astronomers have observed a small object orbiting Earth, which they have dubbed a “mini-moon” or the planet’s “second moon”.**
- Dubbed 2020 CD3, it is actually an asteroid, about the size of a car; its diameter is about 1.9-3.5 m. Orbit integrations indicate that this object is temporarily bound to the Earth. i.e. unlike our permanent Moon, the mini-moon is temporary; it will eventually break free of Earth’s orbit and go off on its own way.

#### **Temporarily Captured Object (TCO)**

- When an asteroid’s orbit crosses Earth’s orbit, it can sometimes be captured into the latter orbit. This is what happened with 2020 CD3. It is now orbiting at a distance farther from Earth. Such an asteroid is called a Temporarily Captured Object (TCO).
- The orbit of such objects is unstable. They have to contend with the gravitational influence of our permanent Moon as well as that of the Sun.

#### **HENNEGUYA SALMINICOLA**

- An international team of researchers has found *Henneguya salminicola*, **a multicellular animal with no mitochondrial DNA**, making it the only known animal to exist without the need to breathe oxygen.
- *H. salminicola*, *member of the group Myxozoa*, is a microscopic parasite that infects salmon. In their work, the researchers sequenced the DNA of *H. salminicola* tissue and found no mitochondrial DNA at all. The researchers suggest they likely steal energy from their host using some type of proteins.
- One of the common characteristics of all multicellular animals on Earth is **mitochondrial respiration**—the process by which oxygen is used to generate adenosine triphosphate—the fuel used to power cellular processes. The process takes place in mitochondria

#### **BISAG(N)**

- Union Cabinet has approved Elevation of Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG), Gujarat as Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG(N)) under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MEITY), Government of India.

- At present, BISAG is a state agency of Department of Science and Technology Government of Gujarat, located at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- The elevation of BISAG has been done to expand its scope of activities & research and to ensure efficient rollout of GIS projects. Now it will be an Autonomous Scientific Society under Government of India instead of State Government.

**ASKDISHA**

- **Indian Railways** has introduced the services of **Artificial Intelligence based ASKDISHA chatbot** on the ticketing and tourism website of its PSU, Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC).
- It has been developed to resolve queries of railway passengers over the internet pertaining to various services offered by IRCTC.

Chatbot is a special computer programme designed to simulate conversation with users, especially over the internet.

**CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY**

- **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** has set up the Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Blockchain Technology in **Bengaluru, Karnataka**.
- A blockchain is a growing list of records, called blocks, that are linked using cryptography. Each block contains a cryptographic hash of the previous block, a timestamp, and transaction data.

**XENOBOT**

- Scientists in the USA have created the **world's first 'living machines'**. tiny robots built from the cells of the African clawed frog, that can move around on their own.
- They have named the millimetre-wide robots "xenobots" after *Xenopus laevis*, the species of aquatic frog found across sub-Saharan Africa,
- The xenobots "can move toward a target, perhaps pick up a payload and heal themselves after being cut.

**INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS ASSOCIATION (ISCA)**

- The '107<sup>th</sup> Indian Science Congress' was held at **University of Agricultural Sciences (UASB), Bengaluru** under the theme '*Science & Technology: Rural Development*'.
- ISCA is a premier scientific organisation of India having a membership of more than 30,000 scientists.
- **HQ:** Kolkata, West Bengal. The association started in the year 1914 and meets annually, generally in the first week of January.

**Key Highlights of 107<sup>th</sup> session of ISC**

- **A Farmers Science Congress** was held for the first time in the history of ISC.
- **Vigyan Sancharak Sammelan (Science Communicators Meet)** was held as an initiative for Science communicators' for professional growth.
- **Women's Science Congress** was held to provide single platform for women working in different arena of science and technology.
- **Rashtriya Kishore Vaigyanik Sammelan (Children's Science Congress)** was held to provide opportunity for children to view selected projects and interact with scientists.

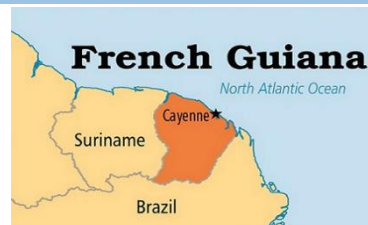
**BI-LUMINESCENT SECURITY INK**

- **CSIR-National Physical Laboratory** has developed a bi-luminescent security ink to **Curb Fake Printing of Passports and Counterfeiting of Currency Notes**.
- This ink glows in red and green colours when illuminated by two different excitation sources at 254 nano meters (nm) and 365 nm, respectively.

- The ink was prepared in a batch of 1kg and given to **Bank Note Press (BNP), Dewas**, a unit of Security Printing Minting Corporation of India Ltd. (SPMCIL), New Delhi.

**GSAT-30**

- India's telecommunication satellite GSAT-30 was successfully launched into a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) from Kourou launch base, French Guiana by Ariane-5 VA-251.
- GSAT-30 is aimed at providing high-quality television, telecommunications and broadcasting services. With a mission life of 15 years, the 3,357-kg GSAT-30 is equipped with 12 C and 12 Ku band transponders.
- GSAT-30 will serve as replacement to the aging INSAT-4A spacecraft services.

**HIGH DEFINITION (HD) VS. STANDARD DEFINITION (SD)**

- All companies from digital industry have decided upon temporarily defaulting HD & ultra-HD streaming to SD content or offering only SD content, at bitrates no higher than 480p on cellular networks until 14th April.
- The difference between **High Definition (HD)** and **Standard Definition (SD)** images is the number of pixels contained in the image on display. HD images have more pixels per square inch than SD videos. Thus, HD images can show finer detail than SD images.
- SD is 640 pixels wide and 480 pixels tall in the U.S (larger in Asia and Europe, where the format is different). HD is at least 1280 pixels wide, and in wider format than SD.

**SCHEMES FOR ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURING**

Union Cabinet has approved three schemes to incentivise electronics and components manufacturing exports and production in the country. These are:

- Scheme For Promotion Of Manufacturing Of Electronic Components And Semiconductors (SPECS):** Under it, financial incentive of 25% of capital expenditure will be offered for the manufacturing of goods that constitute the supply chain of an electronic product.
- Production Incentive Scheme (PLI) for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing:** It proposes production linked incentive to boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments in mobile phone manufacturing and specified electronic components including Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) units.
- Financial assistance to the **Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC2.0) Scheme** for development of world class infrastructure along with common facilities and amenities through Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMCs).

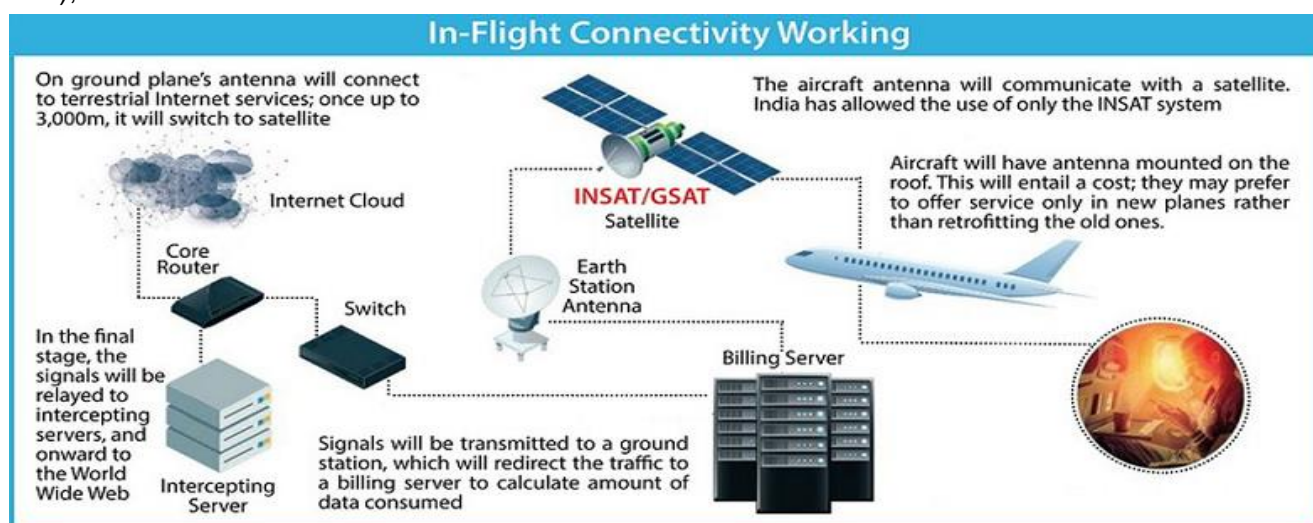
**SOPHISTICATED ANALYTICAL & TECHNICAL HELP INSTITUTES (SATHI)**

- Department of Science & Technology launched Sophisticated Analytical & Technical Help Institutes (SATHI) scheme to address the need for building shared Science and Technology infrastructure in the country.**
- These Centres will house analytical instruments to provide common services of high-end analytical testing, thus avoiding duplication of expensive equipment in our Institutions.
- DST has already set up three such centres at IIT Kharagpur, IIT Delhi and BHU. It has planned to set up five SATHI Centres every year for the next four years.

## IN-FLIGHT WIFI

The government, through an official notification has permitted airlines operating in India to provide in-flight WiFi services to passengers.

- Broadly, in-flight connectivity systems use two kinds of technologies.
- One, an onboard antenna picks up signals from the nearest tower on the ground, and unless the aircraft flying over a large space with no towers (such as a water body), the connection will remain seamless up to a certain altitude.
- Otherwise, satellites can be used to connect to ground stations in the same way that satellite TV signals are transmitted. Data is transmitted to a personal electronic device through an onboard router, which connects to the plane's antenna.
- Once flight mode is activated, the plane's antenna will link to terrestrial Internet services provided by telecom service providers; when the aircraft has climbed to 3,000 m (normally 4-5 minutes after take-off), the antenna will switch to satellite-based services.



## SUTRA PIC PROGRAMME

- Government of India launched SUTRA PIC or Scientific Utilisation Through Research Augmentation-Prime Products from Indigenous Cows.
- Under it, scientific research will be carried out milk products derived from Indian 'indigenous' cows. To be funded by multiple scientific ministries, the initiative is led by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

## MUKTOSHRI

- **Researchers in West Bengal** have developed and commercialised a **rice variety** named Muktosshri (also called IET 21845) that is **resistant to arsenic**.
- West Bengal is among the States with the highest concentration of arsenic in groundwater. Arsenic from groundwater and the soil can enter the food chain through paddy which can lead to poisoning.

## OCULUDENTAVIS KHAUNGRAAE

- Scientists have identified a **100-million-year-old flying dinosaur encased in amber that may be the smallest yet discovered**.
- The skull of Oculudentavis khaungraae was found in a globule of amber in Myanmar.



- The preserved skull is just 7.1mm (less than one-third of an inch) long. It would have been smaller than the smallest bird alive today, the bee hummingbird.
- Oculudentavis is an extinct genus of tetrapod, originally identified as an avialan dinosaur (bird, in the broad sense) with a single known species, Oculudentavis khaungraae.

#### **APOLLO 13**

- NASA marked the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 13 crewed mission to the Moon – known as “a successful failure” as its crew were able to pull off a safe return despite the spacecraft enduring an explosion. Apollo 13 was the seventh crewed mission in the Apollo space program and the third meant to land on the Moon.
- The craft was launched from Kennedy Space Center on April 11, 1970, aboard the Saturn V SA-508 rocket. But the lunar landing was aborted. The crew instead looped around the Moon, and returned safely to Earth on April 17.

#### **CollabCAD**

- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog and National Informatics Centre (NIC)** jointly launched CollabCAD, a collaborative network, computer enabled software system, providing a total engineering solution from 2D drafting & detailing to 3D product design.
- The aim of this initiative is to provide a great platform to students of Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) across country to create and modify 3D Computer Aided Designs with free flow of creativity and imagination.

## MISCELLANEOUS: AWARDS, SPORTS, PERSON IN NEWS

### PADMA AWARDS 2020

- Padma Awards 2020 were announced on the eve of Republic Day. This year the President of India has approved conferment of 141 Padma Awards including 7 Padma Vibhushan and 16 Padma Bhushan.
- Padma Awards are one of the highest civilian Awards of the country conferred in three categories, namely –
  - **Padma Vibhushan:** For Exceptional and distinguished service.
  - **Padma Bhushan:** For Distinguished service of high order.
  - **Padma Shri:** For distinguished service in any field.
- **Disciplines in which awarded:** It is given for distinguished and exceptional achievements/service in all fields of activities/disciplines.
- **Eligibility:** All persons without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex are eligible for these awards. However, Government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these Awards.

### Award Committee

- The nomination process is open to the public. Even self-nomination can be made.
- All nominations received for Padma Awards are placed before the Padma Awards Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary, which is constituted by the PM every year.
- The recommendations of the committee are submitted to the PM and the President for approval. The awardees are then presented a certificate and a medallion.

### Clarification

- The **award does not amount to a title and cannot be used as a suffix or prefix** to the awardees' name.
- **The total number of awards** to be given in a year (excluding posthumous awards and to NRI/foreigners/OCIs) **should not be more than 120.**
- The award is **normally not conferred posthumously**. However, in highly deserving cases, the Government could consider giving an award posthumously.
- A higher category of Padma award can be conferred on a person only after a **gap of five years**. However, in highly deserving cases, a relaxation can be made.

### List of Padma Vibhushan 2020 Awardees (7):

George Fernandes (Posthumous)	Chhannulal Mishra, Art
Arun Jaitley (Posthumous)	Sushma Swaraj (Posthumous)
Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK Public Affairs, Mauritius	Vishveshateertha Swamiji (Posthumous), Others-Spiritualism, Karnataka
Mary Kom, Sports, Manipur	

**List of Padma Bhushan 2020 Awardees (16):**

Manohar Parrikar (Posthumous)	Krishnammal Jagannathan, Social Work
P. V. Sindhu, Sports	S. C. Jamir, Public Affairs, Nagaland
M. Mumtaz Ali (Sri M), Others-Spiritualism	Anil Prakash Joshi, Social Work
Syed Muazzem Ali (Posthumous), Public Affairs, Bangladesh	Tsering Landol, Medicine, Ladakh
Muzaffar Hussain Baig, Public Affairs	Anand Mahindra, Trade and Industry
Ajoy Chakravorty, Art	N R Madhava Menon, Public Affairs
Manoj Das, Literature & Education	Jagdish Sheth, Literature and Education
Balkrishna Doshi, Others-Architecture	Venu Srinivasan, Trade and Industry

**PRADHAN MANTRI RASHTRIYA BAL PURASKAR 2020**

- The President of India presented the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2020.
- The award scheme is administered by **Ministry of Women & Child Development**.
- Under this scheme, awards are given every year in two categories.
  - **Bal Shakti Puraskar** is given to recognize exceptional achievements of our children in various fields i.e., innovation, scholastic achievements, social service, arts & culture, sports and bravery.
  - **Bal Kalyan Puraskar** is given to recognize the contribution of dedicated individuals and institutions working for the welfare of children.

**NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR**

- President Ram Nath Kovind gave away the Nari Shakti Puraskar to 15 women on the occasion of International Women's Day.
- **Some of the prominent awardees are:** Indian Air Force's first women fighter pilots (Mohana Singh, Bhawana Kanth and Avani Chaturvedi), 103 year old athlete Mann Kaur, Environmentalist Chami Murmu and classical vocalist Kaushiki Chakroborty.
- The Nari Shakti Puraskar, instituted by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, are "National Award in recognition of exceptional work for women empowerment."
- These are conferred every year on March 8 to individuals, groups, institutions in recognition of their exceptional work towards the cause of women empowerment, especially for vulnerable and marginalized women.

**Eligibility Criteria**

- Open to individuals, groups and institutions for outstanding work towards empowerment of women
- Individual applicant must be at least 25 years of age
- Institutions must have at least 5 years of relevant experience

**WOMEN TRANSFORMING INDIA (WTI) AWARDS**

- **NITI Aayog** presented the Women Transforming India (WTI) Awards to 15 winners.
- WTI Awards are given to highlight the commendable and ground-breaking endeavours of India's women leaders and changemakers.
- Since 2018, the Awards have been hosted under the aegis of **NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform** with a special focus on entrepreneurship.

## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- Launched on International Women's Day, the Women Entrepreneurship Platform has become a forum dedicated to educating, enabling and empowering women entrepreneurs.

### SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE AAPDA PRABANDHAN PURASKAR 2020

- For the year 2020, **Disaster Mitigation & Management Centre, Uttarakhand (in the institution category)** and **Kumar Munnan Singh (Individual category)** have been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar.
- It is an annual award instituted by Government of India to recognise the excellent work done by individuals and institutions in India in the field of disaster management.
- It is announced on 23rd January, the birth anniversary of Subhash Chandra Bose.
- In case the winner being an institution, it shall receive a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakhs. In case of the winner being an individual, winner shall receive a cash prize of Rs. 5 lakhs.

### HARIVARASANAM AWARD

- **Renowned music composer Ilaiyaraaja** was awarded the Harivarasanam Award for 2020 by the Kerala Government.
- **Criteria:** The award is given to a person for their contribution to propagate the spirit of secularism, equanimity, and universal brotherhood of Sabarimala through the songs.
- **Cash prize:** ₹1,00,000; **Instituted:** 2012.
- **Instituted By:** Kerala state government and the Travancore Devaswom Board.
- **Previous recipients of the award:** KJ Yesudas (2012), KG Jayan (2013), M Jayachandran (2014), SP Balasubrahmanyam (2015), MG Sreekumar (2016), Gangai Amaran (2017) and KS Chitra (2018) and P Susheela (2019).

#### Harivarasanam

- 'Harivarasanam' is a Malayalam devotional song written in eight stanzas, called '**Ashtakam**'. It was written by Kambakudi Kulathur Srinivasa Iyer, a guruswami, in 1947.
- It is recited at Sabarimala (the principal Ayyappan pilgrimage site), before closing the temple door every night.

### ANTARASHTRIYA YOGA DIWAS MEDIA SAMMAN (AYDMS)

- The **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B)** conferred the **first 'Antarrashtriya Yoga Diwas Media Samman'** to 30 media houses to mark the contribution of media in spreading the message of Yoga. The award was instituted in June, 2019.
- 30 Sammans under 3 categories will be conferred.
  - 11 Sammans under the category "Best Media Coverage of Yoga in Newspapers.
  - 8 Sammans under the category "Best Media Coverage of Yoga in Television.
  - 11 Sammans under the category "Best Media Coverage of Yoga in Radio.
- The Samman will comprise of a special medal/plaque/trophy and a citation.

#### Do You Know

Since 2015, the International Day of Yoga is being celebrated annually on 21st of June. The idea of International Day of Yoga was first proposed by the PM Modi, during his address at the United Nations General Assembly in 2014.

**RAMNATH GOENKA EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM AWARDS**

- **President of India presented the 14th Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards** to honour **journalists from print, broadcast and digital media** recognising their strength and integrity while covering news in adverse circumstances.
- Named after Ramnath Goenka, the awards have been held annually since 2006.
- **Ramnath Goenka (1904–1991)** was an Indian newspaper publisher. He launched The Indian Express Newspaper in 1932. He became the Lok Sabha Member in 1971 under the banner of Bhartiya Jan Sangha.

**COSTA CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD**

- India-born author **Jasbinder Bilan** has won the Costa Children's Book Award, a coveted UK children's book award for her debut novel '**Asha and the Spirit Bird**.' Bilan will receive 5,000 pounds as the winner of the award.
- The Costa Book Awards are a set of annual literary awards recognising English-language books by writers based in Britain and Ireland.
- The awards are given both for high literary merit but also for works that are enjoyable.
- Authors need not be British or Irish but they must have been resident in the UK or Ireland for at least six months in each of the previous three years.
- There are five book award categories: (1) Novel, (2) First novel, (3) Children's book, (4) Poetry and (5) Biography. Each of the five winning writers receives £5,000.

**SWATHI MUSIC AWARD**

- **Violinist and Carnatic music composer L. Subramaniam** has been selected for the Swathi music award for 2017 instituted by the Kerala government.
- The award comprises a cash prize of ₹2,00,000.

**MUPPAVARAPU NATIONAL AWARDS**

- **Dr. M S Swaminathan and Dr. Gutta Muniratnam** were respectively chosen as the first recipients of '**Muppavarapu Venkaiah Naidu National Award for Excellence**' and '**Muppavarapu National Award for Social Service**'
- The National Award for Excellence was instituted by the Muppavarapu Foundation, while the one for Social Service was launched by the Swarna Bharat Trust, in Hyderabad.
- Each award carries a cash prize of Rupees Five Lakh and citation.
- **M.S. Swaminathan**, an eminent Agricultural Scientist is widely referred to as the scientific leader of the green revolution movement. **Dr G Muniratnam** is Founder Secretary of Tirupati -based Rashtriya Seva Samiti and an exemplary social worker.

**JEEVAN RAKSHA PADAK**

- President of India approved the conferment of **Jeevan Raksha Padak Series of Awards - 2019 on 54 persons**.
- **Objective:** Jeevan Raksha Padak series of awards are given to a person for meritorious act of human nature in saving the life of a person.
- **Categories:** The award is given in three categories: (1) Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak, (2) Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak and (3) Jeevan Raksha Padak.



## VAJIRAM & RAVI

- **Eligibility:** Persons of all walks of life are eligible for these awards. The award can also be conferred posthumously.

### 29th SARASWATI SAMMAN

- **Sindhi writer Vasdev Mohi** was conferred 29th Saraswati Samman for his short stories collection- **Chequebook**. He is also a recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award.
- **Criteria:** The award is annually given to an outstanding work of an Indian citizen published during the last 10 years in any of the languages mentioned in **Schedule 8 of the constitution**.
- **Instituted by:** KK Birla Foundation; **Instituted in:** 1991; **Cash Prize:** 15 lakh rupees.

### Do You Know

- Besides the Saraswati Samman, the K.K. Birla foundation also gives away **two other literary awards Vyas Samman and Bihari Puraskar**.
- Sindhi is one of the scheduled languages officially recognized by the Constitution of India.

### SWARNA JAYANTI FELLOWSHIPS

- Swarna Jayanti Fellowships for 2018-19 have been awarded to **14 Scientists associated with projects containing innovative research idea and with potential of making impact on R&D** in the respective disciplines.
- The Swarna Jayanti Fellowships scheme was instituted by Government of India to commemorate India's fiftieth year of independence. The awardees are supported by Department of Science & Technology, for fellowship and research.
- This will cover all the requirements for performing the research and include a fellowship of Rs 25,000/- per month as well as a research grant of 5 lakh Rupees for 5 years in addition to their salary.

### NATIONAL LALIT KALA AKADEMI AWARDS

- President of India conferred the Lalit Kala Akademi's 61st annual awards.
- **Prominent awardees included:** Anoop Kumar Manzukhi Gopi (Kerala), David Malakar (West Bengal), Hari Ram Kumbhawat (Rajasthan), Devendra Kumar Khare (Gujarat), Dinesh Pandya (Maharashtra), Mohan Kumar (Karnataka) and Yashwant Singh (Delhi).
- Lalit Kala Akademi, National Academy of Art, New Delhi was set up by the Government of India as an autonomous body, in 1954. The Akademi was given **statutory authority in 1957**, under the Societies Registration Act 1860.

### SERB WOMEN EXCELLENCE AWARD-2020

- **Niti Kumar, Senior Scientist from Division of Molecular Parasitology, CSIR-CDRI, Lucknow** received SERB Women Excellence Award-2020.
- This award is given to women scientist below 40 years of age who have received recognition from national academies.
- The women researchers will be supported by research grant of 5 lakhs per annum for 3 years by Science and Engineering Research Board, Department of Science & Technology, Government of India (SERB-DST).
- Award was conferred by the President of India during National Science Day (NSD) 2020 Celebrations on February 28, 2020. This year's theme for NSD was "Women in Science"

**LAUREUS WORLD SPORTS AWARDS-2020**

- The Laureus Award is shared for the first time in its 20-year history. Formula One driver **Lewis Hamilton** and footballer **Lionel Messi** were declared joint winners of the prestigious Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award.
- The Laureus Sporting Moment Award (2000-2020) public fan vote was won by Sachin Tendulkar, who was part of the victorious 2011 ICC World Cup-winning team, was carried on the shoulders by his teammates.
- The Laureus World Sports Awards is an annual award ceremony honouring individuals and teams from the world of sports along with sporting achievements throughout the year.
- It was established in 1999 by Laureus Sport for Good Foundation.

**92<sup>nd</sup> ACADEMY AWARDS**

- Parasite won four awards at the Oscars – Best Picture, Best International Film, Best Director and Best Original Screenplay.
- Parasite is the first non-English language film to win best picture in the 92-year history of the Academy Awards. Director Bong Joon Ho created history by becoming the first Asian and South Korean filmmaker to bag the best director Oscar.
- Joaquin Phoenix took home the Best Actor award for his performance in Joker. Renée Zellweger won the Oscar for her performance in Judy.

**Do You Know**

- The Academy Awards, also known as the Oscars, are awards for artistic and technical merit in the film industry. These are given annually by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
- The 92nd Academy Awards ceremony honored the best films of 2019.

**INTERNATIONAL GANDHI AWARDS FOR LEPROSY**

- The President of India presented the International Gandhi Awards for Leprosy to **Dr N.S. Dharmashaktu** under the Indian nomination (individual) category and the Leprosy Mission Trust under the institutional category.
- **Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation, Wardha** (established in 1951) has instituted the award titled “International Gandhi Award” in 1986.
- The Award is presented once in two years and consists of Rs. 2 lakhs as cash award.
- **Eligibility:** The Award is given to a Leprosy Worker or Institution who/which has undertaken work in the field of leprosy for a period of not less than 10 years. The Award is open to medical, paramedical or non-medical and social workers in leprosy field.

Mahatma Gandhi had evinced keen interest in mitigating the sufferings of persons affected by leprosy. Leprosy work was accorded importance by Gandhiji by including it in **his 18 point constructive programme.**

**NATIONAL E-GOVERNANCE AWARDS, 2020**

- The National e-Governance Awards 2020 were presented during the National Conference on e-Governance 2020 which was held in Mumbai.
- **Presented by:** Department of Administrative reforms & Public Grievances (DAR&PG) presents National Awards every year to recognize and promote Excellence in implementation of e-Governance initiatives.
- **Categories:** The awards are presented in six categories –

- Excellence in Government Process Re-engineering for Digital Transformation.
- Excellence in providing Citizen-Centric Delivery.
- Excellence in District level Initiative in e-Governance (i) North-East States + Hilly States (ii) UTs (including Delhi) (iii) Other States.
- Outstanding research on Citizen Centric Services by Academic/Research Institutions.
- Innovative Use of ICT in e-Governance solutions by Start-ups.
- Excellence in Adopting Emerging Technologies.

### 3rd KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES

- The 3rd Khelo India Youth Games recently concluded in Guwahati, Assam. The champions trophy was handed over to Maharashtra, first runner up trophy to Haryana and second runner up trophy to Delhi.
- **Background:** Khelo India Youth Games is an annual event. The first edition was held in 2018 in Delhi. The second edition was held in Pune, Maharashtra.
- **Objective:** It is **organized by Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports** to revive the sports culture in India at the grass-root level by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establish India as a great sporting nation.
- **Categories:** It is held for two categories, namely under-17 years school students and under-21 college students.
- **Target:** 1000 players will be selected from Khelo India Games and will be given 5 Lakh rupees scholarship per year for the next 8 years.

### KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES

- The Union Sports Minister inaugurated **the first-ever Khelo India Winter Games at Leh (in UT of Ladakh) to promote winters sports in India.**
- A total of three winter sporting competitions are being held during the Ladakh leg – Open Ice Hockey Championship, Figure Skating, Speed Skating.
- The second leg of these Games was held at Kongdori, Gulmarg with competition in Alpine Skiing, Cross Country Skiing, Snow Boarding and Snow Shoeing events.

### KHELO INDIA UNIVERSITY GAMES

- PM Modi inaugurated **first-ever Khelo India University Games at Cuttack in Odisha.**
- Around 3,400 athletes from 159 universities across the country competed for top honours across 17 disciplines, including rugby which is among the six-team events.

### WIMBLEDON

- Wimbledon has been cancelled for the first time since World War-II because of the Coronavirus pandemic. As grass is only a viable playing surface in spring and summer, postponement was not a realistic option for Wimbledon.
- Wimbledon is the oldest tennis tournament in the world. It has been held at the All England Club in Wimbledon, London, since 1877.
- It is played on outdoor grass courts. Since the Australian Open shifted to hardcourt in 1988, Wimbledon is the only major still played on grass, which is widely considered as classic tennis court.
- Wimbledon is one of the four Grand Slam tennis tournaments, the others being the Australian Open, the French Open and the US Open.

**TOKYO OLYMPICS POSTPONED**

- Due to coronavirus pandemic, International Olympic Committee postponed the Tokyo 2020 Games by a year. Olympics has been held every four years since 1948.
- Three other times, the Modern Olympic games were cancelled altogether because of **World War I (1916) and World War II (1940 and 1944)** — and in those latter two quadrennials, both the Summer and Winter Games were shelved.
- The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was founded in 1894 and the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens in 1896.

**P K BANERJEE**

- **Indian footballer** P K Banerjee died in Kolkata at the age of 83. He won the gold medal at the Jakarta Asian Games in 1962 and led India in the 1960 Rome Olympics.
- The world governing body FIFA that awarded him the Centennial Order of Merit in 2004.
- Government of India conferred him with Arjuna award and Padm Shree. The West Bengal government conferred him 'Bangabibhushan Samman.'

**PULLELA GOPICHAND**

- P. Gopichand was named among the recipients of the **International Olympic Committee's 2019 Coaches Lifetime Achievement Award**.
- He is the **first Indian** to get it across all Olympic disciplines.
- He is a former Indian badminton player. He won the All England Open Badminton Championships in 2001 becoming the second Indian to win it after Prakash Padukone.
- Presently, he is the Chief National Coach for the Indian Badminton team. He runs the Gopichand Badminton Academy. He received the Arjuna Award in 1999, the Dronacharya Award in 2009 and the Padma Bhushan in 2014.

**The International Olympic Committee (IOC) Coaches Lifetime Achievement Award** was created in 2017 to recognise coaches who have dedicated their lives to training some of the best athletes to have graced the Olympic Games.

**NIKET DALAL**

- Niket Dalal, a 38-year-old from Aurangabad, created history by becoming **the first completely visually-challenged athlete to finish an Ironman triathlon**.
- An Ironman Triathlon is a series of long-distance triathlon races organized by the World Triathlon Corporation, consisting of swim, bicycle ride and a run, raced in that order. It is widely considered one of the most difficult one-day sporting events in the world.

**MOTERA STADIUM**

- The newly renovated Motera stadium hosted the opening of the **'Namaste Trump' meeting of US President Donald Trump and PM Modi** on 24 February 2020.
- Sardar Patel Stadium, commonly known as Motera Stadium, is a cricket stadium in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. It is owned by the Gujarat Cricket Association.
- As of 2020, it is the **largest cricket stadium in the world** with a seating capacity of 110,000 spectators. Before Motera, Australia's Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) was the biggest cricket stadium.
- The Rungrado May Day Stadium in Pyongyang, North Korea, is the world's largest stadium with a seating capacity of 114,000.

**RANI RAMPAL**

- Indian women's Hockey team captain Rani Rampal is the World Games Athlete of the Year 2019, thus becoming the first-ever hockey player to win this award.
- Rani Rampal (born 1994) is an Indian field hockey player from Haryana. In 2020, the Government of India honoured her with the Padma Shri.

**P PARAMESWARAN**

- Renowned thinker, writer and the founder-director of Bharatiya Vichara Kendram P. Parameswaran passed away at 93 in Kerala.
- He was a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) pracharak from Kerala and was Vice-President of the Jan Sangh.
- He was the president of Vivekananda Kendra, (which was awarded with Gandhi Peace Prize in 2015). He was also awarded Padma Vibhushan (2018) and Padma Shri (2004).

**NEUTRON JACK**

- Jack Welch, who grew General Electric Co. during the 1980s and 1990s into the most valuable public company in the United States, has died at age of 84.
- He was known as 'Neutron Jack' for cutting thousands of jobs, bought and sold scores of businesses, expanding the industrial giant into financial services and consulting.

**LARRY TESLER**

Larry Tesler, the computer scientist who invented the commands like **"cut, copy, paste"** and **"find & replace"** passed away. He also claimed he coined the word "browser". He was a former Xerox researcher and also worked in Apple and Yahoo.

**KATHERINE JOHNSON**

Katherine Johnson (1918 – 2020), an American mathematician and former NASA scientist passed away. Her work was fundamental in enabling Apollo 11 to land on the moon in 1969 and also the beginning of the Space Shuttle program.