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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

WHO declares virus a global health emergency:
• World Health Organization has declared an international emergency over the novel virus from China. The organization has declared an emergency as the disease has spread to 18 other countries apart from China where it originated.
• Also, the disease is spreading through human-to-human contact. According to WHO, there are more than 7,711 confirmed cases and 12,167 suspected cases all over the world.

Bangladesh’s PM Sheikh Hasina inaugurates “Ekushey Book Fair”:
• Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the annual Ekushey Book Fair in Dhaka on 1st February 2020.
• Ekushey Book Fair is a month-long biggest and longest book fair of Bangladesh organised every year by Bangla Academy from February 1 to 28.
• This event commemorates the martyrs, of the language movement, who laid down their lives on 21 February 1952 for establishing Bangla as the official language of the then East Pakistan.

Maldives rejoins Commonwealth:
• The Maldives has once again joined the Commonwealth. The Maldives was officially inducted into the Commonwealth recently.
• Maldives separated from the Commonwealth about three years ago due to the issues of Human Rights.

WHO calls for USD 675m in donations to fight novel virus:
• The World Health Organization has called for 675 million US dollar in donations for a plan to fight the novel virus, mainly through investment in countries considered particularly "at risk".
• WHO chief Tedros Adhanom said at a news conference in Geneva today that they are launching a strategic preparedness and response plan and requesting 675 million dollar to fund the plan for the next three months.

International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation:
• International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation is a United Nations-sponsored annual awareness day that takes place on February 6 every year since 2003 to eradicate female genital mutilation (FGM).
• 2020 Theme: Unleashing Youth Power.

RBI to conduct “Financial Literacy Week 2020”:
• Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will be organizing Financial Literacy Week (FLW) from February 10 to February 14, 2020.
• The theme for 2020 FLW is “Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs),”
• RBI conducts Financial Literacy Week (FLW) every year since 2016 to propagate financial education messages on a particular theme every year across the country, through a focused campaign.
Astronaut Christina Koch returns to Earth after record stay in space:
- Christina Koch, US-astronaut who made record for the longest continuous spaceflight ever undertaken by a female astronaut, returned from the International Space Station (ISS) to Earth on 6th February 2020.
- Koch was accompanied by European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut Luca Parmitano and Russian cosmonaut Alexander Skvortsov on the way to Earth.
- The three boarded a Soyuz capsule docked at the ISS at around 12:50 AM EST, and had a safe landing at around 4:12 AM EST (3:12 PM local time) in Kazakhstan.
- American astronaut Christina Koch joined the NASA’s astronaut corps in 2013 and also led the first ever all-female spacewalk in 2019.

US India’s preferred trade partner in journey to be $5 trn economy: Envoy:
- America is India’s preferred trade and business partner in its journey to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024, the country’s new envoy to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu has stated.
- Addressing a gathering of American business community at a reception hosted in his honour by US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum, Sandhu stated that the potential for cooperation between the United States and India is limitless.
- He further added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set the goal for India to grow from a USD 3 trillion economy to a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024 and a USD 10 trillion economy by 2030.

Philip Barton appointed Britain’s new High Commissioner to India:
- Britain appointed career diplomat Philip Barton as its High Commissioner to India to succeed Dominic Asquith.
- Barton will take up his appointment during Spring 2020, a statement from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) stated.

African Union Summit 2020 held:
- African Union Summit 2020 held in Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa. African leaders discussed about rising terrorism in Africa.
- The theme of African Union Summit 2020 was ‘Silencing the Guns’. It has adopted the eight resolutions including ‘Agreement with United Nations for funding in peace operation’.

Oscars Award 2020 winners:
92nd Academy Awards, also known as Oscars 2020, announced. The awards were presented at a ceremony held at Dolby Theater in Los Angeles, USA. The film “Parasite” became the first foreign-language film ever to win the Best Picture award at Oscars 2020. Actor Brad Pitt won the Oscars for ‘Best Supporting Actor’ for his film ‘Once Upon a Time in Hollywood’.

India ranks 17th among countries at risk of virus import:
- Of the countries most at risk of importing virus cases, India ranks 17th, researchers have
found on the basis of a mathematical model for the expected global spread of the virus that originated in China’s Wuhan area in December 2019.
- The top 10 countries and regions at risk of importing virus cases are: Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, USA, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Cambodia, according to the model.
- While Thailand’s national import risk is 2.1 per cent, it is 0.2 per cent for India, found the research.

Narayana Murthy’s son-in-law appointed as UK’s new Finance Minister:
- Rishi Sunak has been appointed as the Finance Minister of the United Kingdom. He will replace Pakistani Chancellor Sajid Javid.
- Now three Indian origin Members of Parliament are a part of Britain’s most diverse cabinet led by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.
- Along with Rishi Sunak, Priti Patel has been appointed as the Home Minister and Alok Sharma has been appointed as the Business Secretary in the British Cabinet.

World Defence Spending Rose by 4% in 2019, Highest in 10 Years: IISS Report:
- The global Defense spending rose by 4% in 2019 compared to the previous year, as per a new report titled “Military Balance” published by the London-based think tank International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).
- As per the international think tank, this global rise is the highest annual increase in 10 years.

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

"Bezos Earth Fund" : to combat climate change launched by Jeff Bezos:
- Through this fund, Jeff Bezos has committed to contribute $10 billion to help preserve and protect the natural world against the climate change.
- The Bezos Earth Fund will fund the scientists, activists, NGOs to save Earth to tackle the issue of climate change.
Key points:
CEO of Amazon: Jeff Bezos.
Amazon was established on 5th July 1994.
Headquarters: Washington, USA.
Nepal’s 70th National Democracy Day:
• Nepal celebrates the National Democracy Day every year on Falgun 7 to commemorate the attainment of democracy after the abolition of the 104-year long autocratic Rana Regime.
• In 2007 Bikram Sambat, on this day, democracy was established in the Himalayan nation ending over a century old autocratic Rana regime.
President of Nepal: Bidhya Devi Bhandari.
Capital of Nepal: Kathmandu; Currency of Nepal: Nepalese rupee.

Pakistan will remain on the FATF Grey list till June 2020:
• The decision was taken by the anti-money laundering watchdog after the conclusion of the February 16-21 group meetings and plenary in Paris.
• The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in October decided to keep Pakistan on its Grey List for failure to curb funnelling of funds to terror groups Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and others.

What is the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)?
• The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 by the Ministers of its Member jurisdictions.
• The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
• The FATF is, therefore, a "policy-making body" which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.
• The headquarters of FATF is in Paris, France.
• FATF was founded in July 1989

US to become India’s top trading partner, surpasses China:
• The United States has surpassed China to become India’s top trading partner. According to the Commerce Ministry data, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at nearly 88 billion dollars in 2018-19 fiscal. During the period, India’s trade with China was at 1 billion dollars.
• Similarly, during April-December 2019-20, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at 68 billion dollars against a nearly 65 billion dollars trade with China in the same period.

3,000 kilometre long power grid from Myanmar-Thailand to India: BIMSTEC:
• Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is working on connecting about 3,000-kilometre long power grid from Myanmar-Thailand to India.
• This was announced by the Energy Adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Dr Tawfiq-E-Elahi Chowdhury while inaugurating the energy conference of BIMSTEC in Dhaka.
Sri Lanka to construct first electric rail track in Kandy:
- The Government of Sri Lanka has decided to build its first electric railway track in Kandy. Sri Lanka government believes that it will ease transportation and provide better infrastructure to the country.
- The Government has planned to build construct a new electric rail track between Kandy to Rambankana, about 78 km from the capital Colombo via Katugastota.

Janez Jansa named as Prime Minister of Slovenia:
- The President of Slovenia recently nominated Janez Jansa as the new Prime Minister of the country. He has decided to form a government with three other political parties.
- He has also been the Prime Minister of Slovenia twice before. He was the Prime Minister of the country from 2004 to 2008 and from 2012 to 2013.

Sri Lanka notifies UN about rights resolution withdrawal:
- Sri Lankan Government formally notified the United Nations that it will withdraw from the UNHRC (United Nations Human Rights Council) resolution for investigating alleged war crimes. The case was dealing with a decade-old clash with Tamil separatists.
- The UNHRC resolution 40/1 was co-sponsored by Sri Lanka and 11 other countries. The main aim of the resolution is investigation of war time violence against Tamil Tiger rebels. The Tamil Rebels were demanding separate homeland. They were claiming that they were ethnic tamil minority and hence are eligible for separate homeland.
- Important

Currency of Sri Lanka: Sri Lankan rupee.
President of Sri Lanka: Gotabaya Rajapaksa.
Prime Minister of Sri Lanka: Mahinda Rajapaksa.

NATIONAL NEWS

Union Budget 2020-21 is being presented by FM Nirmala Sitharaman:
Union Budget 2020 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to revive economic growth and boost people’s income. The Budget is based on three themes:
- Aspirational India
- Economic development
- Caring society

Union Budget 2020 was presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharamananin, a bid to revive economic growth and boost people’s income. The Budget is based on three themes - aspirational India, economic development for all, and caring society. The Finance Minister began her speech by saying that the Budget 2020-21 is for boosting income and improving the purchasing power of people. The fiscal deficit is estimated at 3.8 percent(revised estimate for 2019-20) of the gross domestic product in the current financial year, and the government aims to lower it to 3.5 percent (budget estimate for 2020-21) in the fiscal year ending March 2021.
She proposed Rs 69,000 crore to the healthcare sector and Rs 12,300 crore to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s flagship cleanliness program Swachh Bharat Mission. Finance Minister earmarked another Rs 3.6 lakh crore towards the supply of piped water to households.

**Highlights Of Union Budget 2020:**

The income tax for those earning between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 7.5 lakh will be cut to 10 percent from 20 percent. The income tax for those earning between Rs 7.5 and Rs 10 lakh will be cut to 15 percent from 20 percent. The income tax for those earning between Rs 10 and Rs 12.5 lakh will be cut to 20 percent from 30 percent. The income tax for those earning between Rs 12.5 lakh and Rs 15 lakh will be cut to 25 percent from 30 percent. 30 percent tax rate will still be applicable for those earning above Rs 15 lakh. There will be no tax for those earning Rs 5 lakh and Rs 690 billion will be spent on healthcare spending.

**Village Storage Scheme:**
- Women, SHGs to regain their position as Dhaanya Lakshmi. NABARD to map and geo-tag agri-warehouses, cold storages, reefer van facilities, etc.
- Warehousing in line with Warehouse Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) norms:
- State governments who undertake the implementation of model laws (issued by the Central government) to be encouraged.

**Livestock:**
- Doubling of milk processing capacity to 108 million MT from 53.5 million MT by 2025.
- Artificial insemination to be increased to 70% from the present 30%.
- MNREGS to be dovetailed to develop fodder farms.
- Foot and Mouth Disease, Brucellosis in cattle and Peste Des Petits ruminants (PPR) in sheep and goat to be eliminated by 2025.

**Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana:**
Around 0.5 crore households mobilized with 58 lakh SHGs for poverty alleviation.

**Education and Skills:**
- New Education Policy to be announced soon.
- National Police University and National Forensic Science University proposed for policing science, forensic science, and cyber-forensics.
- Degree level full-fledged online education program by Top-100 institutions in the National Institutional Ranking Framework.
- Up to 1-year internship to fresh engineers to be provided by Urban Local Bodies.
- The budget proposes to attach a medical college to an existing district hospital in PPP mode.
- Special bridge courses to be designed by the Ministries of Health, and Skill Development

**Transport:**
- 100 more airports are planned by 2024
- Over 6,000 km of highways in 12 lots will be monetized by 2024
- One major airport will be privatized

**16-Point action plan for farmers:**
The government is committed to doubling farmers’ income by 2022 to allocate Rs 2.83 lakh
crore for agriculture and rural sectors such as irrigation.
• Schemes that encourage manufacturing of mobile phones, electronic equipment, and semiconductor packaging be introduced
• Private sector to build Data Centre Parks throughout the country will be encouraged
• 80 billion rupees over five years to be provided for quantum technologies and applications
• Milk processing capacity to be doubled by 2025.

ISRO readying for low cost satellite launch vehicles:
• The Indian Space Research Organisation is readying low-cost satellite launch vehicles costing about Rs 30-35 crore each, which can put into orbit satellites weighing 500 kg.
• The first such launch from the country is expected to take place in the next four months.
• Flame-Throated Bulbul ‘Rubigula’ Unveiled as Official mascot for National Games 2020 in Goa
• The 36th edition of the National Games of India will be held from 20 October to 4 November 2020 in Goa.
• The official mascot for the Goa 2020 National Games was unveiled on 01 February 2020 by the Chief Minister of Goa Pramod Sawant in the presence of Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju.
• The Flame-Throated Bulbul under the name ‘Rubigula’ has been unveiled as the mascot for the event.
• The Flame-Throated Bulbul is the state bird of Goa.

India’s First Fruit Train Flagged Off From Andhra Pradesh to JNPT:
• In another major milestone achievement for the Indian Railways, a first-of-its-kind ‘Fruit Train’ was flagged off from Tadipatri Railway Station in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh to the Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Mumbai, from where the consignment will be exported to Iran.
• This is the first time that an entire train carrying a load of 980 tonnes of locally grown bananas is being sent to the gateway port (JNPT) for export.
• These bananas will be exported under the brand name ‘Happy Bananas’.

Mumbai’s Iconic ‘Kala Ghoda Arts Festival’ Begins from 1st Feb:
• The 21st edition of the 9-day Kala Ghoda Arts Festival (KGAF) 2020, one of the biggest open street arts and cultural festival of India, has begun in Mumbai from 1st February 2020.
• The Kala Ghoda Festival is one of the most-awaited art and cultural festivals which takes place in the Kala Ghoda area of South Mumbai since 1999 in early February and attracts a wide range of crowd from all across the world.
• The theme for 2020 KGAF is “PAST FORWARD.”

Union Govt plans to raise funds through LIC IPO:
• Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that union government plans to sell a partial stake in LIC through IPO or an initial public offer.
• The union budget she proposed that the government will sell its stake in IDBI Bank to
private investors and also amend the Banking Regulation Act to strengthen co-op banks.

- The finance minister that the deposit insurance coverage against bank failure will be increased to ₹5 lakh from ₹1 lakh.

**Indian Railways Demands Setting Up Pension Fund To Deal With Rs 50,000 Crore Burden:**

- Indian Railways Demands Setting Up Pension Fund To Deal With Rs 50,000 Crore Burden Rs 50,000 crore outgo as pension to more than 15.5 lakh former railway employees, the railways asked the Finance Ministry to set up the pension fund.
- About 25 percent of the railway’s earnings go into paying the pensions to the former railway employees.
- Last year, the operating rate for the railways was 97 percent, while this year it has gone up to 98.44 percent. The operating ratio is a measure of expenditure against revenue, and it shows how efficiently the national transporter.

**Union Government sets up task force to restrict Novel virus**

- The Union Government has set up a task force which has a target to restrict the Novel virus in India.
- The task force consists of Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy and Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.
- The task has a prime aim of stopping the Novel virus outspread in India.

**14-day joint military exercise by Indian, Bangladesh armies begin:**

- The 9th edition of the annual joint military training exercise by Indian and Bangladesh armies named ‘SAMPRITI-IX’ was flagged off on 3rd February 2020 in Umroi in Meghalaya.
- The 14-day log exercise is an important bilateral defence cooperation endeavour between India and Bangladesh, hosted alternately by the two countries, enabling both armies to familiarise each other in various tactical drills and procedures.

**virus: Kerala declares ‘state calamity’:**

- Kerala government has declared ‘state calamity’ after 3 confirmed cases of virus in the state. The Central Government recently constituted a High-Level Group of Ministers (GoM) to review the preparedness of concerned authorities to deal with virus in India. Till date, virus has led to the death of over 400 people in China.

**India’s biggest rural technical festival ‘Antahpragnya 2020’ held in Telangana:**

- Collector of Nirmal inaugurated National Level India’s Biggest Rural Technical Festival titled Antahpragnya 2020 in the state of Telangana at Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies-Basar (RGUKT-Basar).
- Rural areas cannot afford to miss the development bus. Most of the developments in the two lakh years have taken place in the last century.
The fest showcases 300 prototypes, working models, exhibits and technologies such as automatic switch for water, homemade electricity, smoke absorber, automatic street lighting system, smart dustbins, zero budget farming, automatic irrigation and others.

India hosts Defence dialogue between India and South Korea:
- Ministerial-level Defence dialogue between India and South Korea was held in New Delhi today. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Minister of National Defence of South Korea Jeong Kyeong-doo held the meeting.
- The theme of DefExpo-2020 in Lucknow is ‘Digital Transformation of Defence’ and India and South Korea recognize the influence of Artificial Intelligence and digital technology in defence sector.

Indian Government unveils new vaccine to control classical swine fever:
- The government of India unveiled a new indigenously developed vaccine for controlling classical swine fever (CSF). CSF is a highly contagious fatal pig disease.
- The new vaccine, developed by Uttar Pradesh-based Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)-Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), will be much cheaper than the existing one.

Prime Minister inaugurates DefExpo in Lucknow:
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 11th edition of the ‘DefExpo’, India’s biennial military exhibition, in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh on February 5, 2020. It will culminate on February 8.
- The Theme of the Expo is ‘India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub’ with main focus on ‘Digital Transformation of Defence’
- Delegates from 70 countries and 172 foreign military manufacturers and as many as 856 Indian defence firms will attend the exhibition to showcase their products on new technologies and solutions on a single platform.

President Kovind inaugurates Annual Rashtrapati Bhavan Udyanotsav 2020:
- President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the annual ‘Udyanotsav’ at the Mughal Gardens of Rashtrapati Bhavan on 4th February 2020.
- The 15-acre Mughal Gardens at Rashtrapati Bhavan will be opened for the general public from February 5 to March 8, 2020 between 10 am to 4 pm.

Reliance General launches health insurance plan "Infinity":
- Reliance General Insurance Company Limited has launched a comprehensive health insurance plan named "Reliance Health Infinity".
- The policy offers 90 days pre and 180 days post hospitalization cover, along with sum insured ranging from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 1 crore, and free restore benefits.

India’s HAL & Dynamatics Technologies To Build Israel Aerospace Drones:
- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the 1st time, will sign a partnership pact with
Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) at the DefExpo 2020 in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.
- This pact is signed for manufacture advanced Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs) in India.

**Five more IIITs to receive Institute of National Importance status:**
- The Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved to confer five of the Indian Institute of Information Technology with the Institute of National Importance status. The IIIT’s which will be given the Institute of National Importance status include the Indian Institute of Information Technology Surat Bhopal, Bhagalpur, Agartala, and Raichur. These institutions will now be able to use the Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) or the Master of Technology (M.Tech) or the Ph.D degree.

**Cabinet approves setting-up country’s 13th major port at Vadhavan in Maharashtra:**
- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its in-principle approval for setting up a new Major Port at Vadhavan near Dahanu in Maharashtra.
- The projected cost of the Vadhavan Port is over Rs 65,000 crore. The new Major Port will be established on the basis of land lord model.
- After the development of this new Major Port at Vadhavan in Maharashtra, India is expected to enter the list of countries with top 10 container ports in the world.

**First Central Asia Business Council” launched in New Delhi:**
- The first ever India-Central Asia Business Council meeting was launched in New Delhi on 6th February 2020.
- The programme was organised by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). From India, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar addressed the meeting.
- The aim of the meeting was to bring together business chambers of India and all five Central Asian states, namely Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to collaborate and strengthen trade and investment partnership.

**Jaipur becomes certified UNESCO World Heritage City:**
- Jaipur “The Pink City” has been certified by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as the World Heritage site.
- The certification was done by the UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay during an event held in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

**SAI & Hockey India to Launch 7 High Performance Centres Across the Country**
- Sports Authority of India (SAI) and Hockey India have decided to establish High Performance Centres in seven places across the country to provide state-of-the-art facilities to Junior and Sub-Junior players.
- The move is taken in view of 2024 and 2028 Olympic Games, so as to groom the young talent.
The seven High Performance Hockey Centres will be installed at the following places:
1. SAI Centre, Bengaluru, Karnataka (South Zone)
2. Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, New Delhi (North Zone)
3. SAI Sundergarh, Odisha (East Zone)
4. SAI UDMCC, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh (Central Zone)
5. SAI NS NEC, Takyel, Imphal, Manipur (North-East Zone)
6. Balewadi Sports Complex, Pune, Maharashtra (West Zone)
7. SAI Centre, Ranchi and Gomke Jaipal Singh Astroturf Hockey Stadium (East Zone II)

India’s First Glass Floor Suspension Bridge to Come up in Uttarakhand’s Rishikesh:
- The Uttarakhand Government has approved the design of a glass floor suspension bridge, the first of its kind in the country, which will be built across the River Ganga in Rishikesh.
- The bridge is as an alternative to the iconic Lakshman Jhula, almost 94 years old, which was closed in 2019 due to safety reasons.

Madhya Pradesh to deploy drones to map villages:
- The Madhya Pradesh state government has decided to deploy drones to map villages. This will be the first time that drone technology is used to make maps in the state.
- Till now, all the land survey work in the state was either done manually or with the help of satellite images.
- The map of the population area will be created on a scale of 1: 500, which will help a clearer picture of the population area. Around 55000 villages have been selected for mapping.

NPCI approves WhatsApp to expand its UPI project 10 million users:
- Facebook-owned instant messaging platform WhatsApp has received the approval from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to expand its Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services to 10 million users.
- WhatsApp’s payment feature, named WhatsApp Pay, has developed by the NPCI to run on UPI. It allows users to pay others or do business transactions through their bank accounts.

PFRDA increases minimum net worth for pension fund managers to Rs 50 cr:
- The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), the regulator of the National Pension System (NPS), has made certain amendments in the pension guidelines. These are as follows.
  - Minimum Net Worth: The regulator has doubled the minimum net worth requirement for pension fund managers to Rs 50 crore from the Rs 25 crore stipulated earlier.
  - Validity of License: Provision has also been made for licenses to have indefinite validity. Earlier, the licenses of pension fund managers was granted for a period of five years.
  - Equity Acquisition: A pension fund or its sponsor cannot acquire equity stake in another pension fund.
Disha Police Station inaugurated in Andhra Pradesh’s Rajamahendravaram:
- The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on 8 February 2020 inaugurated the first ‘Disha Police Station’ in Rajamahendravaram city on 8 February 2020, which will exclusively handle cases of crime against women and children.
- In all 18 Disha Police Stations will be set up in all 13 districts of the state, under the Disha Act, enacted by the state government in 2019, to ensure speedy investigation and trial of sexual assault cases.
- The state government has allocated a budget of Rs 21.10 crore for the setting up of these police stations. Each Disha Police station will be headed by a deputy superintendent of police.

National Conference on e-Governance 2020 Held in Mumbai:
- The 23rd edition of the National Conference on e-Governance was held at Mumbai, Maharashtra on 7-8 February 2020.
- The theme of the conference was: India 2020: Digital Transformation.

BBIN nations deliberate on MoU for implementation of motor vehicle agreement:
- A meeting of the BBIN nations (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) was held in New Delhi on 8 February 2020 to deliberate on a proposed MoU, to be signed by Bangladesh, India and Nepal, for implementation of the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) in these countries.
- Representatives of Bhutan participated in the meeting in an observer capacity. The Indian delegation was led by Vikram Doraiswami, Additional Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs.

DefExpo 2020 Concludes With Over 200 Partnerships at Bandhan Ceremony:
- The theme of the 11th Edition was “India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub”.
- More than 1,000 companies, including 165 offshore enterprises participated in the event.
- Over 200 partnerships involving Signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs), Transfer of Technology (ToTs), Product launches were concluded during a ceremony titled “Bandhan” at DefExpo 2020.
- Bandhan ceremony witnessed more than 13 product launches, 124 MoUs between Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), private and global defence manufacturing companies.

Indian Army develops world’s cheapest gunshot locator:
- Indian Army has recently developed the cheapest gunshot locator of the world ‘Parth’.
- This device has been developed by the Army’s College of Military Engineering.
- A private firm also helped the Indian Army to develop this device. According to the media report, its cost is about Rs. 3 lakh. It will save a lot of money as imported device costs about Rs. 65 lakhs.
- The device ‘Parth’ was recently showcased at DefExp0 2020. Earlier, the Indian Army developed a bullet-proof helmet that can stop an AK-47 bullet.
**Hyderabad Metro Becomes Second Largest Metro Rail Network In India:**
- Hyderabad Metro Rail, the world's largest public-private partnership project, is now the 2nd-largest operational metro network in the country covering 69.2 km.
- With the launch of another 11-km stretch, Hyderabad Metro Rail has become the second-largest metro rail network in the country after Delhi.

**NCL sets up R&D centre for sustainable coal mining:**
- The Northern Coalfields Ltd (NCL) has established a research and development centre, named ‘Science and Applied Research Alliance and Support (SARAS)’.
- This research and development centre focuses on the sustainable model for development in coal mining.
- Chairman and Managing Director of the NCL: PK Sinha.

**Uttarakhand’s First Heli Services Under UDAN Flagged Off:**
- Under the Regional Connectivity Scheme “Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)” of Government of India, Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has operationalized the first ever helicopter services in the state of Uttarakhand.

**Uttar Pradesh Govt to launch internship scheme for school college students**
- Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh has announced an internship scheme for the tenth, 12th and graduate students of the state to brighten employment prospects.
- During the internship of a period of six months or a year, each participating youth will be given 2500 rupees as honorarium every month. Out of this, rupees 1500 will be given by the Central Government and 1000 rupees by the State Government.

**Vice President Venkaiah Naidu Releases book ‘A Child of Destiny’ by K. Ramakrishna Rao:**
- The Vice President of India, and Chairman of Rajya Sabha Shri M Venkaiah Naidu released a book titled, ‘A Child of Destiny’, an autobiography penned by Prof. K. Ramakrishna Rao, well-known educationist in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- The Government of India awarded him the civilian honour of Padma Shri in 2011.

**5th India-UK Joint Military Exercise AJEYA WARRIOR 2020 to begin from Feb 13:**
- The fifth edition of annual Joint Military Exercise AJEYA WARRIOR-2020 between the Armies of India and the United Kingdom is scheduled to be conducted at Salisbury Plains, the United Kingdom from 13 to 26 February 2020.
- The exercise will comprise 120 soldiers each from the Indian and United Kingdom Army.

**State of the World’s Children Report UNICEF:**
According to UNICEF, more than 8 lakh children below 5 years died under five years of age. UNICEF identified some major reasons for child mortality in India.

- UNICEF report said that major causes of child mortality are - Pneumonia (17.1%), Prematurity & low weight (29.8%), Other non-communicable diseases (8.3%), Birth asphyxia & birth trauma (8.2%), Injuries (4.6%), Diarrheal diseases (8.6%) among others.

National Institute of Financial Management, Faridabad, to be renamed as Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial Management:

- National Institute of Financial Management (NIFM), Faridabad will be known as Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial Management (AJNIFM) as the Government of India has decided to rename the institute.
- NIFM facilitates state governments, defense establishments, banks, other financial institutions and PSUs. It does not only provide training but also management education.
- He introduced the historic Goods and Services Tax (GST), which brought the country under a single tax system. Under his leadership, the railway budget was merged with the general budget.

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

- Over 15 crore loans, amounting to Rs 4.78 lakh crore, have been disbursed to women borrowers under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), stated Anurag Singh Thakur, Union Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs.
- “As on 31.01.2020, over 15 crore loans have been disbursed to women borrowers, since inception of the scheme, amounting to Rs 4.78 lakh crore under PMMY.”

PSU Survey 2019: ONGC, IOC, NTPC top three profitable PSUs:

- According to the PSU Survey 2018-19, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), Indian Oil Corporation and NTPC were three the top profitable companies of India.
- Their total profits were 15.3%, 9.68% and 6.73% respectively. On the other hand, Air India, BSNL and MTNL suffered the most losses.
- According to the survey, 70 government companies were at a loss during this period. About 10 companies were accounted for more than 94% of the total losses.

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

- Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel inaugurated Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi as the 28th district of the state.
- The new district, carved out of Bilaspur, has three tehsils and three development blocks namely Gaurela, Pendra and Marwahi.
- It comprises 166 gram panchayats, 222 villages and two nagar panchayats, with an area of 1,68,225 hectares.

Union Cabinet approves Pesticide Management Bill 2020:

- Union Cabinet has approved the Pesticide Management Bill 2020. Briefing reporters in New
Delhi, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar stated, the legislation will promote organic pesticides in the country.

- Major Ports Authority Bill to enhance overall efficiencies of the ports was cleared by the Cabinet. Cabinet has also approved changes in the Direct Tax Vivad se Vishwas Bill, 2020.

**Supreme Court orders parties to publish criminal records of all candidates**

- The Supreme Court recently directed all the political parties to publish the criminal records of all the candidates, if any, within the next 48 hours.
- These records need to be published on the official websites of these political parties as well as on their social media handles such as Facebook and Twitter.
- The apex court also asked the parties the reason behind allotting the election tickets to candidates with a criminal record.

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

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

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

- The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), under the Ministry of Civil Aviation of India, has issued a circular that Electronic-Cigarettes and all forms of Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS) will not be allowed in both domestic and international flights as well as at airports.
- Under the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act which is passed in December 2019.

**Nitin Gadkari Inaugurates India’s First Intercity Electric Bus between Mumbai and Pune:**

- The Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Nitin Gadkari flagged off Mumbai-Pune Electric Bus on 14 February 2020 in Mumbai.
- It is the first Electric Intercity Bus in India.

**President Kovind Appoints Kejriwal as new CM of Delhi:**

President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed Arvind Kejriwal as the new Chief Minister of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, after his Aam Aadmi Party won the recent Delhi Assembly
elections with 62 of the 70 seats.

- The president has also appointed six MLAs as ministers of the Delhi Government namely: Manish Sisodia, Satyender Jain, Gopal Rai, Kailash Gehlot, Imran Hussain and Rajendra Gautam.

**Arvind Kejriwal takes oath as CM of Delhi for third time:**

- Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday took oath as the chief minister of Delhi, for the third time, at the Ramlila Maidan.
- The Aam Aadmi Party registered a massive majority in the recently concluded Delhi Assembly election with 62 seats in its kitty.
- Arvind Kejriwal was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal.
- Manish Sisodia, who was the deputy chief minister of Delhi in AAP government’s previous term, also took oath as minister in Arvind Kejriwal’s cabinet.
- PM Modi Inaugurates ‘Kashi Ek Roop Anek’ Event at Varanasi.
- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited his Lok Sabha Constituency Varanasi on 16 February 2020 to attend various events and inaugurate several programmes.
- Inaugurated a cultural arts and handicrafts exhibition named ‘Kashi Ek Roop Anek’ organized at the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Trade Facilitation Center, at Varanasi.
- Unveiled the 63 feet Statue of Deendayal Upadhyay (largest statue of the leader in the country) and dedicated to the nation the Deendayal Upadhyay Memorial in Varanasi.
- Flagged off the third corporate train ‘Kashi Mahakal Express’ which links 3 Jyotirling Pilgrim Centres – Varanasi, Ujjain and Omkareshwara.

**CDS Gen Bipin Rawat announces to create Peninsula Command:**

- Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat said on February 17, 2020, that the Navy is planning to form the Peninsula Command on the Eastern and Western Command.
- General Bipin Rawat was talking to the media. He said that India wants to establish two to five theater commands in the country. He clarified that IAF’s Air Defence Command will be released by the beginning of 2021 while peninsula command will be established soon.
- General Bipin Rawat said that a study has been ordered to start the Air Defence Command under the chairmanship of the Vice Chief of Air Force. It will be helpful in situations like aerial attacks.

**Indian Railways zone becomes 1st in India to have energy-neutral stations:**

- Indian Railways takes a huge leap towards environmental sustainability. The Indian Railways South Central Railways (SCR) zone has become the first zonal railway in the country to have functional “energy neutral” railway stations on the network.
- The anticipated energy generation from these energy neutral stations is coming to be around 3 lakh units annually. The SCR zone expects that solar power generated at these stations will lead to savings of Rs 13 lakh per year.
- The total capacity of all the solar panels installed at the 13 energy neutral stations is 99
All India Conference of Central Administrative Tribunal 2020 held in New Delhi:
• The annual All India Conference of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) was held in New Delhi.
• The one day conference was attended by Judicial and Administrative Members from all 17 Benches of CAT from across the country, members of the CAT Bar Association and eminent Jurists, who deliberated on key issues related to the functioning of the Tribunal and priorities for 2020.
• The Conference was presided over by Union Minister for Law and Justice, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad.

Maharashtra starts first intercity electric bus service:
• The first intercity electric bus service between Mumbai and Pune was started on February 14, 2020. Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurated this electric bus service.
• This bus has a seating capacity of 43 people. This bus can cover a distance of 300 km on a single charge.
• The Government of India will also start this type of bus service in other parts of Maharashtra. This bus will be run under the public-private partnership model.

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

Mobile App “Yodhavu” Launched in Kerala to Combat Drug Menace:
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan launched “Yodhav” (Warrior) mobile app (application) at Kochi, Kerala.
Through this app, the public can inform police about drug abuse and its distribution.
• The application was introduced by the Kochi city police and the informer’s identity could be kept secret.

Permanent Commission to Women Officers In Army:
• The Supreme Court recently ruled that the Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers are now eligible to get permanent commission in the Indian Army.
The ruling came on a plea filed by the Central Government against the decision of Delhi High Court 10 years ago.

Jammu and Kashmir soon to be covered by CAT:
• The Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh will soon be covered by the Central
The announcement was made by Jitendra Singh, the Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). The CAT will handle all the cases and issues related to the J&K and Ladakh. 

**Indian pharma & biotech industry expected to grow to 100 billion dollars by 2025:**
- Union Minister for Commerce and Industries Piyush Goyal has stated that the Indian pharma and biotech industry is expected to grow to 100 billion dollars by 2025 from the current size of about 40 billion dollars.
- He predicted an annual growth rate of 10 per cent despite the global slow down and the recent virus.
- Govt to achieve 50% Gross Enrollment Ratio in higher education by 2030, says HRD Minister:
  - Union Government has set an ambitious target to achieve 50 per cent Gross Enrollment.
  - Ratio in higher education by 2030 to equip its working population with employable skills.
  - Minister for Human Resource Development Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank stated this at the 33rd Convocation Ceremony of Indira Gandhi National Open University, IGNOU in New Delhi.

**Govt to facilitate doubling of milk processing capacity by 2025:**
- Union Government will facilitate doubling of milk processing capacity from over 53 million tonne to 108 million tonne by Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying stated, the government is continuously working towards increasing milk productivity through genetic improvement and reduction of input cost.
- In India, milk production is growing by 4 per cent during the last five years and has increased from over 146 million tonne in 2014-15 to over 187 million Tonne in 2018-19.

**UP becomes first state to enforce Performance Regulation Act for power department:**
- Uttar Pradesh has enforced Performance Regulation Act 2019 for the power department.
- It is to provide timely and hassle-free service to the consumers.
- The consumers would now get financial compensation for delay in solving their complaints by the department. Around 2 crore 87 lakh people are likely to be benefitted from the new law.

**State of India’s Birds 2020 Report released:**
- The recently released “State of India’s Birds 2020” Report categorises 101 species of birds for High Conservation Concern. The report assessed over 850 birds and revealed that almost all the bird species are on a decline.
- The report was released during the 13th COP Convention on the ‘Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals’ that was held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

**CDS Gen Bipin Rawat announces plan to create Peninsula Command:**
Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat stated there are plans to create a Peninsula.
Command with Navy’s Eastern and Western Command under it.
General Rawat stated India is looking at setting up two to five theatre commands. Air Defence command will be rolled out by beginning of next year and peninsula command will be rolled out soon.

**Delhi’s IGI Airport becomes single-use plastic free airport:**
The Delhi International Airport Ltd has declared “Indira Gandhi International Airport” of Delhi as India’s first single-use plastic-free airport.
The CII-ITC Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development has certified Delhi.
International Airport Ltd (DIAL) as single-use plastic-free airport.

**Kala Kumbh exhibition, New Delhi : Organized by Ministry of Textiles:**
The Ministry of Textiles organized “Kala Kumbh” exhibition in New Delhi. It is an exhibition to promote Geographical Indication (GI) craft and heritage of India.
The exhibitions are planned in various major cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai. The exhibitions are sponsored by the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH).
The GI tag is used on handicrafts which correspond to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g., a town, region, or country). As of August 2019, 178 GI handicraft products were registered from all over India.
Union Minister of Textiles: Smriti Zubin Irani.

**Cabinet approves formation of non-statutory body for a term of three years:**
The government constitutes a 22nd law commission as per the requirement.
It was originally formed in 1955. The commission is reorganized for three years.
The term of the 21st Law Commission ended on August 31, 2018. The Law Commission is a non-statutory body.
Responsibilities of 22nd Law Commission -
It will identify laws that are no longer needed or are irrelevant and can be repealed immediately.
The 22nd Law Commission will examine the existing laws and suggest ways for reforms.
It will also suggest the necessary laws to implement the Directive Principles mentioned in the Preamble of the Constitution.
It will take all necessary measures to use law and legal processes in the service of poor people.
The law commission will revise the laws of general importance to simplify them and remove anomalies, ambiguities, and inequities.

**Central Consumer Protection Authority to be set up by Govt by first week of April:**
Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan has stated the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) will be set up by the first week of April this year.
• The CCPA to be set up under Consumer Protection Act 2019, will address issues related to consumer rights, unfair trade practices, misleading advertisements and impose penalties for selling spurious and adulterated products.

Phase two of Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen approved:
• Union Cabinet has approved the 2nd Phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen till 2024-25.
• The program will work towards ensuring that no one is left behind and everyone uses a toilet.
• The 2nd phase of the mission will be implemented in a mission mode with a total estimated budgeted financial implication of 52 thousand 497 crore rupees.
• The 2nd phase of the mission will focus on Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF Plus), which includes ODF sustainability and Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM).

Symposium on Emerging Opportunities for Indian Textiles and Crafts:
• Symposium on Emerging Opportunities for Indian Textiles and Crafts was held in New Delhi.
• The symposium was chaired by Union Minister of Textiles and Women and Child Development Smriti Zubin Irani.
• Senior officers of the Ministries of Commerce & Industry and Textiles, representatives of Export Promotion Council (EPCs), buying offices and buying agents participated in the symposium.
• They participated in the symposium to discuss the business opportunities emerging in view of the present scenario of ‘VIRUS’ in China.
• The symposium was organized by Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts under the aegis of Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

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

Department of Telecommunications launches ’5G Hackathon’
• The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has launched the ‘5G Hackathon’ in association with the government of India, academia and industry stakeholders.
• The aim of 5G Hackathon is shortlisting India’s focused cutting edge ideas that can be converted into workable 5G products and solutions.
• The 5G technology provides quantum leap over 4G in terms of speed, peak data rate, latency, spectrum efficiency, and connection density. The Hackathon will convert innovating ideas into products and solutions in different verticals and develop India specific use cases around 5G.
• The 5G Hackathon is open to developers, students, start-ups, SMEs, academic institutions and registered companies in India and Non-resident Indians (NRIs). All Stakeholders can participate as individuals or as a team to present use cases for the 5G network in the Indian context.

Swachh Bharat Mission II phase to cost Rs 52,000 crore, gets cabinet nod
• The Centre has approved the second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural), which will be implemented on a mission mode between 2020-21 and 2024-25.
• An estimated budget of Rs 52,497 crore has been allocated for the project, to be shared between the centre and the state.
• The Phase II will focus on Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF Plus), which includes ODF sustainability and solid and liquid waste management (SLWM).
• Fund sharing pattern between the Centre and States will be respectively as given below:
  o 90:10 for North-Eastern States and Himalayan States and UT of J&K
  o 60:40 for other States
  o 100:0 for other Union Territories

Union Cabinet Approves Constitution of 22nd Law Commission of India
• The Union Cabinet under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the 22nd Law Commission of India for a period of three years, from its date of official constitution.
• Role and Responsibility of the Law Commission: Undertake research in law and review of existing laws in India for making reforms therein and enacting new legislations.

Namaste Trump to be held at Motera Stadium on 24 February
• The mega event Namaste Trump is to be held at cricket stadium Sardar Patel Stadium, also known as Motera Stadium, in Ahmedabad on 24 February 2020.
• The Donald Trump Nagarik Abhivadan Samiti (Citizen Felicitation Committee for Donald Trump) will organize the high-profile public event which will feature cultural performances.

Vice President inaugurated 2nd Edition of Exhibition and Conference on Agri-technology and Innovation
• Vice President of India M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the 2nd Edition of Exhibition and Conference on Agri-technology & Innovation at Prof. Jayashankar Telangana State Agriculture University in Hyderabad on 22 February 2020.
• It emphasized the need for post-harvest management and providing support to the farmers. The conference highlighted e-NAM should be expanded to all regions in every state.
Haryana government to open Atal Kisan-Majdoor canteens to provide meals

Haryana state government is to open Atal Kisan-Majdoor canteens in all mandis and sugar mills across the state. The announcement was made by Governor Satyadeo Narain Arya at the Budget Session of State Assembly which commenced in Chandigarh.

The aim of the move is to provide affordable and cheap meals to farmers and labourers at a concessional rate of Rs.10 per plate.25 Atal Kisan-Majdoor canteens will be established in 2020 in the state.

ASKDISHA : AI based chatbot launched by Indian Railway:

• Indian Railways had introduced the services of Artificial Intelligence based ASKDISHA chatbot in October 2018 for the benefit of the users of the ticketing website www.irctc.co.in and tourism website www.irctctourism.com of its PSU, Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC).

• The ASKDISHA Chatbot was initially launched in English language but in order to further enhance the customer services rendered and to further strengthen the services of the chatbot, IRCTC has now powered voice enabled ASKDISHA to converse with customers in Hindi language also in the e-ticketing site www.irctc.co.in. The customers can now ask queries to ASKDISHA in Hindi language by voice as well as text.

• The first-of-its-kind initiative by IRCTC is aimed at facilitating accessibility by answering users’ queries pertaining to various services offered to railway passengers. Since its initial launch, more than 150 million passengers have been benefited by ASKDISHA with 10 billion interactions for seeking help on reservation of tickets, cancellation, enquiry of refund status, fare, PNR search, train running status, enquiry about retiring rooms and tourism products.

• IRCTC plans to launch ASKDISHA in more languages along with many other additional features in the near future.

‘Thal Sena Bhawan’: New Army Headquarters foundation Laid by Rajnath Singh:

• Defence Minister Rajnath Singh laid the foundation stone of a new army headquarters building in Delhi Cantonment recently. This complex will be named as ‘Thal Sena Bhawan’. It will be constructed over 39 acres of land.

• Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said that this army building will represent the Indian soldiers. He also said that these soldiers wanted India to become capable and empowered. Now their sacrifice has made India a powerful country and this building is dedicated to them. He also said that the building was needed for many years.

• This army building, to be built in 7.5 lakh square meters that will have 6014 offices that will include 1684 offices for military and civilian officers and 4330 offices for sub-staff. The new Army headquarters will also provide employment opportunities to the youth of India. It will be constructed as per the Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) norms.

‘Happiness Class’ to be attended by Melania Trump:

• US First Lady Melania Trump along with the US President Donald Trump, on their maiden
visit to India, will attend a ‘Happiness Class’ at a Government School based in Delhi. Arvind Kejriwal led AAP Government’s flagship scheme of ‘Happiness Curriculum’ has won commendations from different corners of the globe.

• What is Happiness Curriculum?

Happiness Curriculum was launched in 2018 as a scheme to reinvent school education sector in Delhi Government Schools. With school education in India primarily focused on competitive testing model, which lays prime emphasis on scoring marks in order to succeed; AAP Government felt the need to provide a more fulfilling education and learning experience. In line with this, Happiness Curriculum was launched which aims at promoting development of cognition, language, literacy, numeracy and the arts. This in turn aids the mental growth well-being and happiness of students.

‘Krishi Maha-Kumbh’: Chhattisgarh organises agricultural festival to cater to future farming practices:

• A three-day mega agricultural festival organised in Raipur called ‘Krishi Maha-Kumbh’ was inaugurated by Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. Also known as the National Agriculture Festival, this mela boasted of going beyond the traditional dominant practices of farmers by encouraging the agrarian community to experiment with non-conventional farm activities, adopt modern technologies and secure quality organic produce.

Goa carnival: World famous carnival to begin in Panaji:

• The world-famous Goa Carnival will begin in the capital Panaji. The festival, which displays Goan art and culture, is celebrated with fun, frolic, pomp and splendor.
• The mood in Panaji city is quite festive and all the preparations are done for the float parade that is going to take place. The floats carry different messages and themes and there is also a band of music and troupes of artists on each float vehicle.

About Goa:

• Governor: Satya Pal Malik
• Chief minister: Pramod Sawant
• Capital: Panaji (Executive Branch)

4 railway stations in Uttar Pradesh get new names:

• A move aimed at reviving the identity of the ancient city, Allahabad Junction will now be Prayagraj Junction, Allahabad City will now be known as Prayagraj Rambag, Allahabad Chhioki has been changed to Prayagraj Chheoki and the name of Prayagghat has been changed to Prayagraj Sangam.
• The names of the stations were changed by the central and the state government.

About Uttar Pradesh (UP)

• Capital- Lucknow
• Chief Minister (CM)- Yogi Adityanath
• Governor- Anandiben Patel
Mobile app for employees launched by Indian Railways:
• Indian Railways, Railway Board Chairman Vinod Kumar Yadav launched the HRMS (Human Resource Management System) mobile app, in which the employees can see the data related to their service and communicate with the administration for any changes.
• The app has been developed by the Centre for Railway Information System (CRIS).
• The mobile app allows employees to view their historical data since their date of joining, including details related to increments, promotions, awards, transfers, postings, leave, training and retirement benefits.
• Scanned copies of their physical service record are also available in the app, which is an important milestone in computerisation of HR related functionalities in Indian Railways.

About Ministry of Railways:
• Formed– 16 April 1853
• Headquarters– New Delhi
• Union Minister– Piyush Goyal

Elections for 55 Rajya Sabha seats Will be on March 26, Schedule released:
• The Election Commission of India (ECI) announcing the schedule of polling for 55 Rajya Sabha seats spread over 17 States set to be vacated in April will be conducted on March 26. According to the schedule for the elections, the notification would be issued on March 6, the last date of filing of nominations would be March 13 and polling would be on March 26, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The votes would be counted at 5 p.m. on the same day.

National Cyber Research Centre : inaugurated by Union Minister:
• Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy inaugurated National Cyber Research, Innovation and Capacity Building Centre at Central Detective Training Institute (CDTI) campus located at Ramanthapur in Hyderabad.
• Reddy pointed out the need for such a centre with the proliferation of Information Technology in our lives. The Government has anticipated cyber threat and has taken several landmark steps in the recent past. A dedicated division was created in October 2017 under the Ministry of Home Affairs, for addressing the cyber security threat in the country.
• The Minister stated that CDTI is one of the seven verticals under Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and highlights the growing relevance of continuous research and innovation in the fight against cyber crime.
• The Minister also stated that the MHA is also working on setting up Regional Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (R4C) in the States. It is in collaboration with I4C to further strengthen the cyber combat capabilities of the nation. CDTI Hyderabad will prove to be a central hub for entire South India. he added.

First Anniversary of National War Memorial:
• On 25th February 2020, India observed the first anniversary of the iconic National War Memorial. Get full details here.
• As a part of the main ceremony, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat will honour the
fallen soldiers today along with veterans from all three wings of armed services.
- CDS Gen Bipin Rawat will lay wreaths and pay homage to the fallen soldiers. Since its inauguration last year, around 21 lakh people have visited the memorial with over 5,000-7,000 people foot-fall at the monument every day.

‘UPI Chalega’: NPCI launches campaign for payment mode to gain currency:
- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is keen to further popularise its flagship Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which has clocked over 100 crore transactions per month.
- While UPI has already shown robust growth, Rai stated, the objective is to reach out to the next set of users, across geographies, and encourage them to switch from cash. With this in mind, NPCI, along with payment service providers, has co-created an industry campaign ‘UPI Chalega’, to promote it as an easy, safe and instant mode of payment.
- The campaign is aimed to guide users towards the right use of UPI and help create a habitual change, to use UPI in their daily lives. The campaign also focusses on the safety aspects while transacting on UPI-enabled apps.
- The number of UPI transactions touched 130.5 crore last month, and the total amount transacted was at an all-time high of ₹16-lakh crore. As many as 144 banks are on the platform.
- The findings of a pre-campaign study conducted among 12,800 people in four zones, across 36 centres, showed a 60 per cent awareness of UPI, Rai stated.
- She added that early adopters of UPI have come from across geographies — metros and smaller cities — and now the idea is to push it to the next set of users.
- Launched in 2016 as a means to boost digital payments, UPI allows users to transfer money on a real-time basis, across multiple bank accounts, without revealing bank account details to the other party.

About NPCI:
- The National Payments Corporation of India is an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.
- Headquarters: Mumbai
- Founded: 2008
- Non-Exe Chairman : Biswamohan Mahapatra
- MD &CEO :Dilip Asbe

Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog partners with NASSCOM to roll out Artificial Intelligence Modules in Indian schools:
- NITI Aayog and Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) have collaborated with the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) for the launch of an AI-based Module rolled out for students in Indian schools.
- The launch was done on February 27, 2020. The AI-Base Module has been introduced with an objective for students to leverage the full potential of AIM’s Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL).
- The module contains activities, videos and experiments that enable students to work
through and learn the various concepts of AI.

**Offshore Patrol Vessel-6 “VAJRA” launched at Chennai:**
- The 6th Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV-6) ‘VAJRA’ was launched in at Chennai on February 27, 2020. Shri Mansukh Mandaviya was the chief guest of the event.
- Mandaviya is the Minister of State for Shipping(I/C) and Chemicals & Fertilizers.

**Government launches MIEWS Portal for Monitoring prices of TOP Crops**
- Ministry of Food Processing Industries has launched the Market Intelligence and Early Warning System (MIEWS) Web Portal for ‘real time monitoring’ of prices of tomato, onion and potato (TOP) crops.
- Smt. Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Union Minister of Food Processing Industries launched the portal.
- MIEWS system is designed to provide advisories to farmers to avoid cyclical production as well as an early warning in situations of gluts and for simultaneously generating alerts for intervention under the terms of the Operation Greens(OG) scheme.

**New Toll-Free Number of GST helpdesk:**
- The Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) recently launched a new toll-free number for GST related problems. This number will work 365 days for answering queries about the GST.
- GSTN has introduced new features to improve taxpayers’ experience by giving them more power. A new toll-free number is - 1800 103 4786’. Anyone can call on this helpline from 9 am to 9 pm.

**32 projects sanctioned under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana**
- The Union Government has approved 32 projects in the food processing sector under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY). The projects will be spread across 17 states.
- The government has earmarked funds worth Rs 406 crores for the projects. They were approved during the meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Approval Committee, chaired by Food Processing Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal in New Delhi on February 26, 2020.
- The main focus area of the projects is to boost employment opportunities in rural areas and create direct and indirect employment for about 15000 people.

**Key Highlights**
- The government has sanctioned 32 projects under the unit scheme of PMKSY of Ministry of Food Processing Industries. The new projects will cover 17 states with an investment worth Rs 406 crore.
- The projects aim to create employment opportunities and direct and indirect employment for approximately 15000 people in the rural areas.
- The main focus area will be creating more processing and preservation capacities and expansion and modernizing the existing food processing units.
- This will be undertaken to increase the level of processing, resulting in value addition and enhancing the shelf life of the product and reduce wastage.
What is Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)?

The PMKSY scheme aims to create processing and preservation capacities and modernise existing food processing units to increase the quality of processing and reduce wastage. The introduction of modern processing techniques is expected to increase the shelf-life of the processed food or agricultural produce. It will ensure steady income to the farmers, reducing farmer distress.

The implementation period of the PMKSY scheme is 2016-20 and it has a total outlay of Rs 6,000 crore. Overall, the scheme has seven component schemes:

1. Mega Food Parks
2. Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure
3. Infrastructure for Agro-Processing Clusters
4. Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages
5. Creation/Expansion of Food Processing and Preservation Capacities
6. Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure
7. Human Resources and Institutions

Food processing ministry approves Rs 162 cr under Operation Greens scheme:

- Centre has approved Rs 162 crore under ‘Operation Greens’ scheme that has an outlay of Rs 500 crore to stabilize the supply of ‘TOP’ crops i.e. tomato, onion and potato. This will ensure their availability throughout the year without price volatility.
- The scheme that was announced in the budget 2018-19 aims at improving value realization for cultivators by targeted interventions to strengthen production clusters & Farmer Producer Organizations and linking them with the market.
- Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Food Processing Minister stated that 5 projects have been sanctioned in the country and more were lined up for approvals. She stated, The total outlay of the projects is Rs 426 crore and the grant we would give is Rs 162 crore.

SPICE+ Web form, new rules for company incorporation & DIN launched by MCA:

- Ministry of Corporate Affairs has been launched ‘SPICe+’ Web Form (pronounced ‘SPICe Plus’) to offer 10 services by 3 Central Government Ministries/ Departments and of State Government of Maharashtra in a single web form.
- The three department/govt ministries are the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Labour & Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance. Apart from this, the forms of Maharashtra State Government would also be available on the SPICe+ webform. Registration for EPFO and ESIC shall be mandatory for all new companies to be incorporated through SPICe+ and no EPFO & ESIC registration nos. shall be separately issued by the respective agencies.

NITI Aayog and NASSCOM roll out AI modules in Indian schools:

- The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom), in collaboration with Niti Aayog’s Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), launched an artificial intelligence (AI) based module for students of Indian schools.
• The AI-Base Module will be implemented across 5,000 Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL), empowering 2.5 million students. The module contains activities, videos and experiments that enable students to work through and learn the various concepts of AI. This is the first-ever industry-government academia initiative on such a scale to keep the school students abreast of latest technologies. It has been estimated that by 2030, the global AI market is likely to be in the range of $15-15.5 trillion, out of which India’s share will be close to $1 trillion.

Important:
• NITI Aayog: National Institution for Transforming India.
• NITI Aayog CEO: Amitabh Kant, Vice Chairman: Rajiv Kumar.
• Chairman of NASSCOM: Keshav Murugesh.

**PM to launch 10,000 FPOs for farmers, lays foundation stone of Bundelkhand Expressway today:**
• Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch 10 thousand Farmer Producer Organizations, FPOs all over the country from Chitrakoot in Uttar Pradesh.
• These FPOs will help in collectivization of small, marginal and landless farmers to give them strength to deal with issues like lack of access to technology, quality seed, fertilizers and pesticides including requisite finances.
• Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also lay the foundation stone for the Bundelkhand Expressway at The Uttar Pradesh Government is constructing the Expressway which will pass through the districts of Chitrakoot, Banda, Hamirpur and Jalaun.
• It will link the Bundelkhand area to the national capital Delhi through Agra-Lucknow expressway and Yamuna expressway and play a vital role in the development of Bundelkhand region.
• India has huge defence equipment requirements spanning from land systems, ships and submarines to fighter aircraft, helicopters, weapons and sensors. The requirements are worth over 250 billion dollars by 2025. In order to fulfill the requirements, the government had announced setting up of Defence Industrial Corridor in Uttar Pradesh during the Investors Summit on 21st February 2018 at
• The 296-kilometre long Bundelkhand Expressway will pass through the districts of Chitrakoot, Banda, Hamirpur and Jalaun.

**NITI Aayog selects J&K for UNDP pilot project:**
• NITI Aayog has selected Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir for first pilot project among all States and UTs on Sustainable Developmental Goals. It would get a chance to work with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
• The programmes would work like that of district indicator framework wherein information would be sought from respective District Commissioners and ranking would be done by setting certain parameters.
• He stated under the Public Outreach Programme, Lieutenant Governor is touring various parts of the UT and taking firsthand accounts of the issues faced by people and ensuring redressal within the shortest possible time frame.
About Niti Aayog:
• Formed: 1 January 2015
• Objectives: Foster involvement and participation in the economic policy-making process by the State Governments of India
• Headquarters: New Delhi
• Chairperson: Narendra Modi
• Rajiv Kumar (economist), (Vice Chairperson)
• CEO: Amitabh Kant.

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

National Parks in Maharashtra
• Chandoli National Park
• Gugamal National Park
• Pench National Park
• Sanjay Gandhi National Park
• Tadoba National Park
• Navegaon National Park

Offshore patrol vessel ICGS Varad commissioned:
• The Indian Coast Guard’s Offshore Patrol Vessel, ICGS Varad was commissioned into service by Union Shipping Minister Mansukh Mandaviya at a function held at Chennai Port on February 28, 2020. The Director-General of the Coast Guard, K Natarajan was also present on the occasion.
• The ICGS Varad will be deployed at Paradip in Odisha, under the operational control of the North-Eastern Region’s Coast Guard. Commanded by Commandant Pintu Bag, the coast guard vessel will be manned by 11 officers and 91 personnel.
ICGS Varad: Key Features

- The Offshore Patrol Vessel, ICGS Varad has been designed and built by Larsen and Toubro at its shipyard in Kattupalli, near Chennai.
- The vessel is the first major defence ship to clear all the sea trials in one single sea sortie, creating a record of sorts in the Indian shipbuilding industry.
- The 98m-long vessel is fitted with advanced navigation and communication equipment, machinery and sensors. It also comprises 30 mm and 12.7 mm guns.
- Besides this, the vessel has special features including a platform management system, integrated bridge system, high power external fire-fighting system and automated power management system.
- The ship also has the capacity to carry four high-speed boats and a twin-engine helicopter for search and rescue operations and law enforcement and maritime patrol. The vessel can also carry pollution response equipment in case of an oil spill at the sea.
- Further, the vessel propelled by two 9100kw diesel engines can attain a maximum speed of 26 knots. It can operate for almost 5000 nautical miles at a stretch without refueling.

SPORTS

Novak Djokovic and Sofia Kenin Clinches Australian Open 2020 Tennis Tournament:
- The 2020 Australian Open was the 108th edition of the annual Australian Open tennis tournament and the first Grand Slam of the year. It was held from 20 January to 2 February 2020.
- The winners are as follows:
  - Men's Single: Novak Djokovic (Serbia) beat Dominic Thiem (Austria)
  - Women's Single: Sofia Kenin (US) beat Garbine Muguruza (Spain)
  - Men's Double: Rajeev Ram (US) / Joe Salisbury (UK)
  - Women's Double: Tímea Babos (Hungary) / Kristina Mladenovic (France)
  - Mixed Double: Barbora Krejčíková (Czech Republic) / Nikola Mektić (Croatia)

Ayonika Paul won the women's 10m Air Rifle T1 event:
- Olympian Ayonika Paul won the women’s 10m Air Rifle T1 event Vijayveer Sidhu won the men's 25m Pistol T2 event in the National Shooting trials at Thiruvananthapuram.
- She came to a quality eight-woman field, which had the likes of Tokyo 2020 quota holders Apurvi Chandela and Anjum Moudgil among competitors.

Sourav Ganguly will be the ‘Goodwill Ambassador’ of India in the 'Tokyo Olympic Games 2020’:
- The recently appointed BCCI President, Sourav Ganguly has been invited by the Indian Olympic Association to be the ‘Goodwill Ambassador’ of India in the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020.
- Sourav Ganguly, known in his hometown as the Prince of Calcutta is one of the most respected sports icons in the entire country.

Bangladesh wins ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup 2020:
• Bangladesh has won the ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup 2020 held in South Africa.
• Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team defeated India Under-19 team by 3 wickets to win the final of the ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup 2020 held at JB Marks Oval, Potchefstroom, South Africa.
• This was the 13th edition of the tournament in which 16 teams participated from all over the world.
• Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team has won the ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup for the first time in the tournament history.

Swedish Vaulter Armand Duplantis Breaks World Pole Vault Record:
• On 8 February 2020, Armand Duplantis, who plays for Sweden, broke the world pole vault record with a jump of 6.17 metres at an indoor meeting in Poland.

Armand Duplantis breaks Pole Vault World Record:
• Armand Duplantis, a 20-year-old Louisiana native who has been as shrewd in choosing the nation he represents as he has been in choosing his fiberglass poles, broke the world record in the pole vault on Saturday with a jump of 20 feet 2 ¾ inches, or 6.17 meters.

Aditya Mehta wins National Snooker Championship:
• Aditya Mehta, an Indian snooker player, won National Snooker Championship held in Pune recently. He defeated world champion, Pankaj Advani, in the final match. Madhya Pradesh’s Vidya Pillai won the title in the women’s category.
• Aditya Mehta is ranked 49th in the global ranking. He has won gold medals in world and Asia level competitions so far.

FIH honours Manpreet Singh with FIH Men’s Player of the Year 2019 award:
• Manpreet Singh won the International Hockey Federation’s (FIH) Men’s Player of the Year award.
• He created a record as he became the first Indian hockey team player to win the awards since its inception in 1999.
• He won the award ahead of Arthur van Doren of Belgium and Lucas Vila of Argentina, who finished second and third respectively.
• FIH: The Fédération Internationale de Hockey, commonly known by the acronym FIH, is the international governing body of field hockey and indoor field hockey. Its headquarters are in Lausanne, Switzerland and the president is Narinder Batra.

Headquarters: Lausanne, Switzerland
President: Narinder Batra
Founded: 7 January 1924
CEO: Thierry Weil
Abbreviation: FIH
Membership: 137 national associations
Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju Announces Khelo India Winter Games in Jammu and Kashmir:
- Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has announced Khelo India winter games 2020 which will be held in the Union Territory of Ladakh later this month followed by a similar event in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir in March.
- Khelo India Ladakh Winter Games will feature an open ice hockey championship, figure skating, and speed skating, and the competition will be conducted at the block, district, and UT levels with the expected participation of about 1700 athletes.

India clinches 3 medals in 2020 World SnowShoe Championship:
- Three Indian athletes from Kashmir, have won medals in their respective categories at the 2020 World SnowShoe Championship held at Myoko, Japan from 15 to 16 February 2020.
- Participants from 17 countries of different continents participated in the championship.
- It is first time ever in the history of SnowShoe sport that Indian athletes bagged medals in the World Championship. Indian contingent included nine members, of which three athletes bagged one silver and two bronze medals.

Koneru Humpy wins Cairns Cup chess tournament:
- Grandmaster Koneru Humpy recorded another win in the Cairns Chess tournament. Humpy and Grand Master Drona Valli Harika drew in the ninth and final round in St. Louis, USA.
- Humpy scored six points and won the title. World champion Zu Wezun finished second with five and a half points Drona Valli Harika secured fifth place with four and a half points.
- She will get five ELO rating points that will take her to the second position in the world rankings. She became World Rapid Champion in December 2019.

"UNITED BY EMOTION" Chosen as Motto of Tokyo 2020 Olympics Games:
- ‘United by Emotion’ is the official motto for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics Games.
- The Motto encapsulates the Games vision, capturing the essence of the ideas and concepts that the host city wishes to share with the world.
- About 10,000 athletes from over 200 countries will participate in Tokyo Olympics which will run from July 24 to August 9.

India will host AFC Women’s Asian Cup in 2022:
India has been selected to host the 2022 AFC Women’s Asian Cup. This was announced by the Women’s Committee of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 19 February 2020.

Ross Taylor becomes first player to play 100 matches in all three formats:
- Veteran New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor today became the first player in the world to play 100 matches in all three formats of cricket.
- The landmark achievement came as he took the field against India in the opening Test at
Basin Reserve in Wellington. The ongoing match is also his 100th Test.

India finishes with 20 medals in Asian Wrestling Championships:
• The 2020 Asian Wrestling Championships was held at the KD Jadhav Indoor Stadium, Indira Gandhi Arena, New Delhi from February 18 to February 23.
• China was not allowed to participate in the competition due to virus.
• India won total 20 medals including 5 Gold, 6 Silver and 9 Bronze to be placed at third spot in the medal table.
• Japan stood first with 16 medals (8-4-4) while Iran was second with 17 medals (7-3-7).
• The Championship was held in three categories:
  1. Men's freestyle
  2. Men's Greco-Roman
  3. Women's freestyle

Shooters now permitted by Home Ministry to keep up to 12 firearms for shooting practice:
• The Union Home Ministry has amended Arms Act, 1959 and the Arms Rules, 2016 to increase the number of firearms and ammunition kept by the Indian shooters for their practice during the year. As per the Home Ministry, shooting is an important Olympic sport in India and Indian shooters have excelled in international competitions.
• Key Amendments in Arms Act, 1959
  • According to the new rules, international medalists and renowned shooters are now allowed to have additional weapons up to a total of twelve under the exempted category. Earlier they were allowed to keep only seven weapons.
  • In case a shooter is renowned in one event, he will be allowed to keep a maximum of eight weapons. If he is renowned in two events then he can keep maximum ten weapons. Earlier, the permit was four and seven respectively.
  • If a shooter is known in more than two events, then he will now be allowed to keep a maximum of twelve firearms unlike earlier seven.
  • For junior target shooters or aspiring shooters, the Home Ministry has decided to amend the rules to allow them to possess two firearms of any category, as against earlier one.
  • The shooters will now also be entitled to possess two firearms as normal citizens under provisions of the Arms Act, 1959.
• Key Amendments in Arms Rules, 2016
  • The Home Ministry has amended the provision under Rule 40 of the Arms Rules, 2016, as per which, the quantity of ammunition that can be purchased by the shooters for practice during a year has been increased considerably.
  • Under the amended provisions, the quantity of ammunition that shooters can purchase for .22 LR rifle/pistol has been increased to 5000 instead of 1000, for Pistol/Revolver the quantity has been increased to 2000 instead of 600 and for shotgun calibers, the quantity has been increased to 5000 instead 500.
  • The Ministry has also made other necessary amendments in the Arms Rules, 2016 by
amending the Arms Act, 1959, under the Arms (Amendment) Act, 2019.
  • The amendments clarify that no license will be required for Indian citizens for acquisitions and possession of small arms falling under the category of curio.
  • However, the shooters will be required to carry appropriate licenses, as prescribed to use, carry or transport such small arms. No ammunition can be sold for use without the endorsement of such firearms in the prescribed license of the owner.
  • Further, the maximum number of firearms to be possessed by any person has been reduced to two from earlier three.
  • Those who have three firearms have been given the facility to retain any two of them and deposit the remaining firearm by December 13, 2020.

Commonwealth 2022: India will host Shooting and Archery Championships:
  • India will host the Commonwealth Shooting and Archery Championships in January 2022. The Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) announced this decision after the Executive Board meeting in London. The two events will be held in Chandigarh in January 2022, while the Birmingham Commonwealth Games is scheduled from 27th of July to 7th of August, 2022.
  • The decision is being considered a big win for India after IOA threatened to boycott the 2022 Birmingham Games for dropping shooting from the roster in July last year.

ICC bans Omani player Yousuf Abdulrahim Al Balushi for 7 years:
  • The International Cricket Council (ICC) banned Oman player Yousuf Abdulrahim Al Balushi from all forms of cricket for 7 years. The player has been reprimanded for breaching the ICC's Anti-Corruption Code as he was found guilty for breaching various counts in the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup qualifiers 2019.
  • Al Balushi breached Article 2.1.1 of the Anti-Corruption Code: being party to an agreement or effort to fix or contrive in any way the result, progress, conduct or any other aspect of matches. Besides, he also breached Article 2.1.4, Article 2.4.4 and Article 2.4.7: All relating to corrupt practices.

Important:
  a. Chairman of ICC: Shashank Manohar;
  b. Chief Executive: Manu Sahney;
  c. Headquarters: Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

CCEA approves National Technical Textiles Mission:
  • The CCEA on February 26, 2020 approved the setting up of the National Technical Textiles Mission.
  • For the implementation of this mission, the Cabinet has allocated total funds of Rs 1480 Crore.
  • The mission has been launched with an objective to position India as a global leader in Technical Textiles.
  • The Mission will be implemented in the next four years from 2020-21 to 2023-24.
Himachal Pradesh became First to achieve 100% LPG coverage:
• Himachal Pradesh became the 1st state in the country to have 100% LPG coverage due to the implementation of PMUY (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana) scheme.
• Under the scheme except families having a pensioner, income taxpayer or any member employed with the government, board, corporation etc, all households of the state without an LPG connection were eligible.
• Nearly 2.64 lakh free gas connections were provided through the state funded Himachal Grihini Suvidha Yojana & 36 lakh were benefited through PMUY scheme.

Madhya Pradesh launches unified vehicle registration card:
• Madhya Pradesh has become the first state in the country to launch the unified vehicle registration card.
• MP is only the second state to launch a unified driving license, after Uttar Pradesh.
• These unified smart cards for driving license and vehicle registration will each have a QR code that will help in verifying authenticity of the data printed on the cards.

Union HRD Minister launches Leadership Development Programme for Higher Education Administrators:
• Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal aka Nishank, Union Minister for Human Resource Development, launched ‘Higher Education Leadership Development Programme For Administrator’ – a joint initiative of UGC and British Council under the auspices of UK India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) today in New Delhi.
• The programme has been launched to enhance the leadership qualities as well as systemic changes with renewed approaches, capacity, tools and skill in the middle and senior level administrative functionaries in Indian Universities.

Five-Time Grand Slam Champion Maria Sharapova Retires From Tennis At 32:
• Five-time Grand Slam winner Maria Sharapova, one of the world’s most recognisable and highest-paid sportswomen, announced her retirement at the age of 32.
• “Tennis – I’m saying goodbye,” Sharapova stated in an article for Vogue and Vanity Fair magazines.
• After 28 years and five Grand Slam titles, though, I’m ready to scale another mountain – to compete on a different type of terrain. Sharapova burst onto the scene as a supremely gifted teenager and won her Grand Slams before serving a 15-month ban for failing a drugs test at the 2016 Australian Open.

virus impact: India pulls out of shooting world cup in Cyprus:
• India on February 28, 2020 withdrew itself from the upcoming shooting World Cup in Cyprus, citing the threat of novel coronavirus (COVID-19).
• The shooting World Cup is scheduled to be held in the Eastern Mediterranean island nation from March 4-13, 2020. The World Cup is recognised by the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF).
• The Indian Shooting contingent decided to pull out from the tournament on the advice of the Union Government due to the massive across the world.
• Cyprus has not yet reported any confirmed case of the deadly virus but the nation has kept suspected cases under quarantine as a precautionary measure.
• India is also scheduled to host a combined shooting world cup from March 16-26 at the Dr Karni Singh Range in New Delhi. Six countries have already withdrawn from the shooting World Cup including China, North Korea, Taiwan, Turkmenistan, Hong Kong and Macau as they are on complete.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

GISAT-1 to be launched on March 5:
• Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to launch the launch GISAT-1 satellite on March 5, 2020 aboard GSLV-F10 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.
• GISAT-1 is a Geo Imaging Satellite which will enable real-time observation of Indian sub-continent under cloud-free conditions.

Indian Army Major develops world's first bulletproof helmet:
• Indian Army has developed first bulletproof helmet of the world which can stop an AK-47 bullet round fired from a distance of 10 meters.
• The Ballistic helmet is developed by An Indian Army Major Anoop Mishra.
• The helmet is developed under the Indian Army's project “Abhedya”.

DRDO inks deal with Russian company for missiles propulsion:
• Pune-based DRDO Laboratory, High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) has signed technology development contract with Rosoboronexport, Russia for development of Advanced Pyrotechnic Ignition Systems.
• The agreement was signed at the DefExpo2020 in Lucknow. The agreement will enable advancement in the field of energetic materials and pyrotechnic technology leading to the development of advanced ignition systems.
• HEMRL works in the development of spectrum of high energy materials required for missiles, rockets and guns.

Astronomers Find Ultramassive Galaxy From The Early Universe That Suddenly Died:
• The International team of astronomers led by scientists at the University of California, United States(US) have discovered an Ultramassive monster galaxy dubbed as XMM-2599.
• This galaxy existed around 12 billion years ago just 1.8 billion years after the formation of the universe.

Scientists discovered the nearest known planet “2MASS 1155-7919 b”:
• The scientists from Rochester Institute of Technology has discovered the nearest-known 'baby giant planet' which is named as “2MASS 1155-7919 b”.
• The scientists has used the data from Gaia space observatory to find the baby giant
The newly discovered baby giant planet which is named as “2MASS 1155-7919 b” lies about 330 light-years from our solar system.
- The planet is closer to Earth and is located in the Epsilon Chamaeleontis Association. This planet orbits a star that is about 5 million years old. The planet has only ten times the mass of Jupiter.

**ISRO G Narayanan to head space PSU NSIL:**
- Veteran space scientist G Narayanan has been named the chairman of Indian Space Research Organisation’s newly formed commercial entity New Space India Ltd (NSIL).
- Narayanan, who hails from Kerala’s Palakkad, had earlier worked as first secretary (space) at the Indian embassy in Paris.
- The Indian Space Research Organisation is the space agency of the Government of India and has its headquarters in the city of Bengaluru. Its vision is to “harness space technology for national development while pursuing space science research & planetary exploration”.
  
**Founder:** Vikram Sarabhai  
**Founded:** 15 August 1969  
**Headquarters:** Bengaluru

**ISRO Plans to Launch 10 Earth Observation (EO) Satellites in 2020-21:**
- As per the annual data released by the Department of Space, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), has planned to launch an unprecedented 10 earth observation (EO) satellites with space surveillance feature during 2020-21.
- Apart from this, three communication satellites and two navigation satellites are also scheduled to be launched in the next fiscal. The annual plan includes total 36 missions, comprising of both satellites and their launchers.

**Incois launches three ocean-based services:**
- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (Incois), Hyderabad, has launched three ocean-based specialised products/services — the Small Vessel Advisory and Forecast Services System (SVAS), the Swell Surge Forecast System (SSFS) and the Algal Bloom Information Service (ABIS).
- Incois, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, provides a number of free services for users in the marine realm, including fishermen.

**Realme X50 Pro 5G world's first phone with India's NavIC navigation system developed by ISRO:**
- Realme X50 Pro 5G is touted to be the world’s first phone with NavIC.
- NavIC is a satellite navigation system developed by India’s ISRO.
- Xiaomi previously said it will launch the world’s first phone with NavIC.
- Realme X50 Pro 5G - India’s first 5G phone - is also the world’s first smartphone that features the NavIC navigation system. NavIC is the satellite navigation system developed by India’s premiere space agency, Indian Space and Research Organisation.
• The announcement was made by Realme India CEO Madhav Sheth on Twitter, also revealing the Realme 6 series phones, slated to launch on March 5 in India, will also support NavIC. Interestingly, Realme X50 Pro 5G has bagged one too many titles for being the first it is the first 5G phone in India, the first phone in India with a Snapdragon 865 SoC, and now, the first device to support NavIC not only in India but the world.

Providence opens Global Innovation Centre in Hyderabad:
• Providence, a US-based healthcare systems provider, inaugurated its global innovation centre in India with plans to invest up to $100 million and induct more than 2,000 technologists.
• This is, the $26 billion-company’s first development centre outside the US. It plans to start with 350 techies within a year and gradually ramp it to over 2,000 centre within 3-4 years.
• Murali Krishna, Senior Vice-President and Country Manager, Providence India, who joins from Microsoft, will head the global innovation centre. The centre will focus on engineering, data intelligence, digital innovation, professional services, cyber security, application development and tech support.
• The teams will build and innovate with Big Data, artificial intelligence, machine learning, Oracle Cloud, Microsoft Azure, Web Development, Natural Language Processing, Analytics, and other emerging technologies.

OBITUARY

Former Karnataka Minister D Manjunath Passes Away:
• Former Karnataka Minister D Manjunath passed away at the age of 93 after prolonged illness.
• Manjunath joined the Janata Party in 1977 and had served in different capacities including as Chairperson of Legislative Council and Minister in various governments.

Veteran Odia poet Rabi Singh passes away:
• Renowned Odia poet Rabi Singh passed away. He was 89.
• The revolutionary poet had received many awards for his contribution to Odia literature.
• He received Atibadi Jagannath Das Samman in the year 2017.

Padma Shri Winning Indian Author Giriraj Kishore Passes Away:
• Veteran writer and academician Giriraj Kishore passed away following a prolonged illness. He was 82-years-old.
• Giriraj was awarded the Padma Shri by the President of India in the year 2007, for his work Pahla Girmitiya (The Girmitiya Saga).

P Parameswaran passes away in Kerala:
• Renowned thinker, writer and the founder-director of Bharatiya Vichara Kendram P Parameswaran has passed away in Ottapalam, Kerala. He was 91.
• Kendram P Parameswaran was awarded Padma Vibhushan in 2018 and Padma Shri in 2004.
Noted fashion designer and Padma Shri awardee Wendell Rodricks passed away:
• Wendell Rodricks was awarded the Padma Shri in 2014 and was a recipient of Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres (Knight of the order of arts and letters) in 2015.
• Rodricks made his mark in the fashion industry with his first collection from Goa that earned him the title ‘Guru of Minimalism’.

Bengali actor and former MP Tapas Pal passes away:
• Former Politician and Bengali actor, Tapas Pal has passed away at the age of 61 years.
• He was former Trinamool Congress MP. He started his acting career with the film ‘Dadar Kirti’ in 1980. He was awarded the Filmfare Award for his role in a movie ‘Saheb’ (1981).
• He made his Bollywood debut in ‘Abodh’ in 1984.

Former MP Krishna Bose passed away in Kolkata:
• Academic-turned-politician, Krishna Bose, passed away in West Bengal due to cardiac arrest. She was 89 years old.
• She served as a Member of Parliament elected from the Jadavpur constituency in West Bengal as an All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) candidate.

Creator of LEGO Minifigure, Jens Nygaard Knudsen Passed Away:
• Jens Nygaard Knudsen, the chief designer of the iconic Lego minifigure with interchangeable legs and torsos has passed away. He was 78-year old.
• Nygaard Knudsen was also responsible for developing some of Lego's classic themes, such as Lego Space and Lego Pirates.
• The LEGO Group is a Danish toy production company located in Billund, Denmark.

Former Lok Sabha MP Krishna Bose passed away:
• She was the wife of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s nephew Sisir Kumar Bose. She joined politics in the mid-1990s. She was close to Trinamool Congress chairperson and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.
• Krishna Bose was elected from the Jadavpur Lok Sabha seat in 1998 and 1999 on TMC ticket. She was elected from the same seat on a Congress ticket in 1996. During her time in the Lok Sabha, she was the Chairperson of the Committee on External Affairs and served as a member in several other important committees. She was the chairperson of the Netaji Research Bureau.

Katherine Johnson, legendary NASA mathematician, dies at 101:
• Katherine Johnson’s calculations helped NASA to take humans into space. She was also portrayed in a Hollywood film ‘Hidden Figures.’
• Katherine Johnson was an American mathematician, who passed away on February 24, 2020. She was 101. Katherine was famous NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) mathematician who led the American space agency to a new height.
• Her calculations related to space travel played an important role in transporting humans to space. Katherine was one of the first women scientists of NASA who helped humans to reach
space. It is believed that the Americans were able to overtake the Soviet Union in the space race because of her contributions.
• Katherine Johnson was a part of NASA’s computer pool. This pool was a group of mathematicians. NASA carried out its first successful space mission with the help of data created by this group. Katherine was one of the black women who worked for NASA. She started her career as a teacher.
• Born in 1918 at West Virginia, Katherine was curious to learn math from an early age. According to Katherine’s biography published by NASA, she was one of three black students selected to integrate West Virginia’s undergraduate colleges. She did the mapping of the moon before the 1969’s landing and helped to bring Apollo-13 astronauts back to the Earth.

Former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak passes away:
• Former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak who was forced to resign during Arab Spring died on February 25, 2020 in Cairo at the age of 91.
• Mubarak was found guilty of being involved in the murder of protesters during the revolution.
• He ruled Egypt as the President for almost three decades before his removal.

Famous NASA Mathematician Katherine Johnson passes away:
• Famous NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) mathematician Katherine Johnson passed away at the age of 101.
• Johnson’s calculations helped put the first man on the Moon in 1969, but she was little known until the Oscar-nominated 2016 movie that told the stories of three black women who worked at NASA.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

M Ajit Kumar Appointed as New Chairman of CBIC:
• The Central government has appointed M Ajit Kumar as the Chairman of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on 31 January 2020. Mohammad Allawi Named as new PM of Iraq
• The President of Iraq Barham Saleh has named former Communication Minister.
• Mohammad Allawi as the country’s new Prime Minister on 1st February 2020.

Abidali Neemuchwala Steps Down as CEO and MD of Wipro:
• The chief executive officer (CEO) and managing director (MD) of Wipro, Abidali Z Neemuchwala has quit the post, giving “family commitments” as the reason behind the decision. Indian-origin Arvind Krishna to Succeed Ginni Rometty as IBM Chief.
• Indian-origin Arvind Krishna has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of American multinational IT company International Business Machines Corporation (IBM).
• The 57-year-old will succeed long time CEO Ginni Rometty.

Pramod Agrawal Takes Charge as Chairman of Coal India Ltd:
• A 1991 batch IAS officer Pramod Agrawal assumed charge as the new Chairman and Managing Director of Coal India Ltd (CIL) on 1st February 2020.

Ajay Bisaria Appointed Indian High Commissioner to Canada:
• Ajay Bisaria, a 1987 batch IFS officer, has been appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to Canada.
  • Currently, he is India’s High Commissioner to Pakistan.

Albin Kurti Appointed New Prime Minister of Kosovo:
• Kosovo’s parliament has approved Albin Kurti as the new prime minister of the country on 3rd February 2020.
  • Albin Kurti, leader of the political party Vetëvendosje, will serve as the fourth Prime Minister of Kosovo.

Amitabh Bhatt the New CEO (Bangalore Complex) at HAL:
• Amitabh Bhatt has taken over as Chief Executive Officer of Bengaluru-headquartered safeguard PSU, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited’s Bangalore Complex.
  • Prior, he was serving as Executive Director of Light Utility Helicopter (LUH) venture in HAL.
  • Bhatt is a Post Graduate in Management and earlier served in SKF India Limited for a long time before joining Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

Microsoft-Owned LinkedIn’s Jeff Weiner resigns as CEO:
• Jeff Weiner has recently resigned as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Microsoft-owned LinkedIn.
  • Jeff Weiner will become Executive Chairman of the company, while Ryan Roslansky who is currently the senior vice-president of product, will become CEO with effect from 1st June 2020.
  • LinkedIn is a business and employment-oriented service that operates via websites and mobile apps.
  • LinkedIn Corp: Founded: 2002.
  • LinkedIn Corp: Headquarters: Sunnyvale, California, United States.

World Bank chief economist Pinelopi Koujianou resigns:
• World Bank Chief Economist Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg has announced to step down from the post with effect from 1st March 2020.
  • She is resigning to return to teaching at Yale University and create opportunities for the poor young talented economists to the bank.
  • The World Bank President David Malpass has announced that the organisation’s research director Aart Kraay would take over as the Chief Economist in place of Goldberg until a new permanent chief economist is hired.
  • President of World Bank: David Robert Malpass.
  • Managing Director (MD) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO): Anshula Kant.
Arvind Kejriwal to take oath as Delhi CM on February 16 at Ramlila Maidan:
• After resounding victory in Delhi assembly elections, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will take oath for the third time on February 16.
• The swearing-in ceremony will take place at the historic Ramlila Maidan — similar to that of last two times.

Ducati appoints Bipul Chandra as new head of Indian operations:
• Italian super bike maker Ducati stated it has appointed Bipul Chandra as the new Managing Director of its India operations.
• Chandra replaces Sergi Canovas who is moving to an international role within the company.
About Ducati:
• Parent organization: Lamborghini
• Founded: 4 July 1926, Bologna, Italy
• CEO: Claudio Domenicali

G Narayanan appointed as head of New Space India Ltd:
• ISRO’s senior space scientist G Narayanan has been appointed as the chairman of the commercial entity of ISRO New Space India Limited (NSIL).
• Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) named him for this post because he earlier worked as deputy director at the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) of ISRO.
• New Space India Limited (NSIL) was established in March 2019 to meet the demands of ISRO’s various space programs. The NSIL will manufacture small and lightweight satellites.

Former IAS officer Rajiv Bansal appointed as CMD of Air India:
• Former IAS officer Rajiv Bansal was recently appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Air India.
• Bansal is currently serving as Additional Secretary in Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
• Former India all-rounder Robin Singh appointed UAE’s Director of Cricket
• The Emirates Cricket Board has appointed former Indian cricketer Robin Singh as the new director of cricket.
• Robin Singh’s appointment was announced after Emirates Cricket Board fired head coach Dougie Brown.

Vinay Dube Takes Charge as CEO of GoAir:
• The Board of Directors of GoAir has appointed Vinay Dube as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
• Mr. Dube was the former CEO of Jet Airways.
• He joined GoAir in an advisory role in October 2019.

Australia appoints Barry O’Farrell as the new high commissioner to India:
• Australia has appointed former New South Wales premier Barry O’Farrell as the next high commissioner to India.
• O’Farrell will succeed Harinder Sidhu who has been in the office since 2016.

Afghanistan: Ashraf Ghani secures 2nd term as President:
In Afghanistan, independent Election Commission announced that Ashraf Ghani has won a second term as President of the country. However, his closest opponent Abdullah Abdullah has refused to recognize the results and declared himself winner potentially endangering peace negotiations with the Taliban.

Nritya Gopal Das elected as the president of Ram Mandir Trust:
• Mahant Nritya Gopal Das was elected as the president of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust.
• Champat Rai would be the general secretary of the trust.
• The first meeting of the Ram Mandir Trust to oversee the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya was held in New Delhi.
• The meeting also decided that Nripendra Mishra, former Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will head a committee to make decisions regarding the actual construction of the temple.

Former IAS officers Bhaskar Khulbe, Amarjeet Sinha appointed advisors to PM:
• Retired IAS officers Bhaskar Khulbe and Amarjeet Sinha have been appointed as Advisors to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
• The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointments in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in the rank and scale of Secretary

Rajalaxmi Deo re-elected as Rowing Federation of India President:
• Mrs Rajlaxmi Singh Deo has been re-elected as the president of the Rowing Federation of India (RFI) on 22nd February 2020.
• Rowing Federation of India headquarter – Mumbai

Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad resigns:
• Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad Resigns: Mahathir Mohamad – the Prime Minister of Malaysia, submitted his resignation to the country’s king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah on February 24, 2020, as per media reports.
• Mahathir’s PPBM has also pulled out of the ruling Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope) coalition, throwing the country into renewed political turmoil. The resignation of 94-year-old veteran politician and two-time Prime Minister comes following an on-going rift with his presumptive successor Anwar Ibrahim. Following his resignation as the PM, Mahathir also resigned as the chairman of PPBM.
• Resignation of Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad comes in the wake of long going battle in the ruling coalition which comprises many stakeholders. The key parties in the Pakatan Harapan coalition include Mahathir’s Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia i.e. PPBM or United Indigenous Party of Malaysia; Anwar Ibrahim’s Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) and Democratic
Action Party (DAP) which commands ethnic Chinese as its vote bank.

**USIBC appoints Vijay Advani as new Chairman of Global Board:**
- The US-India Business Council (USIBC) has appointed Vijay Advani as new Chair of its Global Board of Directors. Prior to this, he served as Executive Chairman of the Board in January 2020. The council also announced two new members of the Global Board of Directors Lockheed Martin International Senior Vice President Tim Cahill and GE South Asia President & CEO Mahesh Paleshikar. US India Business Council (USIBC) represents top global companies operating across the United States, India, and Indo-Pacific.
  - Important:

**Mastercard names product chief Michael Miebach as CEO, Ajay Banga moves to executive chairman:**
- Mastercard’s chief executive officer of 10 years, Ajay Banga, will step down at the start of the next year and be replaced by Chief Product Officer Michael Miebach.
- India-born Banga will take on the role of executive chairman, while Miebach will become the company's president on March 1.
- Miebach served as managing director at Barclays Bank and general manager at Citibank.

**Next Delhi Police Commissioner: SN Shrivastava to succeed Amulya Patnaik:**
- SN Shrivastava, a senior IPS officer who was posted in Delhi this week while deadly communal violence broke out in the territory's northeast, is poised to succeed Amulya Patnaik as the Commissioner of Police. He is currently Special CP (Law and Order).

10. Puneet Sharma appointed as CFO of Axis Bank
- Axis Bank announced the appointment of Puneet Sharma as its Chief Financial Officer (CFO).
- Sharma will replace Jairam Sridharan, who has resigned as the Group Executive and Chief Financial Officer of the bank, with effect from March 5, 2020.

**About Axis Bank**
- HQ- Mumbai
- CEO- Amitabh Chaudhry
- Tagline- Badhti Ka naam Zindagi

**Sumant Kathpalia appointed as new MD and CEO of IndusInd Bank:**
- Private sector lender IndusInd Bank announced the appointment of Sumant Kathpalia as its new Managing Director and CEO.
- Kathpalia will take over from Romesh Sobti who is set to retire later next month.
- Kathpalia has been with IndusInd Bank since 2008 and currently heads the consumer banking division at the private sector lender, and has been responsible for building the bank's retail franchise.

**About IndusInd Bank**
Abhishek Singh, India’s next Ambassador to Venezuela:
Abhishek Singh has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. He is currently serving as Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India in Kabul, Afghanistan. He will succeed Rajiv Kumar Napal, who passed away recently. He is a 2003-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer.

Important:
- Capital of Venezuela: Caracas.
- Currency of Venezuela: Petro Bolivar Soberano.
- President of Venezuela: Juan Gerardo Guaido Marquez.

IMPORTANT DAYS

World Cancer Day: February 4
- World Cancer Day is organized every year on 4 February by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) to raise awareness and education about cancer, and pressing governments and individuals across the world to take action against the disease.
- World Cancer Day 2019-21 theme: ‘I Am And I Will’

World Pulses Day: February 10
- World Pulses Day proclaimed on February 10 of each year since 2019. World Pulses Day is a designated United Nations global event to recognize the importance of pulses (chickpeas, dry beans, lentils, dry peas and lupins among others) as a global food.

National Productivity Day: February 12
- National Productivity Day is observed on 12 February. The day is celebrated by the National Productivity Council (NPC) to promote productivity culture in India. Also, National Productivity Week is celebrated from 12-18 February 2020. The day aims to propagate productivity, quality, competitiveness, and efficiency.
- NPC was established in 1958. The autonomous organization functions under the Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- Chairman of National Productivity Council: Guruprasad Mohapatra.
- Director-General of National Productivity Council: Arun Kumar Jha.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution A/RES/70/212 on December 2015, declaring Feb.11 as the International Day of Women & Girls in Science.
- Theme:“Investment in Women and Girls in Science for Inclusive Green Growth”.

World Unani Day: February 11
- The World Unani Day is observed every year on February 11.
• The day commemorates the birth anniversary of great Unani scholar and social reformer Hakim Ajmal Khan.
• Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh was the chief guest of the 4th Unani day function organized by AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) Ministry, New Delhi, India.

**World Radio Day: February 13**
• World Radio Day is celebrated on 13 February World Radio Day 2020 celebrates the radio as a method for teaching individuals, giving data, and promoting the opportunity of expression across cultures.
• The theme of World Radio Day 2020 is “Radio and Diversity”.
• Sarojini Naidu’s 141st Birth Anniversary observed as National Women’s Day
• India on February 13, 2020 observed Sarojini Naidu’s 141st Birth Anniversary as National Women’s Day 2020. Naidu was the first woman governor of India’s United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh).
• She was popularly known as 'Nightingale of India' for her collection of poems. She was also actively involved in the Indian National Movement

**World Pangolin Day: February 9**
• World Pangolin Day is celebrated on the third Saturday of February every year.
• In 2020, the world is celebrating the 9th edition of the annual World Pangolin Day. It was celebrated on 15 February 2020

**Soil Health Card Day: February 19**
• The Soil Health Card Day is being observed on 19th of February. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme on 19th February 2015 at Suratgarh in Rajasthan.
• The scheme aims at issuing soil health cards to farmers every two years so as to provide a basis to address nutritional deficiencies in soil. The scheme ensures additional income to farmers by increase in yields and it also promotes sustainable farming.

**World Day of Social Justice: February 20**
• The World Social Justice Day is celebrated on February 20 every year. It aims to face the problem of poverty, unemployment, and abandonment. This year’s theme is - Closing the Inequalities Gap to Achieve Social Justice.
• This day highlights that gender equality, social security and the rights of migrants are essential for social justice.
• United Nation believes that social justice can be ensured only when people do not face problems due to gender, age, race, religion or culture.

**Central Excise Day: 24 February**
• Central Excise Day is observed in India on 24 February every year to encourage the
employees of the excise department to carry out the central excise duty in a better way to prevent corruption in the manufacturing business and to carry out the best possible exercise services in India.

National Science Day: 28 February
National Science Day is celebrated every year in India on 28 February to mark the discovery of the Raman Effect by the Indian physicist Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman. He discovered the Raman Effect on 28 February, 1928 and for this discovery, he was honoured by the Nobel Prize in Physics subject in 1930.

SUMMITS AND MOU’S
India and Maldives sign four MoUs to establish Addu Tourism Zone:
• India and Maldives signed 6 MoUs, which included 5 MoUs in the field of tourism and 1 MoU for setting up bottled water plant in Maldives.
• The MOUs were signed between the High Commissioner of India Sunjay Sudhir, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulla Shahid and Addu City Council.
• Under the Tourism sector, USD 2.49 million MoUs were signed for establishing the Addu Tourism zone in five islands of Addu atoll.

IOC signs First Term contract for Russian crude oil:
• State-owned Indian Oil Corp has signed a deal with Russian oil and gas company Rosneft for the annual purchase of 2 million metric tonnes of crude oil
• This is the first ever annual oil purchase deal between India and Russia.
• Under the deal India will import up to 2 million tonne of Urals grade crude oil from Rosneft of Russia.
• India is world’s third largest energy consumer. It is 83 percent dependent on imports to meet its oil needs.
• Two-thirds of the imports come from the Middle East, with Iraq being the biggest supplier followed by Saudi Arabia.
• Headquarters of Indian Oil Corp: New Delhi, Mumbai (Registered Office)
• Founded of Indian Oil Corp: 1959.
• Chairman of Indian Oil Corp: Sanjiv Singh.

India, Portugal sign seven agreements:
• India and Portugal have signed seven agreements to boost cooperation and bilateral ties. The agreements were signed during the state visit of Portugal’s President.
• This is President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa’s first visit to India. PM Modi had visited Portugal in June 2017.

India, World Bank sign $ 450 mn loan agreement to support Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY) to improve groundwater management:
• The World Bank has signed a USD 450 million loan agreement with India on February 17, 2020 to support the Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY) – National Groundwater Management Improvement Programme.
• The Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY) will be implemented in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh and cover 78 districts.

Odisha MSME Dept inked MoU with HDFC Bank to boost startups:
• The Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Department of government of Odisha has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) Bank Limited.
• Objective: to provide smart banking solutions to Startups recognised by the Startup Odisha and will also extend incubation and acceleration support to all Startups, banking with them.

HDFC:
Establishment– 1994
Digital Assistant– Eva
Managing Director– Aditya Puri
Head Office– Mumbai, Maharashtra

MSME loan: Gujarat govt partners with SBI to facilitate MSME:
• The Gujarat government signed an MoU with State Bank of India (SBI) to facilitate approval of loans to entrepreneurs in the MSME sector with ease and within a short time-frame.
• As per the MoU, the top public sector lender will provide working capital to entrepreneurs seeking to start new micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) within a short time-frame after providing theoretical approval within 15 days of making an application.
• The MoU was signed between principal secretary M K Das and SBI Ahmedabad circle general manager Ramesh Kumar Agarwal.
• The SBI decided to help MSME entrepreneurs in Gujarat looking at their high recovery rate.
• About State Bank of India (SBI):
  Chairperson– Rajnish Kumar.
  Headquarters– Mumbai, Maharashtra.
  Former name– Imperial Bank of India.
  Tagline– The Banker to Every Indian; With you all the way; Purely Banking Nothing Else; The Nation Banks on Us.

HDFC Bank, Mastercard & SAP concur associate for T&E Tech
• HDFC Bank, Mastercard and SAP Concur have joined hands for spending management services for the corporate sector.
• HDFC Bank will offer a corporate credit card for business travellers, providing a one-stop solution for payment and expense management during business trips.
• The card is supported by Mastercard. SAP Concur is a travel, expense, and invoice management solutions provider.
• The corporate credit card will enable the seamless integration of all business-related to
spend into SAP Concur offerings, enhancing the employee experience, increasing visibility, saving money, and improving corporate efficiency.

India and US have expanded defence cooperation with defence deals worth USD 3 billion:

- India and the United States finalised defence deals worth $3 billion on February 25, 2020. The deals were signed after delegation-level talks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and visiting US President Donald Trump. The deals are expected to enhance the joint defence capabilities between the two countries.
- The US President made the announcement in a joint statement with PM Modi on Day 2 of his maiden visit to India. Donald Trump said that India has agreed to purchase USD 3 billion worth advanced American military equipment including Apache and MH-60 Romeo helicopters, which are the finest in the world.
- Trump also stated that the US makes the greatest weapons ever made including planes, ships, missiles, rockets, air defence systems, armed and unarmed aerial vehicles and that the nation is now looking forward to providing India with some of its best and most feared military equipment.

Two key defence deals

India and the US finalised two key defence deals on February 25. The deals are as follows:
- Procurement of 24 MH-60 Romeo helicopters by India for $2.6 billion.
- Procurement of six AH-64E Apache helicopters at a cost of $800 million.

Govt to host Artificial Intelligence-focused Raise 2020 summit for the first time:

- The Union Government will organize India’s first Artificial Intelligence summit- “RAISE 2020: Responsible AI for Social Empowerment 2020” between April 11-12, 2020 in New Delhi. The first-of-its-kind two-day summit will be organized to spearhead social empowerment, inclusion and transformation.
- RAISE 2020 will be organized by the centre in partnership with the industry and academia. The summit will serve as a common platform for people across the world to exchange ideas on how to use AI for social empowerment, inclusion and transformation in key areas and sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, education and smart mobility.
- The international summit will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Objective

a. The RAISE 2020 summit aims to outline India’s vision for using the power of AI responsibly to transform the social landscape for a better future. The summit will enable the smooth exchange of ideas to create mass awareness about the need to ethically develop and practice AI in the digital era.

Key Highlights

a. The summit is the first of its kind global meeting of minds on Artificial Intelligence. It aims to provide a boost to India’s vision and roadmap for social inclusion, empowerment and transformation through the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence.
b. The RAISE 2020 summit will begin with a startup challenge called 'Pitchfest', which will be followed by the two-day summit.
c. The event will be organized by the union government in coordination with the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
d. It will witness participation from a large number of global industry leaders, key opinion makers, AI experts, academia and government representatives.

• **Significance**
  Artificial Intelligence is a powerful tool, which can be used to create a positive impact in the Indian context, helping it become the AI destination for the world. India has the potential to be the world’s leading AI laboratory that can eventually transform lives globally.

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

**About BIMSTEC**
- BIMSTEC is an International organization formed on June 6, 1997 with seven countries from South and Southeast Asia including Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan. It aims to promote regional cooperation for rapid economic development.

**AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

**Madhya Pradesh wins award for implementation of PMMVY:**
- Madhya Pradesh has bagged the first position for the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY).
- The Madhya Pradesh Minister for Women and Child Development Imarti Devi and Principal Secretary Anupam Rajan received the award from the Union Minister of Women and Child Development Smriti Irani on 3rd February 2020 in New Delhi.
- Also, Indore district of Madhya Pradesh has bagged the first place for better performance of the scheme.

**21st IIFA Awards to be held in Indore in March 2020:**
- The 21st edition of the International Indian Film Academy Awards (IIFA Awards) 2020 will be held in Indore, Madhya Pradesh from March 27-29, 2020.
• This will be the second consecutive year that the event is being organised in India. Last year it was held in Mumbai.
• Till 2019, the events were organised in cities outside the country.
• The IIFA awards are presented annually since 2000 for Excellence in cinematic achievements for Bollywood.

BAFTA 2020 Film Awards:
• The 73rd edition of the annual British Academy Film Awards, also known as BAFTA, was held on 2 February 2020 in London,
• The award is presented by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, to honor the best national and foreign films of 2019 of any nationality that were screened at British cinemas in 2019.
• The Film ‘1917’ received the highest number of awards at 7 with nominations in 9 categories.

Vinod Shukla bags first Mathrubhumi Book of the Year award:
• Noted Hindi poet-novelist and Sahitya Akademi honouree Vinod Kumar Shukla has bagged the inaugural Mathrubhumi Book of the Year award for his translated book “Blue Is Like Blue”.
• The stories in “Blue Is Like Blue”, translated into English by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra and Sara Rai, deal with common people and their daily struggles.

Kamya Karthikeyan becomes youngest climber to conquer Mount Aconcagua:
• Kamya Karthikeyan (12-year-old) from Mumbai has become the youngest girl to climb Mount Aconcagua, the highest mountain in South America.
• She studies in 7th grade at Navy Children School in Mumbai. She holds the record by climbing the highest mountain in the Andes mountain range as the youngest girl to climb this mountain.
• Kamya Karthikeyan trekked in various high altitude areas of the Himalayan region. She aims to complete "Explorers Grand Slam” by 2021.

Lalremsiami becomes FIH Women’s Rising Star of Year:
• Lalremsiami is a forward player in India’s women’s hockey team. She has been selected as the FIH women’s rising star of the year.
• The voting was conducted by the International Hockey Federation. Argentina’s Julieta Jankunas and Netherlands’ Frederique Matla secured second and third places respectively.

President Kovind presents President’s "Colour" to INS Shivaji
• President Ram Nath Kovind presented ‘President’s Colour’ to the INS Shivaji at a ceremony in Lonavala, Maharashtra.
• The Presentation of Colour or Standards by the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces is an acknowledgement of the unit’s meritorious service.

BioAsia 2020 announces Genome Valley Excellence Award:
• BioAsia, Asia’s largest annual global biotechnology and life sciences forum organised by the Government of Telangana, has announced that the Genome Valley Excellence Award will be bestowed upon Dr Carl H June and Dr Vas Narasimhan for their contributions to life sciences.
• Dr. Carl H June will be awarded for his work in immunotherapy, research in development of CAR-T (Chimeric Antigen Receptor- T cells) for treatment of cancer & commercialization of world’s first FDA (Food and Drug Administration, United States)- approved gene therapy.

Sachin Tendulkar wins the Laureus Sporting Moment Award for ICC World Cup 2011 victory lap:
• 2020 Laureus World Sports Awards has been announced. The winners of the award are:
  • Laureus World Sportsman Of The Year 2020: Lewis Hamilton (F1 racer) and Lionel Messi (Football)
  • Laureus World Sportswoman Of The Year: Simone Biles (Gymnastics- US)
  • Laureus Sporting Moment Of The Year- Sachin Tendulkar (Cricketer- India)
  • Laureus World Team Of The Year: South Africa Rugby Union Team
  • Laureus Lifetime Achievement Award 2020: Dirk Nowitzki (Basketball- Germany)

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw wins EY Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2019
• Dr. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chairperson and Managing Director, Biocon, has been named as the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year 2019 on 19 February 2020, at the 21st edition of the EY Entrepreneur of The Year India awards.
• Godrej Group Chairman Adi Godrej was conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award.
• She will now represent India at the EY World Entrepreneur Of The Year Award (WEOY) in Monte Carlo from 4–6 June 2020.

Dr. Niti Kumar receives SERB Women Excellence Award-2020:
• Dr. Niti Kumar, Senior Scientist of Molecular Parasitology and Immunology Division, CSIR-CDRI, Lucknow, has received the SERB Women's Excellence Award-2020. She will be awarded by the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind during the National Science Day celebration at Vigyan Bhawan on February 28, 2020.
• The award is given to women scientists under the age of 40, who have received honors from various national academies. Women researchers will be assisted by Science and Engineering Research Board of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, with a grant of Rs 5 lakh per year for 3 years.
• Dr. Niti Kumar’s research group is trying to understand the protein quality control machinery in malaria parasites to explore alternative drugs for malaria. Dr. Niti Kumar has received several awards and honors like Innovative Young Biotechnologist Award (DBT-IYBA 2015), INSA Medal for Young Scientist (2010) by Indian National Academy of Sciences and Marie Curie Early Stage Research Fellowship by European Union under 6th Framework Programme (2005-2006).
• What is SERB?
The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) is a constitutional body works under the
Department of Science and Technology (DoST), Government of India. It was established in 2009 through an Act of the Parliament of India.

**Adline Castelino wins Miss Diva Universe 2020:**
- Adline Castelino has been crowned as the winner of LIVA Miss Diva Universe 2020 competition. She was crowned by Vartika Singh, the winner of the previous edition at an event held in YRF (Yash Raj Films) Studios, Mumbai, Maharashtra. She hails from Mangalore, Karnataka. She will go on to represent the country at Miss Universe later this year.
- Aavriti Choudhary of Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh crowned as LIVA Miss Diva Supranational 2020 and was crowned by his predecessor Shefali Sood. She will be India’s contender for Miss Supranational pageant 2020.

**Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards 2020:**
Complete List of Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards 2020 Winners:

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<td>Super 30</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Best Actor</td>
<td>Hrithik Roshan (Super 30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Most Promising Actor</td>
<td>Kiccha Sudeep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Best Actor in Television Series</td>
<td>Dheeraj Dhoopar</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Best Actress in Television</td>
<td>Divyanka Tripathi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Most Favourite Television Actor</td>
<td>Harshad Chopda</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Most Favourite Jodi in Television Series</td>
<td>Sriti Jha and Shabbir Ahluwalia (Kumkum Bhagya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Best Television Series</td>
<td>Kumkum Bhagya</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Best Playback Singer Male</td>
<td>Armaan Malik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Best Reality Show</td>
<td>Bigg Boss 13</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Film editor Sreekar Prasad enters Limca Book of Records for editing films in 17 languages:**
- Sreekar Prasad, a veteran editor has entered the Limca Book of Records for ‘films edited in the most number of languages’. Sreekar Prasad has received the certification from the Limca Records for editing films in 17 languages. The 17 languages includes: English, Hindi, Punjabi, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Odia, Sinhalese, Bengali, Assamese, Nepali, Pangchenpa, Karbi, Mishing, Bodo, and Marathi.
• The veteran video editor also holds eight National Awards including a Special Jury Award and his recent Bollywood projects includes ‘Saaho’ and ‘Super 30.

**Assam’s forest man to be conferred with Swami Vivekananda Karmayogi Award:**
• Assam’s eminent environmental activist Jadav Payeng will be awarded with Swami Vivekananda Karmayogi Award for his efforts in creating a man-made forest through reforestation.
• The award ceremony will be organized by My Home India, an NGO which aims at bringing emotional integration between people from different parts of India.
• The award will be handed to Payeng by union environment minister Prakash Javadekar on Saturday.

**RANKING**

**India slips to 40th position in Intellectual Property Index:**
• India slips to 40th position in International Intellectual Property (IP) Index. This information has been given in the report of the Global Innovation Policy Centre of the American Chamber of Commerce.
• This index measures the intellectual property environment of 53 economies of the world. Last year, India was ranked 36th.
• The United States, Britain, Sweden, France and Germany are present on the first five positions.

**India ranks 17th among countries at risk of virus import:**
• Of the countries most at risk of importing virus cases, India ranks 17th, researchers have found on the basis of a mathematical model for the expected global spread of the virus that originated in China’s Wuhan area in December 2019.
• The top 10 countries and regions at risk of importing virus cases are: Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, USA, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Cambodia, according to the model.
• While Thailand’s national import risk is 2.1 per cent, it is 0.2 per cent for India, found the research.

**Hindi is third most spoken language in the world:**
• According to the 22nd edition of the world language database Ethnologue, Hindi is the third most spoken language in the world with 615 million speakers. The Ethnologue stated that English has the most number of speakers (1132 million) while Chinese Mandarin secured second place with 1117 million speakers.
• The report highlights that Bangla is the seventh most spoken language of the world as it has 228 million speakers in the world. Ethnologue provides an annual database of living languages of the world.
• It covers 7111 living languages across the globe. Apart from that, it also collects data on languages that have gone out of use in the recent past.
India ranks 35th in 2019 WEFFI list:
- The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) published Worldwide Educating for the Future Index (WEFFI) 2019. India jumped five ranks and secured 35th rank in the list.

Worldwide Educating for the Future Index (WEFFI) 2019:
- WEFFI ranked countries that are based on their abilities to equip students with skill-based education.
- It analyzed the education system from the perspective of skill-based education in areas like problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, leadership, creativity and entrepreneurship, and digital and technical skills.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS
Book titled “Messages from Messengers” by Priti K Shroff:
- “Messages from Messengers” book launch by Priti K Shroff at the prestigious Bombay Stock Exchange, Mumbai.
- MD and CEO of the Bombay stock exchange, Ashish Chauhan was the chief guest.

India Ranks 77th on Sustainability Index and 131st in Child Flourishing Index rankings: UN report:
- India has been ranked at 77th position in the Sustainability Index 2020 and 131st on the Flourishing Index 2020, according to a UN-backed report.
- The report released on 19 February 2020 commissioned by the World Health Organization (WHO), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and The Lancet medical journal.
- The Sustainability Index 2020 takes into account per capita carbon emissions and ability of children in a nation to live healthy lives. It ranks countries on excess carbon emissions compared with the 2030 target.

BANKING AND ECONOMY
Fitch Predicts India's GDP Growth for FY20 at 4.6 pc and FY21 at 5.6 pc:
- US-based rating agency Fitch Ratings Inc. has projected GDP growth of India for the next financial year 2020-21 at 5.6 percent.
- For the current fiscal 2019-20, GDP is projected at 4.6 percent.

Paytm launches Android POS device for SMEs & merchant partners:
- Paytm has launched an Android POS device for small and medium businesses (SMEs) & merchant partners. The android based device will enable the merchants to accept payments in various ways like debit and credit cards, Paytm Wallet, UPI-based apps and cash.
- The device provides the merchants with the facility of producing GST compliant bills, to manage transactions and settlements through 'Paytm for Business' app.
- These services will increase the importance of digital payments in the business of small and medium businesses (SMEs) & merchant partners and will also bring to them the advantages of the digital economy.
RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das Named Central Banker of the Year 2020:
• The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Shaktikanta Das, has been named as the ‘Central Banker of the Year 2020 for the Asia-Pacific region’ by ‘The Banker’ magazine, owned by London-based Financial Times (FT).
• The Banker’s Central Banker of the Year 2020 awards celebrate the officials that have best managed to stimulate growth and stabilise their economy.

Union Cabinet Approves Amendments to Banking Regulation Act to regulate co-operative banks:
• The Union Cabinet has given its approval to bring cooperative banks under the regulatory mechanism of Reserve Bank of India.
• The cabinet approved amendments to the Banking Regulation Act on February 5, 2020, thus allowing multi-state cooperative banks to come under the regulation of the RBI.
• The announcement was made by Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadkar after a cabinet meeting.
• The 1,540 cooperative banks with 8.6 crore depositors’ money, with around Rs. 5 lakh crore deposits in the country and the proposed amendment will protect the depositors.
  a. The Banking Regulation Act, 1949 is legislation in India that regulates all banking firms.
  b. Shaktikanta Das is the 25th governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

Union Govt plans to raise funds through LIC IPO:
• Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that union government plans to sell a partial stake in LIC through IPO or an initial public offer.
• The union budget she proposed that the government will sell its stake in IDBI Bank to private investors and also amend the Banking Regulation Act to strengthen co-op banks.
• The finance minister that the deposit insurance coverage against bank failure will be increased to Rs 5 lakh from Rs 1 lakh.
• She proposed to expand exchange-traded funds by floating a Debt ETF, consisting primarily of government securities.

LIC: Life Insurance Corporation of India is an Indian state-owned insurance group and investment corporation owned by the Government of India. The Life Insurance Corporation of India was founded in 1956 when the Parliament of India passed the Life Insurance of India Act that nationalised the insurance industry in India.
Headquarters: Mumbai
Owner: Government of India (100%)
Founder: Government of India
Founded: 1 September 1956

RBI keeps repo rate unchanged at 5.15%:
The Reserve Bank of India’s Monetary Policy Committee has released its 6th Bi-monthly
Monetary Policy 2019-20. The Reserve Bank of India’s MPC has decided to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.15%.

The key decisions taken in the 6th Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy Committee meeting are:

• The repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) left unchanged at 5.15%.
• The reverse repo rate under the LAF stands same i.e. 4.90%.
• The marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate also remain same i.e. 5.40%.
• RBI has increased the real GDP growth for fiscal year 2020-21 from 5% to 6%.

Moody’s Projects India’s growth at 4.9% in FY20, 5.5% in FY21

• Moody’s Investors Service has projected India’s GDP growth during the current fiscal ending 31 March 2020 at 4.9 percent (unchanged).
• For the fiscal 2020-21, GDP growth is estimated at 5.5 percent compared to December 2019 estimate of 6.3 percent.
• And for 2021-22 fiscal, GDP growth is estimated at 6 percent from 6.7 percent projected earlier.

Government to introduce new One Rupee Currency Note:

The Central Government recently announced to introduce new Re 1 currency note with security features. The all-new one rupee note will have several watermarks. The value of the currency note will be mentioned in 15 different Indian languages. The note will contain an image of ‘Sagar Samrat’, the oil exploration platform.

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

• Facebook launched its ‘We Think Digital’ programme, under which the social media giant will provide digital literacy training to 1 lakh women across seven states, including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar.
• In partnership with National Commission for Women (NCW) and Cyber Peace Foundation, the program aims to provide digital literacy training to one lakh women across seven states through the year. The program will start with the state of Uttar Pradesh and expand to other states including Assam, West Bengal Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Bihar, it added.

Infosys to acquire US-based Simplus for $250 million to step up cloud biz:

• Bengaluru-based IT services major Infosys stated it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire US-headquartered Simplus, a major Salesforce platinum partner, in a bid to strengthen its cloud business.
• The acquisition, expected to be complete within a month, will incur a cost of up to $250 million, Infosys said in a filing with stock exchanges.$200 million, including contingent consideration to be paid for the acquisition of shares, subject to closing adjustments.

Nasscom’s IT revenue grows at 7.7 per cent in FY20:

• The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) projected the Indian IT sector to grow 7 per cent to reach $191 billion in FY20, with exports reaching $147 billion, and headcount addition accelerating from the previous year.
• This is a marginal improvement over its prediction of 2018, when it said that the IT sector
will only grow by 6.1 per cent but the sector is still ‘cautiously optimistic’ about FY21, the industry body pointed out.
• While the global economy has been moving at a sluggish pace, Indian economy only grew at 8 per cent and exports stood at $644 billion.

**IndusInd Bank tops list of ‘Highest increase in brand value’:**
• According to ‘The Banker’s Top 500 Banking Brands 2020’ report, IndusInd Bank has topped the list of ‘Highest increase in brand value’ among global banks.
• As a part of the report, the list “Top 50 By Total Brand Value by Country” has been topped by China, followed by United States (US) at 2nd position while Canada and the United Kingdom (UK) ranked at 3rd and 4th spots. Japan has moved up to the fifth spot. India ranked 8th in this list in comparison to 10th place in 2019.
• The brand value of IndusInd Bank has increased by 122% over the past 12 months, making it the highest placed for growth in brand value, across the globe. The bank reported total assets of Rs 3.1 lakh crore at the end of Q3 FY20.
 Managing Director & CEO of IndusInd Bank: Romesh Sobti
 Headquarter of IndusInd Bank: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
The tagline of IndusInd Bank: We Make You Feel Richer.

**EIU lowers global growth forecast for 2020:**
The Economist Intelligence Unit has revised downwards its global growth forecast for 2020 to 2.2% from 2.3%:
• This impact because of Novel virus in China and also the virus starts spreading globally.
• The virus originated in Wuhan, a city of around 11.3 million people in central Hubei province, China, and has spread to most provinces in mainland China and overseas.
• EIU also revised China’s growth downwards by lowering the real GDP (Gross Domestic Product) forecast for China in 2020 to 5.4 per cent from 5.9 per cent earlier.
 About Economist Intelligence Unit :
 Managing Director (MD): Robin Bew.
 founded: 1946.

**SEBI introduces a system to track client securities:**
• The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has developed the in-house capabilities to track the movement of client securities collected by the broker as collateral online.
• It will raise alerts with exchanges if diversion of clients’ securities is noticed.
• So far, three ‘mismatch reports’ has been forwarded to the stock exchanges for reconciliation with members.
• SEBI: The Securities and Exchange Board of India is the regulator for the securities market in India owned by the Government of India. It was established in 1988 and given Statutory Powers on 30 January 1992 through the SEBI Act, 1992.
 Founded: 12 April 1992
Sector: Securities market  
Jurisdiction: India  
Headquarters: Mumbai  
Type: Statutory corporation  
Chairperson: Ajay Tyagi

**GIC Re gets license from Bank of Russia for reinsurance biz:**
- India’s reinsurance company, General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re) has received the license from Central Bank of the Russian Federation (Bank of Russia) to commence reinsurance business in Russia.
- The license enables the subsidiary to commence transacting domestic and international reinsurance business in Russia based on the capital invested by the Corporation.
- GIC of India is a state owned enterprise in India. It was the sole reinsurance company in the Indian insurance founded in 22 November 1972. GIC Re has its registered office and headquarters in Mumbai.

**SEBI Constitutes Municipal Bonds Development Committee:**
Markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has constituted a municipal bonds development committee
The committee will be headed by the Executive Director of SEBI, Mr Sujit Prasad and comprise of representatives from municipal corporations, lawyers, professionals and market practitioners.

**15th Finance Commission Constitute Panel on Defence and Internal Security Funding:**
The Fifteenth Finance Commission has constituted a 5-member group on Defence and Internal Security.
The panel will be headed by the Chairman of the commission, Shri N.K. Singh. Home Secretary, Defence Secretary, Finance Secretary and a member of Commission will be the other members of the group.

**DMart’s Radhakishan Damani is second richest man in India: Forbes:**
- Riding on the ongoing stock rally of Avenue Supermarts, founder Radhakishan Damani has become the second most richest in India, behind Reliance Industries’s Mukesh Ambani ($57.4 billion).
- According to Forbes’ Real-Time Billionaires Index, the total net worth of Damani is at $17.8 billion.

**Moody’s lowers GDP growth rate for 2020 to 5.4 per cent:**
- virus dents optimism just as global economy was starting to show signs of stabilisation.
- Amidst indications of the deadly virus hitting global growth, international rating agency Moody’s Investors Service lowered the estimate for India’s economic growth rate for 2020 by 120 basis points (100 basis points make up one percentage point).
NESFB began its service and operation:
- North East Small Finance Bank (NESFB) which is the first small bank of North India has started its services on 16 February.
- On 31 March 2017, Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi (RVGN) (North East) Microfinance Limited received the Small Finance Bank License from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

North East Small Finance Bank (NESFB):
- Assam’s finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and TATA Trust chairman Ratan Tata launched the first 28 branches of NESFB.
- Tata has invested Rs.40 crore through his investment arm RNT Associates in the bank. North East Small Finance Bank Ltd has a net worth of Rs.300 crore.
- The bank is supported by the infusion of funds from domestic and overseas investors.
- The bank will carry out banking services in remote and unbanked areas of India’s eight

India becomes 5th largest economy: World Population Review report:
- As per a report by a US-based think tank 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.
- The size of the UK economy is $2.83 trillion and that of France is $2.71 trillion.

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

IOC to invest Rs 500 crore for Karnataka unit:
- Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Karnataka government under which the firm will invest `500 crore to set up petroleum products receiving, storage and distribution terminal at Chitradurga in Karnataka.
- It will be set up in an area of 120 acres in the district. The MoU was signed during ‘Invest Karnataka’, conference at Hubballi.

SEZs continue to take lead in expanding exports:
- The Special Economic Zones, SEZ continue to take the lead in expanding the exports for the country.
- Even in the midst of a volatile global economy, SEZs in India have shown resilience and have achieved 100 billion dollar worth of exports so far.
- Sectors that saw healthy growth in this financial year include gems and jewelry, trading and Logistics, leather and footwear, non-conventional energy, textiles and garments.
Petrochemicals constitute a major segment of SEZ exports, however, growth was muted in this segment this year which may be attributed to the softening of global crude prices.

There are 241 SEZs operational in the country.

RBI Approves Appointment of Sunil Gurbaxani as MD and CEO of Dhanlaxmi Bank:
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of Sunil Gurbaxani as Managing Director and CEO of Dhanlaxmi Bank.
- Sunil Gurbaxani will be appointed for a period of three years from the date of taking charge. Currently Gurbaxani is working with Axis Bank.

NCAER pegs GDP growth at 4.9% for current fiscal:
- Delhi-based think tank National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has pegged the economic growth of India for 2019-20 at 4.9 percent.
- For 2020-21, the Indian economy is expected to improve to 5.6 percent.

NABARD sanctions Rs 400 Cr to boost rural infra in J&K:
- The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) recently sanctioned over Rs 400.64 crore for infrastructural development of rural areas of Jammu & Kashmir.
- The funding will be provided under Trench XXV of the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) of NABARD.
- The project includes the construction of roads and bridges which would provide all-weather connectivity to over 450 remote villages of the Union Territory of J&K.
- An amount of 66 crore rupees has been sanctioned for implementation of 38 water supply schemes. The sanction includes augmentation of 27 existing water supply schemes and construction of 11 new water supply schemes.
- These water supply schemes are aimed at providing safe and potable drinking water to rural households. The schemes will benefit over 3.5 lakh people across 86 villages in 17 districts.

About NABARD:
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development is an Apex Development Financial Institution in India. The Bank has been entrusted with “matters concerning Policy Planning and Operations in the field of credit for Agriculture and other Economic activities in Rural areas in India.
- Headquarters: Mumbai
- Agency executive: Harsh Kumar Bhanwala (Chairperson)
- Formation: July 12, 1982

FM Nirmala Sitharaman launches Ease 3.0 for tech-enabled banking:
- “Enhanced Access and Service Excellence (EASE) 3.0” has been launched by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman along with the EASE 2.0 Annual Report at Indian Banks’ Association function.
- This has been launched for smart, tech-enabled banking for aspiring India. Some key
facilities like Palm Banking for “End-to-end digital delivery of financial service”, “Banking on Go” via EASE banking
• EASE 3.0 is expected to provide advanced solutions to make the public sector banking smart and technology-enabled.

India surpasses France, UK to become world’s 5th largest economy: IMF
• India became world’s fifth largest economy in 2019 in terms of nominal GDP, leapfrogging France and the UK, according to data from the IMF’s October World Economic Outlook.
• India’s economy now has a nominal GDP of $2.94 trillion. The report said, “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”.
• The UK economy amounts to $2.83 trillion and France with $2.71 trillion.

Following is the list of the world’s largest economies in 2010 vs 2019:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>China</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Japan</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>India</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>France</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Italy</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>Canada</td>
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Bank of Baroda launches Start-up Banking initiative:
• Finance Secretary Rajiv Kumar inaugurated “Baroda Startup Banking”. It is an initiative aimed at making the Bank of Baroda (BoB) a preferred banking partner for the start-up community and establishing connect with at least 2,000 start-ups over the next two years. The initiative was launched simultaneously across 15 cities in the country.
• It will include 15 Baroda Startup branches that will offer a bouquet of tailor-made banking products and services that have been designed keeping in mind the unique and specialized banking requirements of start-ups.
• The products include customised current accounts, state-of-the-art payments gateways, corporate credit cards, corporate salary accounts and credit facilities apart from other existing products of the bank.
• Important
Headquarters of Bank of Baroda: Vadodara, Gujarat.
MD and CEO of Bank of Baroda: Sanjiv Chadha.
Chairman of Bank of Baroda: Hasmukh Adhia.
Tagline of Bank of Baroda: India's International Bank.

ACQUISITIONS, MERGERS, BUSINESS AND MOU’S

NTPC, CPCB MoU to set up air quality monitoring stations:
- The NTPC Ltd has signed an agreement with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- According to an agreement, NTPC Ltd will provide financial support of Rs 80 Crore for installation and commissioning of Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS).
- A total of 25 Air Quality Monitoring Stations will be installed across six states and three Union Territories. The states include Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Tamil Nadu. The three Union Territories includes Daman & Diu, Dadar & Nagar Haveli and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- The Air Quality Index will be evaluated for the respective cities with the help of data collected from these air quality monitoring stations.

India GDP Growth At 4.7% In Q3, Weaker Than Revised Estimates For Q2:
- The Indian economy grew 4.7 per cent in the third quarter ended December 31, 2019, the National Statistics Office.
- Core sector grows by 2% in January as power generation picks up
- The first quarter GDP growth for this fiscal has been revised upwards to 5.6 per cent, from the 5.1 per cent estimated earlier. The second quarter GDP growth for the current fiscal has also been revised upwards to 5.1 per cent from 4.5 per cent announced earlier.

About NSC:
- The National Statistical Commission (NSC) of India is an autonomous body which formed in June 2005. The NSC is currently headed by Bimal K. Roy, who was appointed as Chairperson of the Commission on 15th July 2019 for a period of three years. Dr. Kiran Pandya, Shri Pulak Ghosh and Dr. Gurucharan Manna are other members of the Commission.
- Shri Amitabh Kant, current CEO of NITI Aayog is the ex-officio Member and Shri Pravin Srivastava, Chief Statistician of India and Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is Secretary to the Commission
- Formed :July 12 2006
- Headquarters: New Delhi