



EXCEL QUEST

VOLUME - 11, November 2020



PM SHRI NARENDRA MODI
TO LAUNCH DISTRIBUTION OF
PROPERTY CARDS UNDER
SVAMITVA SCHEME

11th October, 2020 at 11:00 AM



SVAMITVA SCHEME

India, Myanmar agree to work towards the operationalization of Strategic Sittwe Port in first quarter of 2021

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THE NORWEGIAN NOBEL COMMITTEE

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE FOR 2020



FEATURES OF THE WATER AERODROME

Jetty, arrival/ departure areas including waiting area, security check points

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It will focus on strengthening Early Childhood Education and Foundational Learning as well as Vocational Education in schools

It covers 6 States - Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha

STARS project would be implemented as a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education



STARS' PROJECT

A Monthly Magazine from

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Director's message

Dear Aspirants,

The month of October 2020 experienced heaviest rainfall in Hyderabad after almost 100 years. For residents of Hyderabad City, September usually meant caution as the month brought unusually heavy rains. The great Musi Floods of 1908 that impacted most of Hyderabad was caused by an unprecedented downpour on September 28 that year and every year September since then is a matter of caution. However, this year October witnessed incessant rains, heavy downpour, cloud bursts and flash floods for over a week wrecking havoc inundating a large number of areas not only causing damage to buildings and road infrastructure but also loss of precious human lives. 33 persons died and more than 40,000 families got badly effected and property worth Rs. 670 Crores damaged. As per some experts, it is a clear case of impact of climate change causing extreme weather conditions while as others blame it on poor planning and encroachment of lakes and catchment areas in the City. Be it recent Hyderabad floods, Chennai floods of December 2015 or Mumbai floods of July 2005 are some instances of extreme events and need to be taken as a wake up call for Urban planners to come up with sustainable strategies and take measures to put mechanism in place to minimize the damages in future as such events are likely to increase in the future owing to unplanned growth of Hyderabad City with a population of almost 10 million people and the number of water bodies shrinking from 2500 in 1970 to just 190 at present due to encroachment and construction of housing colonies by unscrupulous elements.

Diwali, a festival of lights, is traditionally celebrated by the majority community with bursting of fire crackers all over the Country. However, this year Diwali was celebrated in a much subdued manner owing to the worsened air quality in Northern parts of India and COVID-19 Pandemic which witnessed a new wave in the national capital in the festive season thereby shifting the entire focus towards firecrackers and their sales across the country. Earlier, the National Green Tribunal banned sale of all kinds of firecrackers until 30th November in cities where the average of ambient air quality during November last year was 'poor' or worse. The Calcutta High Court also intervened with a ban, effectively spanning the Diwali and Chhath Puja festivities in West Bengal which was upheld by the Supreme Court. The ban on firecrackers was also in force in other States like Rajasthan, Odisha, Maharashtra, Haryana, Karnataka, Sikkim, Chandigarh and UT of Delhi. In a huge relief for Telangana, Fire Workers and Dealers Association, the Supreme Court allowed the sale and use of firecrackers in the State in accordance with the order of National Green Tribunal (NGT) which permitted bursting of green crackers in Cities where air quality is 'moderate' between 8 PM to 10 PM on Diwali and Gurupurab, 6 AM to 8 AM on Chhath and 11.55PM to 12.30 AM on Christmas and New Year's eve. These festivities are the mainstay of India's Rs 5,000/- crore fireworks industry and the ban on firecrackers has been dominated by both religious and political undertones. With economic and health considerations, the policy makers are grappling with

difficult choices as Firecracker manufacturers and traders struggled with the plunge in the sales and rising losses and those working in the units fear losing livelihoods.

It's now 13 years since four democracies-America, Australia, India and Japan-known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) first met on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum summit in Manila (2007) to share their concerns on the rise of China in the region and reflect on "themes of mutual interest". There was no formal agenda and no decision about a subsequent meeting was taken. But there was an expectation that the "Quad" countries, as the grouping became known, would meet again. All four nations find a common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security. However, Australia pulled out soon apparently due to Chinese pressure.

With the aim to counter China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region, India, Australia, US and Japan, formed the "quadrilateral" coalition on November 12, 2017, and held a meeting a day before the ASEAN Summit. Officials from India's Ministry of External Affairs, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and United State's Department of State met in Manila for consultations on issues of common interest in the Indo-Pacific region. Soon after the meeting, India, Australia and Japan issued separate statements listing the Indo-Pacific as the major area of the deliberations and resolved to expand cooperation to uphold a rules-based order and respect for international law in the strategically important region. This was the first meeting of the group after its 're-organisation' after Australia showed willingness to join the group. It underlines the rising significance of maritime geopolitics in an increasingly integrated world. Economically, the strategy is regarded as an answer to China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is establishing a China-centric trade route.

QUAD is in news as this year's India-Japan-United States Malabar naval exercise, which will also see the participation of Australia for the first time in 13 years, will be held in two phases. It is a multilateral naval exercise that includes simulated war games and combat manoeuvres. It started in 1992 as a bilateral exercise between the Indian and US Navies. Japan joined in 2015. The first phase of exercise took place from November 3rd to 6th, off coast Vishakhapatnam in the Bay of Bengal, while the second phase will take place between November 17 and 20 in the Arabian Sea. While this year's Malabar exercise is formally independent of the Australia-India-Japan-United States Quad consultation mechanisms, Australia's presence effectively makes it connected. What adds significant signaling value to the exercise is that it sits on top of an array of political and military dialogues and arrangements between the four countries as well as ongoing standoff between India and China in eastern Ladakh.

Fifteen countries have formed the world's largest trading bloc, covering nearly a third of the global economy. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is made up of 10 Southeast Asian countries, as well as South Korea, China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. The pact is seen as an extension of China's influence in the region. The deal excludes the US, which withdrew from a rival Asia-Pacific trade pact in 2017. Negotiations over the new RCEP deal began in 2012 and it was finally signed on Sunday (15/11/2020) on the sidelines of a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). "Its membership includes a larger group of nations, notably reflecting the membership of China,

which considerably boosts the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of RCEP members," according to Rajiv Biswas, Asia Pacific chief economist for analyst firm IHS Markit.

While China already has a number of bilateral trade agreements, this is the first time it has signed up to a regional multilateral trade pact. India was also part of the negotiations, but it pulled out last year over concerns that lower tariffs could hurt local producers. Signatories of the deal said the door remained open for India to join in the future. Members of the RCEP make up nearly a third of the world's population and account for 30% of global gross domestic product. The new free trade bloc will be bigger than both the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement and the European Union.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in green ink, consisting of stylized initials 'K' and 'C' followed by a horizontal line.

K. Rajendra Kumar IPS (Retd.)

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1. NATIONAL

1.1 ZOHRA SEGAL

- On September 29, Google recalled and celebrated iconic Indian actress and dancer Zohra Segal, the first Indian female actors who got recognition for her work and life globally.
- The special doodle has her animated picture in a classical dance posture with floral background.
- The special doodle on Zohra Segal is designed by artist Parvati Pillai.

Background

- The google doodle blog wrote, "Today's Doodle, illustrated by guest artist Parvati Pillai, celebrates iconic Indian actress and dancer Zohra Segal, one of the country's first female actors to truly achieve recognition on the international stage.
- Among Segal's notable early work was a role in the film "Neecha Nagar" ("Lowly City"), which was released on this day in 1946 at the Cannes Film Festival.
- Widely considered Indian cinema's first international critical success, "Neecha Nagar" won the festival's highest honor: the Palme d'Or prize. "

About Zohra Segal

- Zohra Segal's full name was Sahibzadi Zohra Begum Mumtaz-ullah Khan.
- She was born in Saharanpur, India on April 27, 1912.
- She attended a prestigious ballet school in Dresden, Germany in her early 20s and later toured internationally with the Indian dance pioneer Uday Shankar.
- After she returned to India, she transitioned to acting, joining the Indian People's Theatre Association in 1945.
- Zohra Segal got recognition on an international stage first when she moved to London, England in 1962 and worked in British television classics like "Doctor Who, 1984 miniseries," "The Jewel in the Crown,"

1.2 FILM AND TELEVISION INSTITUTE OF INDIA (FTII)

- Noted Filmmaker Shekhar Kapur has been named as the President of Film and Television Institute of India, FTII Society and Chairman of Governing Council of FTII.
- Mr Kapur has directed several films, including Masoom, Mr. India, Bandit Queen and Elizabeth.

About FTII

- The Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) is an autonomous Institute under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India.
- It is situated on the premises of the erstwhile Prabhat Film Company in Pune.
- It was established in 1960.
- The Centre will set up a new Institute in Arunachal Pradesh as part of an initiative to tap the

potential of the North Eastern region.

1.3 NCPCR LAUNCHES TOLL-FREE TELE-COUNSELLING NUMBER FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED DURING COVID-19

The apex child rights body NCPCR has launched a toll-free tele-counselling helpline number 1800-121-2830 for children affected during COVID-19 for providing counselling and psycho-social support.

Objective

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), in a statement, said the tele-counselling service will provide psychological first-aid and emotional support to children who are in quarantine or isolation or at COVID care centres and children who have COVID positive parents or family members or children who have lost their parents due to COVID-19.
- The Commission acknowledges that all children have unique vulnerabilities owing to specific needs and demands at different stages of growth till the time they reach adulthood, the statement said.

About the program

- COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of us, no matter how old we are.
- Children may experience a range of psychological issues such as anxiety, fear, worry, depression, difficulty sleeping, and loss of appetite.
- SAMVEDNA (Sensitizing Action on Mental Health Vulnerability through Emotional Development and Necessary Acceptance), Toll Free Tele counseling -18001212830 (from Monday to Saturday 10 am - 1 pm and 3 pm to 8 pm) will be able to address the stress, anxiety, fear and other issues among children.
- When a child dials the toll-free number, they get to speak to a professional counsellor in a safe environment.
- The tele-counselling support will cater to children all over India in various regional languages also. Counsellors have been specially trained by the expert team of NIMHANS to address the needs of children in these difficult times.
- The NCPCR with India Co-Win Action Network (I-CAN) has created a network of qualified and trained experts/counsellors/psychologists for providing psycho-social support to the children through tele-counselling.
- Technical support to this initiative has been provided by National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences (NIMHANS) in training of counsellors.
- The creativity partner for this NCPCR's initiative is New India Junction (NIJ).

1.4 USER DEPOT MODULE

- The Ministry of Railways announced that Indian Railways has rolled out User Depot Module (UDM).
- This system will be implemented shortly across all Zones of Indian Railways. Railway's supply chain up to Stores Depots has already been digitized; however, activities at user end are being done manually.

About the transformational changes

- Implementation of this system will usher in transformational changes from manual working to digital working with real-time transactions and online information exchange among all stakeholders.
- This will ensure the digitization of the complete supply chain, including user depots.
- The system will facilitate economy, efficiency, and transparency besides improved asset management.
- It will ensure improved service level and satisfaction to customers.

1.5 H-CNG

- In a major step toward adopting alternative clean fuel for transportation, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has allowed use of H-CNG (18% mix of hydrogen) in CNG engines.
- The Ministry has been notifying various alternate fuels under Clean Fuels for transportation.

Background

- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has also developed specifications (IS 17314:2019) of Hydrogen enriched Compressed Natural Gas (H-CNG) for automotive purposes, as a fuel.
- Certain CNG-engine was tested to understand the emission reduction using H-CNG as compared to 'neat' CNG.

Highlights

- The Ministry has been notifying various alternate fuels under Clean Fuels for transportation.
- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has also developed specifications (IS 17314:2019) of Hydrogen enriched Compressed Natural Gas (H-CNG) for automotive purposes, as a fuel.
- A notification for amendments to the Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989, for inclusion of H-CNG as an automotive fuel has been published dated 25th Sept 2020 by the Ministry.

HCNG is hydrogen-enriched compressed natural gas (CNG). In Delhi, instead of physically blending hydrogen with CNG, hydrogen-spiked CNG will be produced using compact reforming process patented by Indian Oil Corporation

► It is cleaner and more economical; power output of HCNG engine is also better than CNG ones

4-tonne-per-day production plant will come up at DTC's Rajghat-1 bus depot by December

50 CLUSTER BUSES WILL RUN ON HCNG

₹40cr cost of HCNG plant

6-month pilot project will start in January

BENEFITS OF HCNG

4% more fuel economy than CNG

70% more reduction in carbon monoxide emissions compared to CNG

4% more fuel economy than CNG

- The Hydrogen Compressed Natural Gas (H-CNG) is a mixture of compressed natural gas and 4-9 per cent hydrogen by energy.
- It can be used as a fuel in internal combustion engine and also for home appliances.

1.6 DINCHARYA AND RITUCHARYA

The Vice President, Shri M Venkaiah Naidu today emphasised the importance of a healthy body and healthy mind saying “we have to follow the concepts of “Dinacharya” – daily regimes and “Ritucharya” – seasonal regimes to maintain a healthy life.

About General measures

- Drink warm water throughout the day.
- Daily practice of Yogasana, Pranayama and meditation for at least 30 minutes as advised by Ministry of AYUSH.
- Spices like Haldi (Turmeric), Jeera (Cumin), Dhaniya (Coriander) and Lahsun (Garlic) are recommended in cooking.

About Ayurvedic Immunity Promoting Measures

- Take Chyawanprash 10gm (1tsf) in the morning. Diabetics should take sugar-free Chyawanprash.
- Drink herbal tea/decoction (Kadha) made from Tulsi (Basil), Dalchini (Cinnamon), Kalimirch (Black pepper), Shunthi (Dry Ginger) and Munakka (Raisin) - once or twice a day. Add jaggery (natural sugar) and / or fresh lemon juice to your taste, if needed.
- Golden Milk- Half teaspoon Haldi (turmeric) powder in 150 ml hot milk - once or twice a day.

Highlights

- Ritu, the season, classified by different features expresses different effects on the body as well as the environment.
- Ayurveda has depicted various rules and regimens (Charya), regarding diet and behaviour to acclimatize seasonal enforcement easily without altering body homeostasis.
- The prime principle of Ayurvedic system of medicine is preventive aspect, can be achieved by the change in diet and practices in response to change in climatic condition.

1.7 COUNTRY RECEIVED ‘ABOVE NORMAL’ RAINFALL DURING 4-MONTH MONSOON

The country received above normal monsoon during the four-month rainfall season, recording the second highest precipitation in the last 30 years, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Background

- The country received 109 percent rainfall of the Long Period Average (LPA) with three of four months -- June (107 percent), August (127 percent), and September (105 percent) -- witnessing above normal rainfall, while July recorded (90 percent) below deficient rainfall.
- Quantitatively the 2020 monsoon seasonal rainfall from 1 June to 30 September 2020 has been 95.4 centimeters against a long period average of 87.7 cm based on data of 1961-2010 (109 percent of its Long Period Average).

Highlights

- The monsoon season in India officially starts on June 1 and lasts till September 30.
- The southwest monsoon delivers about 70 percent of the country's annual rainfall, critical for the agriculture sector that accounts for about 14 percent of India's GDP and employs more than half of the country's 1.3 billion population.
- Good rains have boosted sowing of the Kharif crops which farmers have sown in record 1,116.88 lakh hectares till last week as compared to 1,066.06 lakh hectares a year ago, according to the Agriculture Ministry's data.
- The IMD has four meteorological divisions. Of the four, the east and northeast India, central India, and south India have received above-normal rainfall.
- The northwest India division has recorded deficient rainfall.
- Nineteen states and union territories have received normal rainfall this year, while nine states and union territories saw excess rainfall.
- Bihar, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Lakshadweep islands have recorded above normal rainfall.
- Sikkim recorded large excess rainfall.
- However, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir have recorded deficiency. Ladakh has recorded large deficiency.

1.8 NAMAMI GANGA MISSION

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 6 mega development projects in Uttarakhand under the Namami Gange Mission today through video conference.
- With the commissioning of the projects the sewage treatment capacity of Uttarakhand has increased 4 times in the last 6 years.

Background

- The projects inaugurated include an all-new 68 MLD (million litres per day) sewage treatment plant (STP), up-gradation of an existing 27 MLD STP at State's Jagjeetpur region in Haridwar, and another newly constructed STP in Haridwar's Sarai with a capacity of 18 MLD.

- In addition to these, the PM also inaugurated a 26 MLD STP at Lakkadghat of Rishikesh, a 5 MLD STP will be inaugurated at Chorpani, and two STPs with 1 MLD and 0.01 MLD capacities in Badrinath.

Four pronged strategy

The Prime Minister said the government moved forward with a four pronged strategy to achieve its objective.

- First- started laying a network of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) to prevent the waste water from flowing into the Ganges.
- Second, The STPs were built by keeping in mind the demands for the next 10 – 15 years.
- Third – By making around a hundred big towns/cities and five thousand villages along the River Ganga Open Defecation Free (ODF).
- Fourth – By making an all-out effort to stop the pollution in the tributaries of River Ganga.

1.9 RAJNATH LAUNCHES STARTUP CHALLENGE TO PROMOTE SELF-RELIANCE IN DEFENCE SECTOR

- Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched a startup challenge to achieve self-reliance in the military sector under the ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ campaign.
- Singh launched the Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC 4) featuring initiatives aimed at expanding the horizons of the Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) ecosystem.

Background

- The iDEX4Fauji initiative and the Product Management Approach (PMA) guidelines were also launched by the Defence Minister during the event. Each of these initiatives is expected to facilitate iDEX-DIO to scale up the program qualitatively and quantitatively.
- It is a first of its kind initiative launched to support the innovations identified by the members of the Indian armed forces and will bolster frugal innovation ideas from the soldiers.

Highlights

- There is more than 13 lakh service personnel working in the fields and on the borders, handling extreme conditions and equipment and would be having many ideas to improve such equipment.
- iDEX4Fauji would open this window and allow our soldiers to become part of the innovation process and get recognized and rewarded. Services headquarters will provide support to the soldiers and field formations all over the country to ensure maximum participation.
- For the first time, an atmosphere has been created in the country where different stakeholders have been brought together to push for innovations in the defense sector.
- In order to further strengthen our defense system and make it self-reliant, the participation of the private sector is crucial. For this we have taken certain steps like partnerships with the private

sector, technology transfer, 74 per cent FDI through automatic route and the recently released negative list of 101 items for import ban after a stipulated period.

1.10 INITIATIVES FOR FARMERS

- Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers launched POS 3.1 software, SMS Gateway and Home Delivery facility of Fertilizers (RBK) for farmers in Andhra Pradesh.
- Under POS 3.1 version, keeping in view of the prevailing pandemic conditions, a contactless OTP-based authentication option has been introduced.

Highlights

- Farmers will be able to purchase fertilizer without touching fingerprint sensors.
- SMS Gateway will periodically send SMS to farmers about availability of fertilizer at retail outlets from where he last purchased the fertilizer.
- Under an initiative of Home delivery of Fertilizers in Andhra Pradesh through RythuBharosaKendralu (RBK) state Government has launched 10,641 RythuBharosaKendralu (RBKs) in all gram panchayats to provide farmers with quality inputs and allied services.
- Under this systems, farmers after biometric authentication can order fertilizers from RBK (Rythubharosa Kendra) in their village and fertilizer will be delivered at their door step.

1.11 SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA'S NEW LOGO

- The Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Kiren Rijiju launched the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) new logo at Delhi's Major Dyan Chand Stadium.
- The event was attended by Sports Secretary Ravi Mittal; Indian Olympic Association President, Shri Narinder Batra and Director General SAI, Shri Sandip Pradhan along with the senior officers of the Ministry at the stadium. Many eminent athletes, coaches and other sports enthusiasts joined the event from across the country through video conference.

About the Logo

- SAI has been the leader in the sports ecosystem and the primary agent of promoting sporting excellence.
- It has given athletes necessary support so that they have their sporting careers can take-off smoothly and they can fly towards a life of achievements and sporting glory – that is what the flying figure indicates – the freedom an athlete gets to leapfrog his/her career in SAI.
- The word SAI itself gives the identity to the organisation among various stakeholders being the acronym of Sports Authority of India.
- The Indian Tricolour and blue colour of chakra adds the national fervor as SAI has nurtured some of the biggest names in the sports fraternity, who represent India at the world stage.

About SAI

- SAI has been the pivot of the sports ecosystem in the country since the time it was established in the year 1982 and has been instrumental in identifying and developing grassroots talents across the country.
- The new logo signifies SAI's journey of metamorphosis from identifying and nurturing grassroots level sporting talent to creating sporting excellence in the country.

1.12 GOOD SAMARTIAN RULES

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has published the rules for the protection of Good Samaritans (people helping the road accidents victims on the spot).
- The rules provide for the Rights of Good Samaritan which include that a Good Samaritan shall have the rights as detailed in the rules and shall be treated respectfully without any discrimination on the grounds of religion, nationality, caste or sex.

Highlights

- No police officer or any other person shall compel a Good Samaritan to disclose his/her name, identity, address or any such other personal details.
- The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, inserted a new section 134A, viz. "Protection of good Samaritans".
- It provides that a Good Samaritan shall not be liable for any civil or criminal action for any injury to or death of the victim of an accident involving a motor vehicle while rendering emergency medical or non-medical care or assistance.



1.13 AYUSH GRID

- A high level meeting chaired by Secretary, Ministry of AYUSH recently endorsed the operational integration of Ayush Grid with the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM).
- Ayush grid is the emerging IT backbone for the AYUSH Sector.

Objective

- This integration will be beneficial to the public for availing many options for their health needs.
- The integration will also accelerate mainstreaming the Ayush disciplines of healthcare.

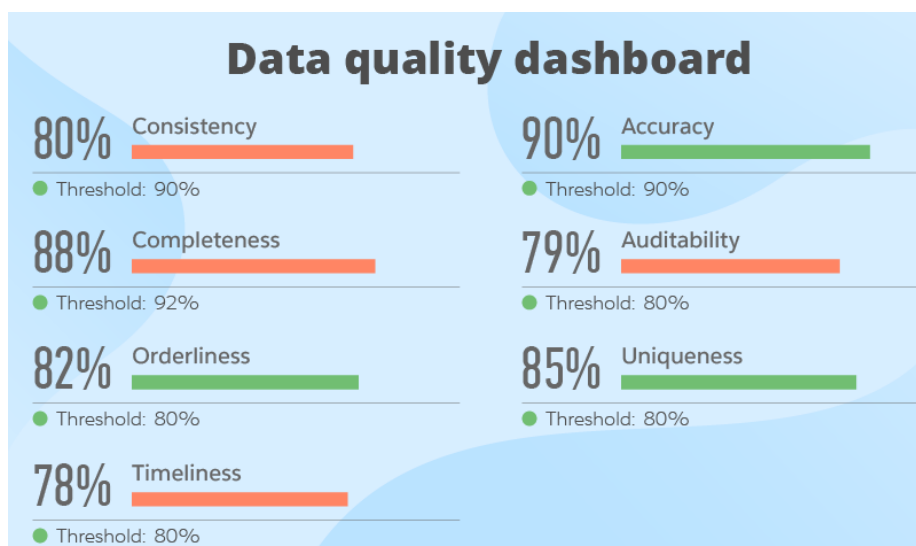
About the project

- This project was initiated by the Ministry of AYUSH in 2018 to create a comprehensive IT backbone for the sector.
- Digitalization of the Ayush Sector will lead to its transformation in fields of health care delivery at all levels including the research, education, various health programmes and drug regulations.
- This would also benefit for all stakeholders of Ayush including citizens of the country and
- It will thus help to achieve various national and global goals in healthcare.

1.14 DATA GOVERNANCE

QUALITY INDEX

- Department of Fertilizers under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers has been ranked 2nd amongst the 16 Economic Ministries / Departments and 3rd out of the 65 Ministries / Departments with a score 4.11 on a scale of 5 on Data Governance Quality Index (DGQI).



- A Survey conducted by Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO), NitiAyog to assess different Ministries /Departments' performance on the implementation of Central Sector Schemes (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS).

Background

- Self-assessment based review of data preparedness levels across Ministries / Departments to produce a DGQI score card.
- Accordingly a survey was initiated with the objective of assessing data preparedness of Ministries / Departments on a standardized framework to drive healthy competition among them and promote cooperative peer learning from best practices.

Highlights

- Data Generation; Data Quality; Use of Technology; Data Analysis, Use and Dissemination; Data Security and HR Capacity and Case Studies.
- Weightages were assigned to the themes and sub-weightages to each question within every theme to arrive at final DGQI scores ranging between 0 to 5 for every scheme.
- To avoid straight-forward irrelevant comparisons, Ministries / Departments were classified in 6 (six) categories: Administrative, Strategic, Infrastructure, Social, Economic and Scientific.

- Questionnaire was then shared with Ministries / Departments, which are implementing CS / CSS schemes.
- Inputs have been collected from 65 Ministries / Departments implementing 250 CS / CSS schemes and their scores were accordingly calculated.
- Department of Fertilizers ranked 2nd amongst the 16 Economic Ministries / Departments and ranked 3rd out of the 65 Ministries / Departments with a score 4.11 on a scale of 5.

1.15 SWACHH BHARAT PURASKAR

The Swachh Bharat (2020) Awards were conferred to the best performing States/UTs, districts, blocks, GPs and others in various categories marking six years of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) launch.

About the awards

- The awards were given by Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS).
- Top Awards were conferred upon Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab & others.
- Gujarat was felicitated with the first prize in the state category; Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu as best district; Khachrod, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh as best block; and Chinnaur, (Salem) as the best Gram Panchayat for SwachhSundarSamudayikShauchalaya (SSSS) campaign organized from 1st Nov 2019 to 30th April 2020.
- For the week-long Gandagi Se Mukh campaign launched by Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on 8th August 2020, Telangana received the top award for maximum Shramdaan participation.

1.16 INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR ON TEXTILE TRADITIONS

- The first of its kind 'International Webinar on Textile Traditions' was addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The webinar was organized by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Uttar Pradesh Institute of Design (UPID).

About the webinar

- The webinar was conducted to commemorate the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- The theme for the webinar: 'Weaving Relations: Textile Traditions'.
- The webinar was organized with an aim to exchange ideas and inculcate best practices among weavers of different countries and to boost the creation of new avenues for collaborations.
- The webinars were participated by weavers from countries like Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Bahrain, Indonesia, Thailand, Afghanistan, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Bhutan.

1.17 PAN INDIA TIME USE SURVEY

- India's first Pan India time use survey was released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- A time use survey measures the amount of time people spend doing various activities, such as paid work, childcare, volunteering, and socialising.
- Objective
- The primary objective of a time use survey (TUS) is to measure participation of men and women in paid and unpaid activities.
- TUS is an important source of information on the time spent in unpaid caregiving activities, volunteer work, unpaid domestic service producing activities of the household members.
- It also provides information on time spent on learning, socialising, leisure activities, self-care activities.
- The findings of these surveys are deemed to be helpful in drafting policies on poverty, gender equity and human development.

Highlights

- The 2,140-page report provides data on the participation rate of Indians in different activities in a day and the average time they spend in those activities.
- It, however, does not provide the reasons for why people participate in certain activities, and why they spend as much time as they do in conducting that activity.
- The data, point to the fact that while the large chunk of paid work is done by men, unpaid work is largely done by women.
- The participation rate of men in paid employment — which includes jobs, farming, fishing, mining amongst other economic activities — is high at 57.3 per cent, compared to women whose participation rate is only 18.4 per cent.
- Indian men also spend more time at paid work, spending on average 7 hours 39 minutes compared to the 5 hours 33 minutes spent by women.
- However, when it comes to unpaid work like domestic services for household members which includes cooking food, cleaning, or unpaid caregiving like looking after a dependent child or an adult, the participation of women is very high.
- 81.2 per cent women participate in unpaid domestic services spending an average 4 hours 59 minutes each day.
- The participation rate of men in domestic services is low at 26.1 per cent, and the amount of time they spend conducting this service is far lesser than women, who spend around 1 hour 37 minutes while conducting this activity.

1.18 DHAULASIDH HYDRO PROJECT

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi participated in the Abhinandan program in Solang Valley, Himachal Pradesh.
- Earlier he dedicated to the nation the World's longest Atal Tunnel at Rohtang and participated in the Abhar Samaroh at Sissu in Himachal Pradesh.

About the transformative impact

- Atal Tunnel would transform the lives of the people in Himachal, Leh, Ladakh and J&K.
- The tunnel has reduced the burden of the common people and now provides easy access to Lahaul & Spiti throughout the year.
- This tunnel would boost the regional economy and tourism.

Highlights

- The Prime Minister announced the construction of 66 MW Dhaulasidh Hydro Project at Hamirpur.
- He added not only will it provide electricity but also several employment opportunities to youth of the region.
- He said Himachal Pradesh is also an important stakeholder in the Government's efforts to build modern infrastructure across the country especially rural roads, highways, power projects, rail connectivity and air connectivity.

1.19 POSTAL BALLOTS IN ELECTIONS

- Seeking to make the procedure to opt for postal ballot more convenient for those above 80 years of age and people with disabilities, the Election Commission has come out with a set of new instructions.
- The form required to opt for the postal ballot would be delivered at the residence of all those aged above 80 and people with disabilities by the booth level officer under his polling station.

About the ballots

- It would be up to these two categories of voters to opt for postal ballot.
- If he/she opts for postal ballot, then the Booth Level Officer (BLO) will collect the filled-in form 12-D from the house of the elector within five days of the notification and deposit it with the returning officer forthwith.
- These instructions have been issued based on the feedback the poll panel received from civil society and media during its visit to poll-bound Bihar last week.
- The EC said the fresh instructions would be applicable to all elections and byelections.



- As per the instructions, the returning officer would deploy polling teams, which will deliver and collect the postal ballot on pre-informed dates and then deposit it with the returning officer.

1.20 ATAL TUNNEL

- World’s longest highway tunnel Atal Tunnel, inaugurated in Himachal Pradesh.
- Atal Tunnel connects Manali to the Lahaul-Spiti Valley.

About the tunnel

- The tunnel is built at Rohtang at an altitude of above 3,000 metre through the PirPanjal range of Himalayas and is 9.02 km-long.
- It is built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and is the world’s longest highway tunnel.
- It is a single tube, double lane tunnel.

About the significance

- It provides all-weather and round-the-year road connectivity to the landlocked valley.
- The Valley otherwise remains cut-off for nearly six months in a year (Rohtang Pass is snow-bound between November and April).
- The tunnel reduces the distance between Manali and Leh and thereby, the travel time by about 4 to 5 hours.
- It is expected to boost tourism and winter sports in the region.
- It is also expected to foster development in the valley due to the connectivity.
- The tunnel is significant for the military logistics as well.



1.21 RAVI CHOPRA COMMITTEE

The chairman of a Supreme Court-appointed expert committee has alleged violations of the court orders in the execution of the Chardham road project — a 900 km, ₹12,000 crore enterprise to connect pilgrimage spots in Uttarakhand.

Highlights

- The top court ruled last month that a width of 5.5 metre be enforced as it was



in conformity with a 2018 recommendation of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) for mountain roads.

- The MoRTH is also the key coordinator of the Chardham project.
- Ravi Chopra is the chairman of the High Powered Committee (HPC).

1.22 CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF HINDI

Union Minister of Education Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' virtually inaugurated the newly constructed building of the Hyderabad regional centre of the Central Institute of Hindi, Agra.

About Kendriya Hindi Sansthan

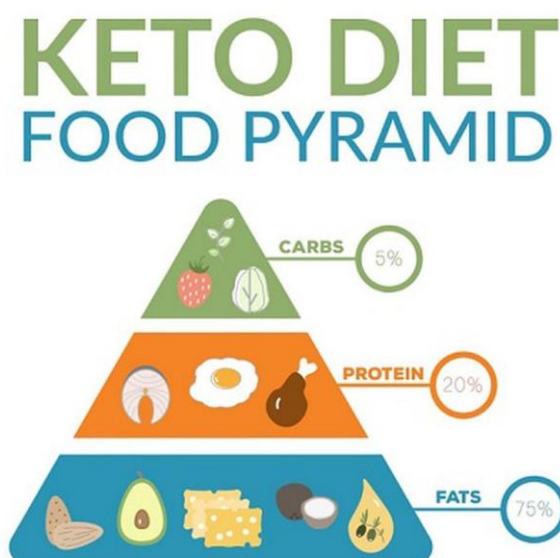
- Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, i.e. Central Institute of Hindi is an educational Institute established in 1960 by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- It is run by an autonomous organization: Kendriya Hindi ShikshanMandal.
- The Institute mainly conducts various projects and activities for Teaching, Training, Research and Promotion & Propagation of Hindi at National and International level.
- The headquarters of the Institute is situated at Agra.
- It has eight regional centers.

1.23 KETO DIET

- Actor Mishti Mukherjee, 27, who had worked in Bangla, Telugu and some Hindi films, died on October 2 in a hospital in Bengaluru.
- Her family said Mukherjee suffered from kidney failure as she had been following a ketogenic diet.

About Keto diet

- The ketogenic diet is one of the most popular weight loss diets the world over.
- It is a high-fat, moderate-protein and low-carb diet that helps in weight loss by achieving ketosis — a metabolic state where the liver burns body fat and provides fuel for the body, as there is limited access to glucose.
- A classic keto requires that 90 per cent of a person's calories come from fat, six per cent from protein and four per cent from carbs.
- But there are many versions doing the round, since this one was designed for children suffering from epilepsy to gain control over their seizures.



- Typically, popular ketogenic diets suggest an average of 70-80 per cent fat, 5-10 per cent carbohydrate, and 10-20 per cent protein.

1.24 AYURVEDA AND YOGA PROTOCOLS

The National Clinical Management Protocol based on ayurveda and yoga for the management of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) will be jointly released by Union health and family welfare minister Harsh Vardhan and minister for Ayush (ayurveda, yoga & naturopathy, unani, siddha and homoeopathy) Shripad Yesso Naik.

Background

- The event will be held virtually.
- The government has been promoting medicinal herbs under the Ayush system for people to improve their immunity levels to be able to fight off infections.
- Last month, the Union health ministry issued guidelines on managing post-recovery symptoms of Covid-19 such as fatigue, body ache, cough, sore throat, breathing difficulty, etc., which largely promoted medicinal herbs for the purpose.

Highlights

- From taking one teaspoonful of Chyawanprash and warm turmeric milk in the morning, to having mulethi (liquorice root) powder, Giloy (*Tinosporacordifolia*) powder, etc., many Ayurvedic medicines found mention in the health ministry's post-Covid-19 management protocol.
- There was a rider, however, that all items were to be taken under strict medical supervision.
- The Ayush ministry also approved a clinical study last month to assess the role of medicinal herbs vasa and guduchi in the therapeutic management of symptoms in Covid-19 cases.

1.25 MoU TO BROADCAST NEW AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGY

- Prasar Bharati and Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited, IFFCO have signed a MoU to broadcast and promote new agriculture technology and innovations.
- According to the agreement, DD Kisan will broadcast various innovative techniques being adopted in the agriculture field in easy language through a 30 minutes program series for the benefit of farmers.

Background

- To make the farmers Atmanirbhar, it is necessary that these new agriculture techniques and their implementation should be explained to the farmers.
- The MoU will help in achieving this objective. IFFCO's innovations will be shared with farmers in easy language through DD Kisan in approximate 25 episodes.

Highlights

- This initiative as a historic step for the betterment of farmers.

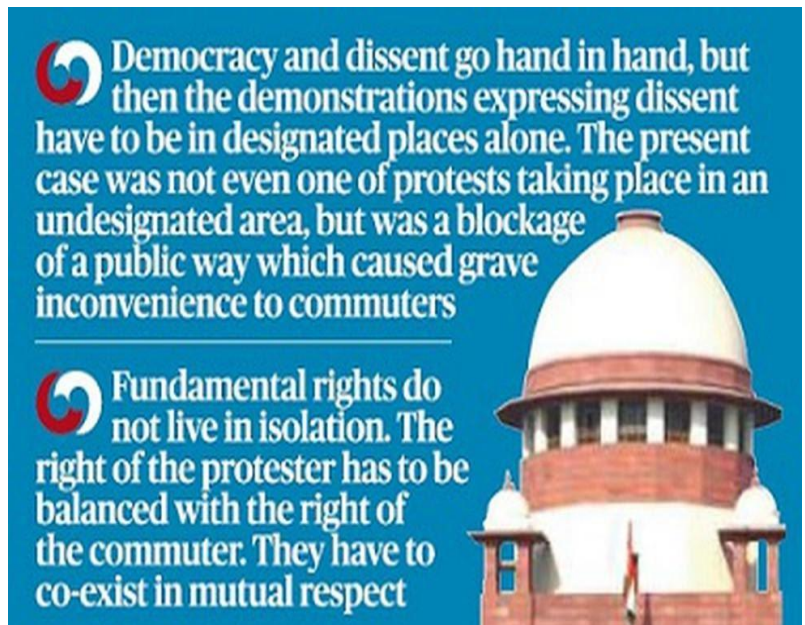
- Through this medium the information will be shared with the farmers in an easy language.
- These programs will also be broadcast through digital medium so that the young farmers can benefit from the initiative.
- IFFCO has prepared alternative of Urea which is Nanotechnology based and will help farmers.
- It is a matter of joy that the innovations which can benefit farmers immensely will now be broadcasted on DD Kisan.
- It will also help to achieve the target of doubling the income of farmers by 2022.
- The agreement will help to promote the innovations of scientists done in lab and the experiment conducted by farmers in the field which will help the young farmer

1.26 KASTURI COTTON

- Union Minister of Textiles launched the 1st ever Brand & Logo for Indian Cotton on 2nd World Cotton Day on 7th October.
- Now India's premium Cotton would be known as 'Kasturi Cotton' in the world cotton Trade.

Highlights

- Cotton is one of the principal commercial crops of India and it provides livelihood to about 6 million cotton farmers.
- India is the 2nd largest cotton producer and the largest consumer of cotton in the world.
- India produces about 6.00 Million tons of cotton every year which is about 23% of the world cotton.
- India produces about 51% of the total organic cotton production of the world, which demonstrates India's effort towards sustainability.
- A mobile app, "Cott-Ally" has been developed by Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) for providing latest news regarding weather condition, Crop situation and best farm practices.



1.27 RIGHT TO PROTEST

- The Supreme Court said that occupying public places like ShaheenBagh for protests is not acceptable and such a space cannot be occupied "indefinitely".

- The top court's verdict came on a plea against the anti-CAA protests which had led to blocking of a road in ShaheenBagh in the national capital last December.

Highlights

- A bench headed by Justice S K Kaul held that public places cannot be occupied indefinitely like during the ShaheenBagh protests.
- The bench also said that Delhi Police ought to have taken action to clear ShaheenBagh area from the protesters.
- "Democracy and dissent go hand in hand," it said, adding that the authorities have to act on their own and cannot hide behind courts in dealing with such a situation.
- The verdict came on a plea of lawyer AmitSahni against the blockade of a road in ShaheenBagh area by those protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

1.28 GYAN CIRCLE VENTURES

- Union Education Minister virtually inaugurates Gyan Circle Ventures, a MeitY-funded Technology Business Incubator at IIIT Sri City.
- Gyan Circle Ventures supported by MeitY will provide support for innovators and startups, in various phases via investments, infrastructure and support.

Objective

- This is to promote deep-tech entrepreneurship through financial and technical support to incubators engaged in using emerging technologies such as IoT, AI, Block-chain, Robotics etc.
- Broad areas include – manufacturing, education, Smart Cities, etc.

About Gyan Circle Ventures

- Gyan Circle Ventures (Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development at IIITs (CIEDI), a Section 8 Company) is the Technology Business Incubator of IIIT Sri City.
- The primary purpose of the incubator is to encourage building the institutions' entrepreneurial spirit via utilizing its intellectual capital.
- The center is funded by Ministry of Information Technology (MeiTy) under TIDE 2.0 as a Group 2 Centre.
- Gyan Circle Ventures located in IIIT Sri City provides valuable facilities to incubatees and startups.

1.29 SARDP-NE

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has enhanced the allocation of funds for expenditure under Special Accelerated Road Development Programme in North Eastern Areas (SARDP-NE) related works during the 2020 financial year.
- Under the revised allocation, almost double the amount originally allocated has been allowed.

Background

- Additionally, the allocations to National Highways in NE Region under 10% mandatory Pool Fund has been on an upward route in the last five years.
- The Government of India has undertaken a massive road development programme under SARDP-NE Scheme in NE Region.

About SARDP-NE

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has taken up an ambitious Special Accelerated Road Development Programme (SARDP-NE) for development of road network in the north eastern States of the Country.
- This programme envisages providing road connectivity to all the district headquarters in the north eastern region by minimum 2 lane highway standards apart from providing road connectivity to backward and remote areas, areas of strategic importance and neighbouring countries.
- Programme planned in two phases (A & B) including Arunachal Package, Phase-A is under progress and Phase-B is in conceptual stage.

1.30 SVAMITVA SCHEME

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the physical distribution of Property Cards under the SVAMITVA Scheme on October 11, 2020 to transform rural India.
- The SVAMITVA scheme, which was launched in April this year, aims to provide the record of rights to village household owners in rural areas and issue Property Cards.

About the scheme

- The Scheme is being implemented across the country in a phased manner over a period of four years and will cover around 6.62 lakh villages of the country.

भारत सरकार
Government of India

Ministry of Panchayati Raj
Government of India

my
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मेरी सरकार

Digitalising Land Records, Empowering Rural India

PM Modi Launches Physical Distribution of Property Cards under SVAMITVA Scheme

- Property records of about 1 lakh villages in Haryana, Uttarakhand, UP, MP, Maharashtra & Karnataka to be surveyed during 2020-21
- Nearly 1 lakh property owners in 763 villages of the 6 States received property cards
- Will enable sourcing loans from Financial Institutions and determination of Property Tax
- PM Modi interacts with beneficiaries of the scheme

Dated: 11 October, 2020

- The launch will enable around one lakh property holders to download their Property Cards through the SMS link delivered on their mobile phones.
- This would be followed by physical distribution of the Property Cards by the respective State governments.
- The move will pave the way for using property as a financial asset by villagers for taking loans and other financial benefits.

1.31 GARBA DANCE

- The Navratri celebrations in Gujarat this year are bound to be dampened with the state government prohibiting any 'garba' event during the upcoming festival due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- No garba event will be permitted in Gujarat during Navratri, starting from October 17, the state government said.

Background

- It also released a set of guidelines for the festive season, which usually sees large gatherings.
- The BJP government released standard operating procedures (SOPs), which stress on COVID-19-appropriate behaviour by citizens to curb the spread of infection, for the upcoming festival season.

About Garba

- Garba is a form of dance which originated in Traditional garbasare performed around centrally lit lamp or a picture or statue of the Goddess Shakti.
- Women normally perform it in a graceful and rhythmic manner in a circle as they rotate around the object placed in the centre.
- The dancer's whirl and move their feet and arms in a choreographed manner to the tune of the music with lots of drum beats.
- The women wear traditional dresses such as colourful embroidered choli, ghagra and bandhanidupattas dazzling with mirror work and heavy jewellery.
- Traditionally, it is performed during the nine-day Hindu festival Navaratri.
- The Gujarat government has branded Garba as the 'Longest Dance Festival of the World'.

1.32 PUBLIC NOTICE TIME PERIOD FOR REGISTRATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

- Election Commission of India has given a relaxation and has reduced the notice period from 30 days to 7 days for the parties who have published their public notice on or before 07.10.2020.
- For all parties, including those which have already published their Public Notice in less than 7 days prior to 07.10.2020, objection, if any, can be submitted latest by 5.30 PM on 10th October, 2020 or by the end of the originally provided 30 days period, whichever is earlier.

- Background
- Since ECI announced General Elections for the Legislative Assembly of Bihar, 2020 on 25th September, 2020, it has been brought to the notice of the Commission that in view of prevailing restrictions on account of Covid -19, there was dislocation and delay in moving applications for registration, which in turn led to delay in registration as a Political Party.
- Therefore, after considering all aspects of the matter, Commission relaxed the Public Notice Time period.
- This relaxation will remain in force till 20th October, 2020, the last date of nomination for Phase 3 of the General Election to the Legislative Assembly of State of Bihar.

Highlights

- It may be recalled that Registration of Political parties is governed by the provisions of Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- A party seeking registration under the said Section with the Commission has to submit an application to the Commission within a period of 30 days following the date of its formation as per guidelines prescribed by the Commission in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 324 of the Constitution of India and Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- As per existing guidelines, the applicant association is, inter-alia, asked to publish proposed Name of the party in two national daily news papers and two local daily newspapers, on two days for submitting objections, if any, with regard to the proposed registration of the party before the Commission within 30 days from such publication.
- Notice so published is also displayed on the website of the Commission.

1.33 BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the autobiography of late multiple term Lok Sabha MP Dr Balasaheb Vikhe Patil.
- The autobiography is titled 'Deh Vechava Karani' or dedicating one's life for a noble cause.

About Eknathrao alias Balasaheb Vikhe Patil

- Eknathrao alias Balasaheb Vikhe Patil was a member of the 14th Lok Sabha of India.
- He represented the Kopergaon and Ahmednagar (South) constituency of Maharashtra and was a member of the Indian National Congress (INC) political party.
- He later joined Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).
- He was a minister in the NDA.
- He was a prominent leader of Maharashtra and eldest son of Vithalrao Vikhe Patil, who started Asia's first Co-operative sugar factory at Loni in Maharashtra.

- He was awarded the prestigious civilian award Padma Bhushan on 31 March 2010 for his outstanding work in the field of Social Work.
- He was seven time MP, former Union Minister of State (Finance) and Union Cabinet Minister (Heavy Industries), Government of India.

1.34 **BHARATMALA PARIYOJANA**

- A total of 322 projects in a length of 12,413 Km have been awarded under BharatmalaPariyojana till August, 2020.
- Further, 2921 Km has been constructed under the Project till the same date.

About the yojana

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has taken up detailed review of NHs network and has given overall investment approval for BharatmalaPariyojana Phase I Scheme for development of about 34,800 km (including 10,000 Km residual NHDP stretches) at an estimated outlay of Rs 5,35,000 Crore.
- BharatmalaPariyojana is an umbrella program for the highways sector that focuses on optimizing efficiency of freight and passenger movement across the country by bridging critical infrastructure gaps through effective interventions like development of Economic Corridors, Inter Corridors and Feeder Routes, National Corridor Efficiency Improvement, Border and International connectivity roads, Coastal and Port connectivity roads and Green-field expressways.



1.35 **TECH FOR TRIBALS**

- “Tech For Tribals” initiative was e-launched by TRIFED, Ministry of Tribal Affairs in association with Chhattisgarh MFP Federation and IIT Kanpur on September 13, 2020.
- TRIFED commenced the ‘Tech for Tribals’ programme in collaboration with Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) under the ESDP.

Objective

- The initiative is aimed at the holistic development of tribals.
- It focuses on entrepreneurship development, soft skills, IT, and business development.
- It will operate through Self Help Groups (SHGs) operating under the Van DhanVikasKendras (VDVKs).

About the initiative

- The training would be a 6 weeks long programme from 13th October to 7th November 2020.

- Under it, Van Dhan beneficiaries across all districts of Chhattisgarh will be trained for micro-enterprise creation, management and functioning.
- The training module has been developed by IIT- Kanpur.
- The primary objective of the programme is to tap the traditional knowledge and skills of tribals.
- It also seeks to add branding, packaging and marketing skills to optimize their income.
- It will be done through market led enterprise model by setting up of Van DhanKendras (VDVKs).
- TRIFED has sanctioned 1243 Van DhanKendras in 21 States and 1 UT so far that involves around 3.68 lakh tribal gatherers.

1.36 DEENDAYAL ANTYODAYA YOJANA - NATIONAL RURAL LIVELIHOODS MISSION

The Union Cabinet has approved a Special Package worth Rs. 520 crore in the UTs of J&K and Ladakh for a period of five years till FY 2023-24 under the DeendayalAntyodayaYojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

Background

DAY-NRLM has been implemented in the erstwhile state of J&K by the Jammu and Kashmir State Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKSRLM) as "Umeed" programme.

About the scheme

- This will ensure sufficient funds under the Mission, as per need to the UTs and is also in line with Government of India's aim to universalize all centrally sponsored beneficiary-oriented schemes in the UTs of J&K and Ladakh in a time bound manner.
- DeendayalAntyodayaYojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) is a centrally sponsored programme that was launched in 2011 to eliminate rural

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - NRLM*

Sustainable Rural Livelihoods through Community Participation

- Implemented in 4884 blocks across 600 districts in 29 States & 5 UTs
- 5 crore women mobilised into 45 lakh SHGs (as on May 18)
- Over 1.8 lakh community members trained & deployed to provide support to community institutions
- Provide Interest Subvention to women SHGs to avail bank loan up to ₹ 3 lakh
- 22000 CLRP** providing 24 hours door step extension services

*Community Livelihoods Resource Persons
**National Rural Livelihoods Mission

poverty through promotion of multiple livelihoods for the rural poor households across the country.

- DAY-NRLM seeks to reach out to all rural poor households, estimated at about 10 crore households.
- It aims at organizing one-woman member from each rural poor household into Self Help Groups (SHGs) and enabling them to implement their livelihoods plans through accessing financial resources from their own institutions and the banks.
- It is implemented in a Mission mode by special purpose vehicles (autonomous state societies) with dedicated implementation support units at the national, state, district and block levels.

1.37 OPERATION GREENS

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari thanked the Ministry of Food Processing and Ministry of Railways for directly providing subsidised rate of 50 per cent in freight for transportation of perishable surplus agriculture produce like Oranges and Vegetables by Railway.

Background

- Operation Green is being implemented as part of Atmanirbhar Abhiyan under the aegis of Union Ministry of Food Processing.
- Under this scheme, 50 per cent subsidy is given to the farmers for transporting the surplus produce of agricultural commodities like oranges and vegetables to the markets by rail.

Highlights

- A 50 per cent subsidy is also given for cold chain storage of agricultural commodities.
- However, in order to get this subsidy, farmers have to attach self-certified documents online on the 'Sampada' portal of the Ministry of Food Processing.
- Taking notice of this problem, Mr Gadkari held a meeting with Somesh Kumar, Divisional Railway Manager of Central Railway in Nagpur a few days ago regarding transport of oranges from Nagpur division.
- He suggested that the subsidy for the transport should be given to the farmers at the time of registration itself for rail transport.

'OPERATION GREENS'

- ❖ On the lines of "Operation Flood"; to address price volatility of perishable commodities like potato, tomato and onion
- ❖ Will promote Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs), agri-logistics, processing facilities and professional management

Greys in Greens

Operation Green – ₹500 cr allocated to ensure steady supply of three politically & price sensitive vegetables – onions, potatoes and tomatoes

POTATOES, OFFICIALS say, is less of a problem because it can last up to eight months in cold storage

ONION, WHICH IS GROWN largely in western India, can be stored in ventilated storages for about four to six months but then there are not many such spaces

Thought being given to have protected areas for tomato cultivation around high-demand urban centres

- Mr Gadkari's suggestion was taken up by the Ministry of Railways and the Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries and a 50 per cent concession has been accepted in the railway transport of eligible agricultural produce.
- This step will enable farmers to register for railway transport at subsidized rates for agricultural produce.
- Mr.Gadkari, in a tweet, thanked both the ministries for their cooperation regarding subsidised railway freight rates.
- He said due to this step, more farmers could avail this facility; it would provide better ticket fares to the railways and increase its profits.
- Meanwhile, the decision to transport oranges from Nagpur to Bangladesh by rail has already been taken by Central Railway on the initiative of Union Minister Gadkari.
- The oranges will soon be transported by Nagpur Railway network.

1.38 **THALASSEMIA BAL SEWA YOJNA**

- Union Health Ministry has launched the second phase of "Thalassemia BalSewaYojna" for underprivileged Thalassemic patients.
- This scheme was launched in 2017 under the Coal India CSR funded Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation (HSCT) program.

THALASSEMIA BAL SEWA YOJANA

(A project for under privileged Thalassemics patients)

- Coal India Limited [CIL] is one of the first PSUs to take up CSR activities in Blood Services since April, 2017 for Bone Marrow Transplant (BMTs) for Thalassemia patients.

<u>Beneficiaries</u>	<u>Financial support</u>	<u>Applications</u>
Underprivileged Thalassemia patients i.e. eligible for bone marrow transplantation but without adequate financial support.	Rs.10.00 lakhs or actual expenditure of the Haematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation (HSCT) procedure, whichever is lower.	Received through State Blood Cells under NHM, Thalassemia societies and the concerned Hospitals

About the program

- It aims to provide a one-time cure opportunity for Haemoglobinopathies like Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell Disease for patients who have a matched family donor.
- The initiative was targeted to provide financial assistance to a total of 200 patients by providing a package cost not exceeding Rs. 10 lakhs per HSCT.

Thalassemia

- Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder characterized by less oxygen-carrying protein (hemoglobin) and fewer red blood cells in the body than normal.
- When there isn't enough hemoglobin, the body's red blood cells don't function properly and they last shorter periods of time, so there are fewer healthy red blood cells traveling in the bloodstream.
- Symptoms include fatigue, weakness, paleness, and slow growth.
- Mild forms may not need treatment. Severe forms may require blood transfusions or a donor stem-cell transplant.

1.39 'STARS' PROJECT

- The Union Cabinet has approved the World Bank-supported Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States -STARS project.
- The Project seeks to support States in developing, implementing, and evaluating interventions with direct linkages to improved education outcomes.
- Highlights
- The total project cost is 5,718 crore rupees with the financial support of the World Bank amounting to 500 million US dollar.
- STARS project would be implemented as a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Department of School Education and Literacy.
- It will cover six States, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha.



STARS PROJECT
Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States

- The STARS project envisions improving the overall monitoring and measurement activities in the Indian School Education System through interventions
- It will focus on strengthening Early Childhood Education and Foundational Learning as well as Vocational Education in schools
- It covers 6 States - Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha
- STARS project would be implemented as a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education

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1.40RS 75 DENOMINATION TO MARK THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF FAO

- On the occasion of 75th Anniversary of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on 16th October 2020, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will release a commemorative coin of Rs 75 denomination to mark the long-standing relation of India with FAO.
- Prime Minister will also dedicate to the Nation 17 recently developed biofortified varieties of 8 crops.

Background

The event marks the highest priority accorded by the government to agriculture and nutrition, and is a testament of the resolve to completely eliminate hunger, undernourishment and malnutrition.

- It will be witnessed by Anganwadis, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Organic and Horticulture Missions across the country.
- Union Agriculture Minister, Finance Minister and WCD Minister will also be present on the occasion.

About India and FAO

- The journey of FAO in making the vulnerable classes and masses stronger, economically and nutritionally, has been unparalleled.
- India has had a historic association with FAO. Indian Civil Service Officer Dr. Binay Ranjan Sen was the Director General of FAO during 1956-1967.
- The World Food Programme, which has won the Nobel Peace Prize 2020, was established during his time.
- India's proposals for the International Year of Pulses in 2016 and the International Year of Millets 2023 have also been endorsed by FAO.

Highlights

- India has rolled out an ambitious POSHAN Abhiyaan targeting over 100 million people with the aim to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anaemia, and low birth weight.
- Malnutrition is a global problem with two billion people suffering from micronutrient deficiency.
- Nearly 45% of deaths among children are linked to malnutrition.
- Appropriately, it is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the UN.
- Aligning with the international priority, the development of nutritionally rich varieties of crops with elevated levels of micronutrients iron, zinc, calcium, total protein, quality of protein with high lysine and tryptophan, anthocyanin, provitamin A, and oleic acid, and reduced level of anti-nutritional factors etc. has been accorded top priority by the government.
- The National Agricultural Research System under the leadership of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) developed 53 such varieties during the last five years.

- There was only one biofortified variety developed prior to 2014.

1.41 KALA SANSKRITI VIKAS YOJANA

Culture Ministry has issued guidelines for holding cultural events in Virtual mode under various scheme components of Central Sector Scheme 'Kala SanskritiVikasYojana' (KSVY).

About the program

- The guidelines will enable artists to avail benefits under these schemes in virtual mode also and will ensure continued financial assistance to tide over the present crisis.
- Kala SanskritiVikasYojana (KSVY) is an umbrella scheme under Ministry of Culture for the promotion of art and culture in the country.



- KSVY has the following sub-schemes through which financial assistance is provided to cultural organizations:
 - Scheme of Financial Assistance for Promotion of Art and Culture.
 - Scheme of Financial Assistance for Creation of Cultural Infrastructure.
 - Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

1.42 INTERFAITH MARRIAGES IN INDIA

- The featuring of an interfaith couple in an advertisement aired by the Tata-owned Tanishq led to accusation of it promoting love jihad.
- Tanishq finally withdrew the advertisement fearing a larger impact on the brands.

About the statistics

- The Census does not record interfaith marriages in India nor has the government conducted any nationally representative survey to find out about such marriages.
- A number of studies conducted by research scholars have found that interfaith marriages have limited impact on society at large.

- For instance, students and faculty of the Central Government-run International Institute for Population Sciences had presented a paper on interfaith marriages in India in 2013 by analysing data from the “India Human Development Survey (IHDS) data, 2005” to explore the extent of mixed marriages in India.
- The India Human Development Survey 2005 (IHDS) is a nationally representative, multi-topic survey of 41,554 households in 1503 villages and 971 urban neighborhoods across India.
- It was jointly organised by researchers from the University of Maryland and the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi.
- Funding for the survey was provided by the National Institutes of Health.
- Though there was no direct question on inter-religious marriage, the paper has taken the religious affiliation of husband and wife to find the number of inter faith marriages.

1.43 KAPILA PROGRAM

Union Education Ministry has launched ‘KAPILA’ Kalam Program for IP Literacy and Awareness Education campaign to bring awareness towards the patenting of inventions.

About the program

- KAPILA is an acronym for Kalam Program for IP (Intellectual Property) Literacy and Awareness.
- Under this campaign, students pursuing education in higher educational institutions will get information about the correct system of the application process for patenting their invention and they will be aware of their rights.
- The program will facilitate the colleges and institutions to encourage more and more students to file patents.

1.44 ASEAN PhD FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

- Union Education Minister virtually addressed the students from ASEAN member states who have been selected for the prestigious ASEAN PhD Fellowship Programme (APFP).
- It was announced on 25th January 2018, the eve of India’s Republic Day, by Prime Minister of India in the presence of leaders of all the ten ASEAN member states.

About the fellowship

- Under the APFP, 1000 fellowships will be provided exclusively to the ASEAN citizens in IITs.
- APFP is the largest capacity development programme undertaken by the Government of India for foreign beneficiaries.
- The ASEAN PhD fellows will be recognized as the alumni of the respective IITs from where they will be completing their PhDs.
- It is funded by the Government of India.

About the significance

- The academic and research ties among India and ASEAN member states will be mutually beneficial for both the regions.
- It will strengthen India's ties with ASEAN members in culture, commerce and connectivity.
- APFP will open many doors to synergies in the field of technology and research for the academicians, researchers and the scientists from India and ASEAN.
- The researches and inventions by them will be used for the betterment of humankind across the globe.

1.45 ELECTORAL BONDS

- The finance ministry said the 14th tranche of electoral bonds sale will take place from 19 October.
- Electoral bonds have been pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of efforts to bring transparency in political funding.

Electoral Bonds Scheme Notified


To help cleanse the political funding system in the country

Nature

- Bearer instrument in the nature of a Promissory Note
- Interest free banking instrument

Eligibility

- A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India
- On fulfillment of all the extant KYC norms
- By making payment from a bank account



Value

- Issued/ Purchased in multiples of Rs.1,000, Rs.10,000, Rs.1,00,000, Rs.10,00,000 and Rs.1,00,00,000
- Available from the Specified Branches of the State Bank of India (SBI)

Lifespan

- Shelf life of only 15 days
- Can be used for making donation only to the political parties registered u/s 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951

Period of Purchase

- Available for purchase for a period of 10 days each in the months of January, April, July and October, as may be specified by the Government

Highlights

- One can purchase electoral bonds from select State Bank of India (SBI) branches across the country till 28 October.
- SBI is the only authorised bank to issue such bonds.
- Electoral bonds can be purchased by a person who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India.
- One can also buy electoral bonds jointly with other individuals.
- Only the Political Parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (43 of 1951) and which secured not less than one % of the votes polled in the last General Election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, shall be eligible to receive the Electoral Bonds.
- The electoral bonds shall be encashed by an eligible political party only through a Bank account with the authorised bank.

1.46 ARMED FORCES FLAG DAY FUND

The government has requested all citizens to connect with the cause of war-widows, Ex-Servicemen, wards of the martyred soldiers and contribute generously to Armed Forces Flag Day Fund in solidarity with the soldiers and their next of Kin or dependents.

About the fund

- Contributions to Armed Forces Flag Day Fund are exempt from Income Tax under Section 80G (5)(vi) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- The Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare in Ministry of Defence has been working for the welfare and rehabilitation of war widows, wards of martyred soldiers and Ex-Servicemen, including disabled by providing financial assistance for their identified personal needs such as penury grant, children's education grant, funeral grant, medical grant and orphanor disabled children grant.

1.47 NATIONAL AUTHORITY OF SHIP RECYCLING

The Central government has notified the Director-General of Shipping as the national authority for recycling of ships under the Recycling of Ships Act, 2019.

About NASR

- The national authority of ship recycling will be set up in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- The location of the office will benefit the ship recycling yard owners situated in Alang, Gujarat which is home to the largest ship recycling industry in the world.
- DG Shipping is authorized to administer, supervise and monitor all activities relating to ship recycling in the country.
- DG Shipping will oversee the sustainable development of the ship recycling industry, monitoring the compliance to environment-friendly norms and safety and health measures for the stakeholders.
- DG Shipping will be the final authority for the various approvals required by the ship-recycling yard owners and state governments.

About Recycling of Ships Act, 2019

- Under the Ship Recycling Act, 2019, India has acceded to the 'Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships'.
- This was adopted by the International Maritime



Organization (IMO).

- DG Shipping is a representative of India in the IMO and all the conventions of IMO are being enforced by DG Shipping.

1.48 ZERO RAJDHANI TRAIN

A special superfast train via Bogibeel, India's longest rail-road bridge across the Brahmaputra, covers 117 km less than the regular Rajdhani route between New Delhi and Dibrugarh.

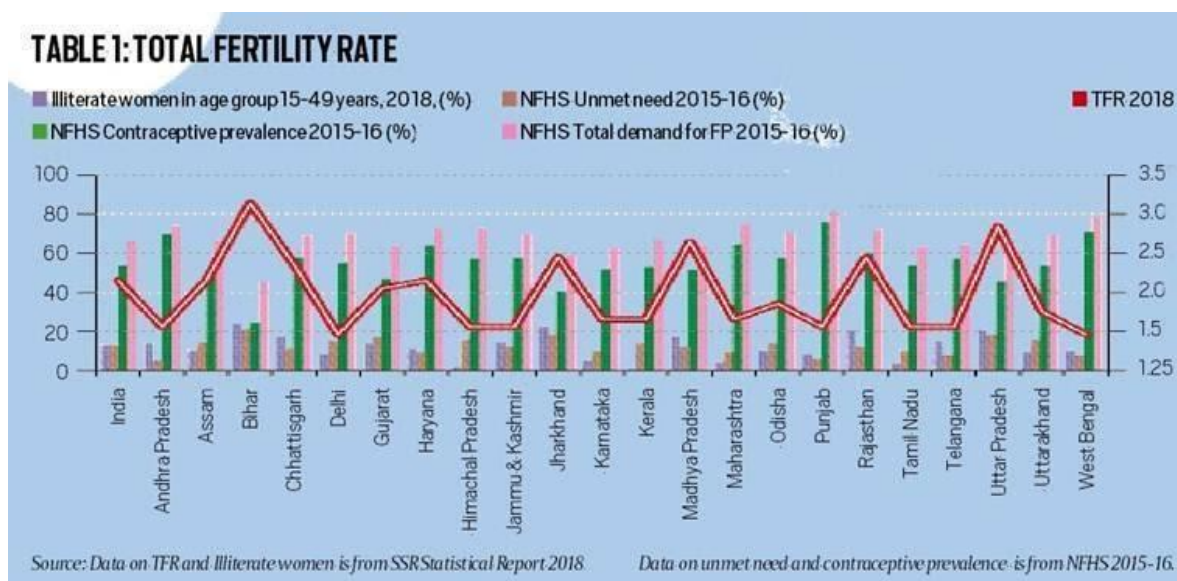
Background

- Bogibeel, India's longest rail-and-road bridge across the Brahmaputra, had in December 2018 brought the two "emotionally connected" banks of eastern Assam closer by more than seven hours.
- A 'zero Rajdhani' train via this 4.94 km bridge has now brought the people of the two banks closer to New Delhi by more than 100 km.

About the train

- The 02505/02506 between New Delhi and Dibrugarh on October 12 is technically not a Rajdhani, a superfast train whose number starts with 2 while those of mail express trains start with 1.
- The zero makes it a special train, the likes of which are operated temporarily.
- The train will officially become the biweekly Rajdhani we had planned to introduce from May 3 once train services in the country become regular.
- The plan had to be shelved because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The special 'Rajdhani' could be the first of its kind, deviating from the definition of such trains – connecting the national capital with the capitals or nearest largest city of the States.
- The train bypasses Guwahati, Assam's principal city and the original terminal for the Rajdhani, by some 50 km.
- For people in Dibrugarh and the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh, what matters more is the option of reaching Delhi or any other stations on the route of 'normal' Rajdhanis faster.
- The track via Bogibeel is 117 shorter than the regular Rajdhani route through Guwahati.

1.49 INDIA'S SEX RATIO



C Rangarajan (former Chairman, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council) has argued that there is an urgent need to reach young people both for reproductive health education and services as well as to cultivate gender equity norms.

About the statistics

- Fertility has been declining in India for some time now.
- The Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report (2018) estimated the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), the number of children a mother would have at the current pattern of fertility during her lifetime, as 2.2 in the year 2018.
- Fertility is likely to continue to decline and it is estimated that replacement TFR of 2.1 would soon be, if not already, reached for India as a whole.
- Many people believe that the population would stabilise or begin to reduce in a few years once replacement fertility is reached.
- Many people believe that the population would stabilise or begin to reduce in a few years once replacement fertility is reached.
- Biologically normal sex ratio at birth is 1,050 males to 1,000 females or 950 females to 1,000 males.
- The SRS reports show that sex ratio at birth in India, measured as the number of females per 1,000 males, declined marginally from 906 in 2011 to 899 in 2018.

Highlights

- This is a cause for concern because this adverse ratio results in a gross imbalance in the number of men and women and its inevitable impact on marriage systems as well as other harms to women.

- Thus, much more attention is needed on this issue.
- Increasing female education and economic prosperity help to improve the ratio,” they point out. It is hoped that a balanced sex ratio at birth could be realised over time, although this does not seem to be happening during the period 2011-18.
- In view of the complexity of son preference resulting in gender-biased sex selection, government actions need to be supplemented by improving women’s status in the society.
- In conclusion, there is an urgent need to reach young people both for reproductive health education and services as well as to cultivate gender equity norms.
- This could reduce the effect of population momentum and accelerate progress towards reaching a more normal sex-ratio at birth.
- India’s population future depends on it.

1.50 KHELO INDIA STATE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

- The Sports Ministry has upgraded centres from a total of nine States and Union Territories to the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence (KISCE) under the Khelo India scheme.
- The States and UTs include Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Chandigarh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Puducherry, Tripura and Jammu & Kashmir.
- About the centers
- The KISCEs will be world-class facilities where the best sporting talent from all over the country will be trained to further India's Olympic dreams.
- These centres have made the cut based on their past performances, quality of infrastructure, management & sports culture in the State, etc.
- Earlier this year, the Ministry had identified a total of 14 centres to be upgraded to KISCEs.
- The overall number now stands at 24 KISCEs from 23 States / UTs.
- The assistance to these centres will be provided in the form of bridging the gaps in sports equipment, high performance managers, coaches, sports scientists, technical support, etc.

Highlights

- The KISCE is established under the Ministry's flagship program called Khelo India Scheme.
- KISCE is being identified in each state and union territory to create a robust sporting ecosystem in the entire country.
- In order to upgrade the existing centre to the KISCE, the government will extend a ‘Viability Gap Funding’ in sports science and technology support for sports disciplines practiced at the centre and also bridge the gaps in requirement of sports equipment, expert coaches and high performance managers.

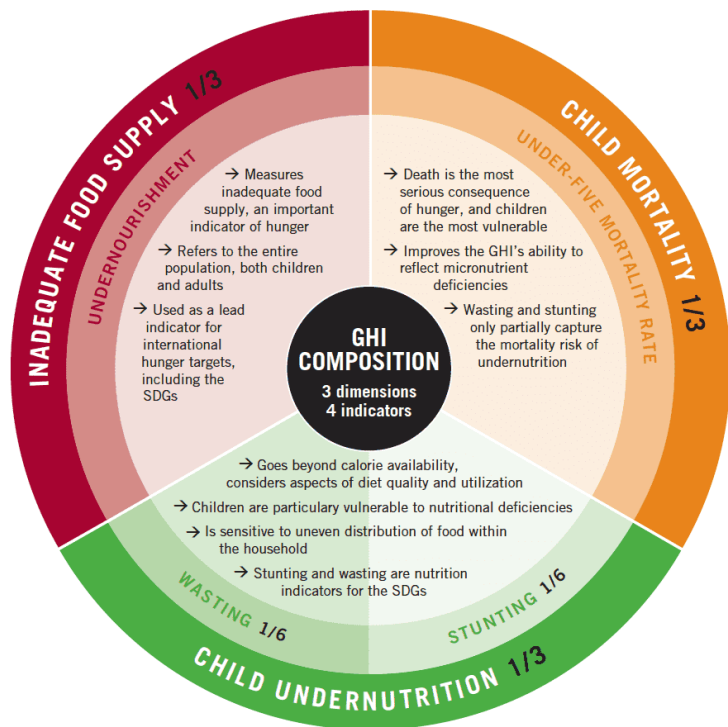
1.51 GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX (GHI) 2020

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020 has placed India at rank 94 among 107 countries.

- The GHI has been brought out every year by Welthungerhilfe (lately in partnerships with Concern Worldwide) since 2000.

About GHI

- A low score gets a country a higher ranking which implies a better performance.
- The reason for mapping hunger is to ensure that the world achieves “Zero Hunger by 2030” - a Sustainable Development Goals of the UN.
- This is why GHI is not calculated for certain high-income countries.



About the indicators

- Undernourishment reflects the inadequate food availability.
- It is calculated by the share of the population that is undernourished (i.e., whose caloric intake is insufficient).
- Child Wasting reflects acute under nutrition.
- It is calculated by the share of children under the age of five who are wasted (i.e., those who have low weight for their height).
- Child Stunting reflects chronic under nutrition.
- It is calculated by the share of children under the age of five who are stunted (i.e., those who have low height for their age).
- Child Mortality reflects both inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environment.
- It is calculated by the mortality rate of children under the age of five (in part, a reflection of the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition).

1.52 INDIA'S FIRST-EVER MULTI-MODAL LOGISTIC PARK

India's first Multimodal Logistics Park (MMLP) that will come up at Jogighopa, about 155 kilometres west of Guwahati, is poised to be a game-changer for the entire Northeast, as well as neighbours Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Highlights

- The Rs 694 crore park will provide direct connectivity to air, road, rail and waterways to the people.
- It will be developed under the ambitious Bharatmala Pariyojana of the Government of India.

1.53 AYUSHMAN SAHAKAR SCHEME

The Agriculture Ministry has rolled out the Ayushman Sahakar Scheme to assist cooperatives in the creation of healthcare infrastructure in the country.

Objective

- There is a huge need for medical and nursing education in rural areas. But the problem is a lack of infrastructure.
- Co-ops find it difficult to access credit for such projects as banks may not give them loans for non-agricultural purposes.

About the scheme

The scheme is formulated by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), the apex autonomous development finance institution under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

- The scheme would give a boost to the provision of healthcare services by cooperatives.
- It specifically covers establishment, modernization, expansion, repairs, renovation of hospital and healthcare and education infrastructure.

1.54 SOIL-TRANSMITTED HELMINTHIASES

- 14 States have shown reduction in the Soil-Transmitted Helminthiases (STH) and 9 states have shown substantial reduction in STH follow up prevalence survey.
- Soil-Transmitted Helminthiases (STH), also known as parasitic intestinal worm infection, is known to have detrimental effects on children's physical growth and well-being and can cause anaemia and under-nutrition.

Highlights

- Regular deworming as advised by the World Health Organization eliminates worm infestation among children and adolescents living in areas with high STH burden.
- As per WHO Report on STH published in 2012, in India there were an estimated 64% children in the age group (1-14 years) at risk of STH.

Deworming infants, children and women for better health World Health Organization

Intestinal parasitic worms (soil-transmitted helminths) are spread through soil, contaminated by human faeces.

Worm infections interfere with children's nutritional uptake and can result in malnourishment, anaemia, and stunted growth.

Periodic treatment of at-risk populations reduces the intensity of infection. No individual diagnosis is needed.

Treatment with what?
Free deworming medicines such as albendazole or mebendazole

Who should be treated?
Preschool, school-age children and women of reproductive age

Why treat everyone?
To reduce ill health (malnutrition, anaemia, impaired growth); To prevent others from acquiring severe infection

Where can treatment be sought?
Schools and community health centres

Global target: To reach 75% of children in need of treatment by 2020

- The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) completed the baseline STH mapping across the country by the end of 2016.
- The data showed varied prevalence ranging from 12.5 % in Madhya Pradesh to 85% in Tamil Nadu.

1.55 KALESHWARAM IRRIGATION PROJECT

- The National Green Tribunal held that environmental clearance given to the Kaleshwaram project is in violation of law.
- National Green Tribunal (NGT) has held that the environmental clearance given to the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) in Telangana was granted after the completion of substantial work by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and thus termed it as violation of law.

Background

- The NGT's Principal Bench has also observed that accountability needs to be fixed and remedial measures be taken.
- For that purpose, NGT has directed the MoEF&CC to constitute a seven-member expert committee preferably out of expert appraisal committee (EAC) members with relevant sectoral expertise to go into the matter in light of the observations in the present case.

About the project

- Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation System is one of the world's largest multi-purpose projects.
- It is designed to provide water for irrigation and drinking purposes to about 45 lakh acres in 20 of the 31 districts in Telangana, apart from Hyderabad and Secunderabad.
- The cost of the project is expected to rise upto Rs 1 lakh crore by the time it is completely constructed.
- This project is unique because Telangana will harness water at the confluence of two rivers with Godavari by constructing a barrage at Medigadda in JayashankarBhupalpally district and reverse pump the water into the main Godavari River and divert it through lifts and pumps into a huge and complex system of reservoirs, water tunnels, pipelines and canals.
- The project has set many records with the world's longest water tunnels, aqueducts, underground surge pools, and biggest pumps.
- By the time the water reaches KondapochammaSagar, the last reservoir in the system, about 227 kms away in Gajwel District, the Godavari water would have been lifted to a height of 618 metres from its source at Medigadda.

1.56 INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SERVICES CENTRES AUTHORITY

The IFSCA - International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), to develop the financial products and services in the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City International Financial Services Centre (GIFT IFSC) has prescribed the regulatory framework for Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) & Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) in IFSC.

Highlights

- IFSCA has permitted global participants that are REITs & InvITs incorporated in FATF compliant jurisdictions to list on the stock exchanges in GIFT IFSC. InvITs have been allowed to raise funds through private placements also.
- The REITs & InvITs registered in IFSC have been permitted to invest in real estate assets and infrastructure projects, respectively in IFSC.
- The REITs and InvITs that are listed in any of the permissible jurisdictions other than IFSC (currently USA, Japan, South Korea, United Kingdom excluding British Overseas Territories, France, Germany, Canada and India) or India have been permitted to list and trade on the recognised stock exchanges in IFSC, subject to compliance with their respective laws of the home jurisdiction.
- The listing of REITs and InvITs in IFSC shall be following the requirements of the stock exchanges in IFSC.
- The entities in IFSC can participate and benefit from the growth of real estate and infrastructure sector in international jurisdictions.

1.57 “LIFE IN MINIATURE” PROJECT

Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (I/C), Prahlad Singh Patel has virtually launched the “Life in Miniature” project, collaboration between the National Museum, New Delhi, Ministry of Culture, and Google Arts & culture.

About the project

- On the Google Arts & Culture app, online viewers can experience the first Augmented Reality-powered art gallery designed with traditional Indian architecture, and explore a life-size virtual space where you can walk up to a selection of miniature paintings.
- The artworks showcased are presented along with five universal themes of the human relationship with nature, love, celebration, faith, and power.
- Users will be able to see famous miniature collections of the National Museum, like the Ramayana, Royal Saga, Pahari style paintings in never before seen ways and in extraordinary detail, in just a few clicks at co/LifeInMiniature.

1.58 SEX WORKERS AS INFORMAL WORKERS

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) recognised sex workers as informal workers in their advisory issued on “Human Rights of Women in the context of COVID 19”.

Highlights

- The NHRC in an effort to secure the rights of all women who have been excluded and marginalised during the Covid-19 pandemic, included sex workers as informal workers in their advisory on ‘Women at Work’.
- The advisory asked the Ministries of Women, Labour, Social Justice, Health, and Consumer Affairs in all states and UTs to recognise sex workers as informal workers and register them so they are able to avail the benefits of a worker.

1.59 FACIAL RECOGNITION SYSTEM

- In a move that can bring relief to many students, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has now introduced “Facial Recognition System” for accessing digital documents.
- Using the latest facial recognition system, CBSE will enable students to download their digital academic documents of class 10 and Class 12.

Background

- This computer application matches a human face from a digital image already stored in the database of the board.
- The computer and the human interact to map the facial features.

Highlights

- Similarly, a live image of the student will be matched with the photograph on the CBSE admit card already stored in repository, and once successful, the certificate will be emailed to the student.
- This application is now available on “ParniaamManjusha” and Digi Locker at <https://digilocker.gov.in/cbse-certificate.html> for all 2020 records.
- CBSE has already pushed 12 crores digital academic documents in Digi locker which can be opened by a student to access Mark sheets, Pass certificate and Migration certificate.
- It is expected that the latest facility of face matching will immensely help foreign students and those who are unable to open Digi locker account for any reason such as Adhaar Card or wrong mobile numbers.

1.60 FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) decided to keep Pakistan on its "grey list", saying that the country has failed to act on six key mandates.
- The FATF urged Pakistan to complete an internationally agreed action plan by February 2021.

Background

- The FATF is a global watchdog that was founded to tackle money laundering initially but its role became prominent post the 9/11 terror attacks.
- Following the attacks, the FATF expanded its operations and included terror financing under its purview.

Highlights

- Its membership includes 39 jurisdictions.
- The FATF maintains two lists – a blacklist and a grey list. Countries on its blacklist are those that the watchdog deems non-cooperative in the global effort to curb money laundering and terror-financing.
- The grey list are officially referred to as ‘Jurisdictions Under Increased Monitoring.’
- It constitutes those nations that present significant risks of money laundering and terror-financing but which have committed to working closely with the FATF in the development and implementation of action plans that address their deficiencies.
- If the country is not actively tackling money laundering or terror funding, it is then blacklisted. So far, only two countries have been blacklisted, they are Iran and North Korea.

1.61 INDIA ENERGY FORUM

The Prime Minister will inaugurate India Energy Forum CERAWEEK, a global platform to understand best-practices, discuss reforms, and inform strategies for accelerating investments into the Indian Oil and Gas value chain’ from October 26-28.

Background

This is the 5th such event organized by NITI Aayog and Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas. Around 45 CEOs of major Oil and Gas companies will attend the event this year.

- The objective behind the meeting is to deliver a global platform to understand best-practices, discuss reforms, and inform strategies for accelerating investments into the Indian Oil and Gas value chain.
- The event will convene an international group of speakers and a community of over a thousand delegates from India and over 30 countries, including from regional energy companies, energy-related industries, institutions and governments.

Highlights

- India’s per capita consumption of coal is about 1/10th of that of the United States but still, India aims to use cleaner technology for low- carbon energy future.
- In addition to the above initiatives, India is planning to transform itself into Gas Economy.
- Natural Gas offers an option of a balancing fuel, as it has proven capability to complement renewables.

- The contribution of modern technologies, efficiency in production has been recognized for transforming the landscape towards climate justice, and a sustainable future.

1.62 KISAN SURYODAYA YOJANA

PM has launched the 'KisanSuryodayaYojana' aimed at providing day-time electricity to farmers in the State of Gujarat for irrigation and farming purposes.

About the scheme

- Under the scheme, farmers will be able to avail of power supply from 5 am to 9 pm for irrigation purposes.
- Around 234 transmission lines are to be installed under the scheme. Each line is to carry the power of 66 KW. They are to be erected to a total length of 3,490 km.
- Dahod, Patan, Mahisagar, Panchmahal, ChhotaUdepur, Kheda, Tapi, Valsad, Anand, and Gir-Somnath have been included under the Scheme for 2020-21.
- The remaining districts will be covered in a phase-wise manner by 2022-23.

1.63 GIRNAR ROPEWAY

Prime Minister NarendraModi launched the world's longest temple ropeway project at Girnar in Junagadh.

About the ropeway

- Girnar ropeway project consists of a total of 25 cabins and is of 2.3 kilometers length and 900 meters height.
- It operates at a capacity of 800 passengers per hour and 8000 per day.
- The Rupees 130 croreproject will attract more tourists and pilgrims to this historical place which will boost employment opportunities.
- In addition to this, the ropeway will also provide a scenic view of the lush green beauty surrounding the Girnarmountain.
- Mount Girnar is a major igneous plutonic complex which intruded into the basalts towards the close of the Deccan Trap period.

1.64 PM INAUGURATES NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON VIGILANCE AND ANTI CORRUPTION

- The Prime Minister inaugurated the National Conference on Vigilance and Anti-Corruption on the theme (Vigilant India, Prosperous India) through video conferencing.
- The event was organized by the Central Bureau of Investigation focusing on Vigilance issues aimed at raising awareness and reaffirming India's commitment to the promotion of integrity and probity in public life through citizen participation.

Background

- The Central Bureau of Investigation organizes this National Conference coinciding with Vigilance Awareness Week, which is observed in India every year from 27th October to 2nd November.
- Activities in this conference would be focused on Vigilance issues aimed at raising awareness and reaffirming India's commitment to the promotion of integrity and probity in public life through citizen participation.

Highlights

- The three-day conference would discuss the Challenges in the investigation in foreign jurisdictions, Preventive Vigilance as a Systemic Check against Corruption, Systemic improvements for financial inclusion and prevention of bank frauds, Effective Audit as an Engine of Growth, latest amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act as an impetus to the fight against corruption, Capacity Building and Training, Multi-Agency Coordination-an enabler for faster and more effective Investigation, Emerging Trends in Economic Offences, Cyber Crimes and Transnational Organized Crime-measures to Control and Exchange of Best Practices among Criminal Investigative Agencies.
- The Conference shall bring policymakers and practitioners on a common platform and will act as an enabler to combat corruption through systemic improvements and preventive vigilance measures, thereby ushering in good governance and accountable administration.
- This is a significant contributing factor for enabling ease of doing business in India.
- The participants of the Conference include Heads of Anti-Corruption Bureaux, Vigilance Bureaux, Economic Offence Wings or CID from States and UTs, CVO's, CBI officials and representatives from various Central agencies will also participate.
- The inaugural session was also attended by Chief Secretaries and DGsP of States and UTs.

1.65 PARAMPARA SERIES 2020

- Vice President, M Venkaiah Naidu has launched the virtual festival of "Parampara Series 2020-National Festival of Music and Dance" organised by NatyaTarangini in partnership with the United Nations.
- NatyaTarangini has been organising this for the past 23 years.

Background

- This dance and music festival as the normal life has been disrupted by lockdowns, economic downturns and lack of social interaction caused by the pandemic.
- It may be noted that this festival has been organized to coincide with the World Day for Audio-visual Heritage.

Highlights

- ‘Parampara’ means ‘tradition’, the transmission of cultural treasure house from one generation to the next.
- NatyaTarangini Performing Arts Centre, was founded initially as a Kuchipudi Dance Institute by India's legendary dancing couple Dr.(s) Raja Radha and Kaushalya Reddy in the year 1976 in New Delhi.

1.66 CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR TRIBAL WELFARE

- Union Minister of Tribal Affairs ArjunMunda launched two Centres of Excellence for Tribal Welfare.
- These centres were launched in collaboration between the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Art of Living through video conference.

Highlights

- The first initiative ‘Strengthening PRIs’ will be launched in 5 districts covering 30 Gram Panchayats and 150 villages of Jharkhand, in creating awareness among elected representatives of PRI about various Tribal Acts.
- The second is about training 10000 tribal farmers in Aurangabad District of Maharashtra on sustainable natural farming based on Go-Adharith farming techniques.
- Farmers will be helped in getting the Organic certification and the marketing opportunities will be made available to them to make each of them Atmanirbhar Tribal Farmers.

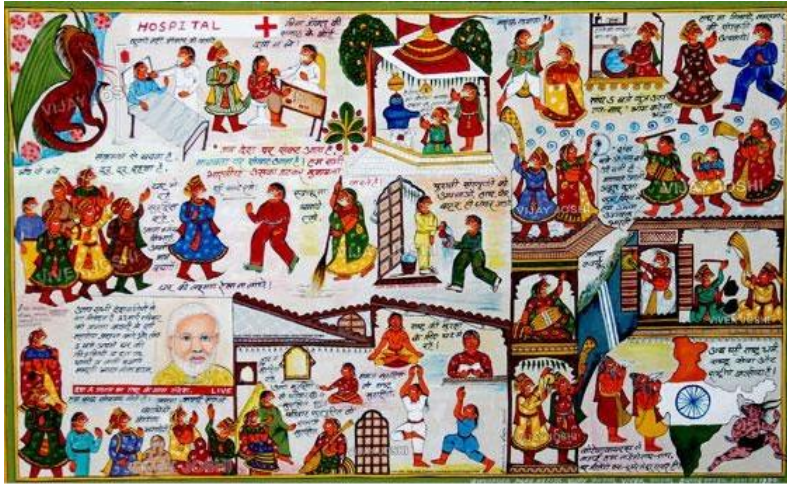
1.67 UNITED AGAINST CORONA- EXPRESS THROUGH ART

A six-year-old Bangladeshi boy AnzarMustaen Ali won a special prize of USD 1000 for his artwork in the global art competition organized by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR).

Highlights

The ICCR had launched a global painting competition named ‘United Against CORONA- Express through Art’ which attracted 8000 artwork entries from around the world.

- The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was founded in 1950 by MaulanaAbulKalam Azad, independent India’s first Education Minister.
- Its objectives are to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs pertaining to India’s external cultural relations.
- It is an autonomous organization of the Government of India.



UNITED AGAINST CORONA- EXPRESS THROUGH ART

ART IN THE TIME OF CORONA

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) invites Indian and world citizens to submit their work of art, expressing their emotions, feelings, ideas and innovative thoughts on the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing, quarantine and the fight against the virus.

Best works will receive major prizes and will be showcased online and in physical exhibitions in National level Galleries in India and abroad.

Expressions may be sent to ICCR by 1st May 2020 in following categories:

CONTEMPORARY ART | FOLK & TRIBAL ART | CARTOONS &
ILLUSTRATIONS | DIGITAL & NEW AGE ART

The competition is open to Professional artists, Amateurs (all people undergoing self-isolation), Students and Children.

For details on participation and competition brochure, please visit www.iccr.gov.in.

1.68 NRITYANJALI

The Films Division of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting is organizing the concluding part of 'Nriyjanjali', an online film festival on Indian classical dance and its maestros from October 28 to 30.

About the festival

- Nriyjanjali is an online festival of documentary films on the life and work of some of the leading Indian classical dance exponents.
- The festival will be streamed on Films Division website and its YouTube channel. All films will be streamed live, simultaneously, for three days.
- Indian Classical Dance is an umbrella under which various performing arts whose theory and practice can be traced to the Sanskrit text, Natya-Shastra, the foundational treatise by Bharata Muni.

- Prominent traditional dance forms like Bharat Natyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Kathakali, Sattriya, Manipuri and MohiniAattam, include music and recitation in the local language or Sanskrit and they represent a unity of core ideas in a diversity of styles, costumes and expression.

1.69 SKILL INDIA MISSION

In line with Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of making India the skill capital of the world, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) in collaboration with their unified regulator— National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) unveiled robust set of guidelines for the Awarding Bodies (AB) and Assessment Agencies (AA) over a digital conference.

Background

- The guidelines and operation manuals have been developed for the recognition and regulation of these two entities, key elements of skilling ecosystem.
- The guidelines aim at establishing quality, improved outcomes and standardizing the processes under Skill India Mission.
- Highlights
- India's diverse skilling ecosystem caters to multiple levels of skilling in various sectors.
- Therefore the need of the hour is to have a dynamic robust strategy framework that encourages improvements at a vast level.
- The guidelines released address the needs of many key stakeholders and takes an approach of good governance.
- The prepared guidelines take into account the existing systems while incorporating the progressive changes required to empower every candidate who desires to be skilled.

2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1 India to host India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue on October 27



- The Ministry of External Affairs informed on October 21, 2020, that India will be hosting the third India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue on October 27 in New Delhi.
- According to the official statement from the External Affairs Ministry, India will host the third India-US Ministerial Dialogue for which U.S Secretary of Defence, Mark T. Esper, and U.S. Secretary of State, Michael R. Pompeo will be visiting India on October 26-27 to participate.
- While from India, Rajnath Singh, the Union Defence Minister, and S Jaishankar, the External Affairs Minister will be leading the US delegations from their respective ministries. The first two 2+2 ministerial dialogue between India and the US were held in New Delhi in September 2018 and in 2019 in Washington D.C.
- Looking forward to my upcoming trip to India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Indonesia, for productive conversations with our friends and partners, and the U.S.-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue and our Indian counterparts.

What can be expected from the meeting between India and the US?

- According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the agenda for the third dialogue between India and the US will cover all the regional, bilateral, and global issues of mutual interest.
- The meeting between the Indo-pacific democracies will be highlighting the challenges in the region and will also discuss the ways to overcome those challenges, says US Defence Secretary Mark Esper.
- While having a conversation with President of Atlantic Council, Frederick Kempe, Esper informed that he himself along with US Secretary Michael Pompeo will be visiting India. He added that it will be their second 2+2 meeting with India while the third ever for the US and India.

- While talking about the relations between the two countries, he assured that the visit is significant as India will be the most consequential partner of the US in the Indo-pacific region for sure in this century.
- The meeting is also expected to highlight the China issue and the impact of its actions in the Indo-pacific region.

2.2 India-Denmark Bilateral Summit; Partners to Work Towards Supply-chain Diversification



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Danish counterpart Mette Frederiksen held a virtual summit on 28 September. The aim is to strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Highlights:

- The leaders signed an MoU in the field of intellectual property cooperation between the two countries.
- The virtual bilateral summit provided an opportunity for the two leaders to comprehensively review the broad framework of the bilateral relationship between the two countries
- The summit gave broad political direction for a strengthened and deepened collaborative partnership on key issues of mutual interest.
- A major outcome of the summit is joining of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) by Denmark.

2.3 India, Netherlands sign SoI on Decarbonization and Energy Transition Agenda

The policy think tank of the Government of India, NITI Aayog and Embassy of the Netherlands, New Delhi, signed a Statement of Intent (SoI) on 28 September 2020. The aim is to support the decarbonization and energy transition agenda for accommodating cleaner and more energy.

Highlights:

- The agreement aims for a strategic partnership to create a platform which will enable a comprehensive collaboration among stakeholders and influencers, including industry bodies, policymakers, Original equipment manufacturer (OEMs), private enterprises, and sector experts.
- The partnership focuses on co-creating innovative technological solutions by leveraging the expertise of the two entities.

- It will be achieved through an exchange of knowledge and collaborative activities.

Key elements include:

- lowering the net carbon footprint in industrial and transport sectors
- realise the target potential of natural gas and promote bio-energy technologies
- adopt clean air technologies from monitoring to reducing actual particulates
- adopt next-generation technologies, such as hydrogen, carbon capture utilization, and storage for sectoral energy efficiency
- financial frameworks to deliver and adopt climate change finance
- The SoI will enhance Indo-Dutch collaboration, and it will successfully work towards achieving the decarbonization and energy transition agenda.

2.4 Suspension of Amnesty International Operations in India

Amnesty International (AI) India has decided to shut its operations in India. The decision came after the recent move by the Enforcement Directorate to freeze the organisation's accounts.

Details

An FIR was filed by CBI in 2019, on charges of an alleged violation of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).

The ED has now converted the preliminary inquiry into an ECIR (the equivalent of an FIR) alleging money laundering charges and froze all of AI India's bank accounts. The ED has invoked the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International (AI) is a non-governmental organization with its headquarters in the United Kingdom focused on human rights.

The mission of the organization is to campaign for a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

Amnesty draws attention to human rights abuses and campaigns for compliance with international laws and standards.

Amnesty International was founded in London in 1961.

The organization was awarded the 1977 Nobel Peace Prize for its "defence of human dignity against torture," and the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights in 1978.

2.5 India, Australia conducted meeting to strengthen partnership on Skilling Agenda

The Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the High Commission of Australia conducted meeting for Cooperation in Vocational Education and

Training.

The aim is to support Vocational Education and Training (VET) in India and Australia. Union Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Dr MahendraNathPandey and Mr Barry O'Farrell, Australian High Commissioner, participated in the virtual meeting.

Highlights:

The meeting aimed to operationalize and implement Cooperation in VET to promote the development of occupational standards in priority industry sectors. The officials discussed the importance of joint planning and implementation of collaborative programmes was emphasized with a focus on salient points such as industry sectors. The meeting aimed to enhance the capacity and quality of trainers and assessors; internships and apprenticeship exchanges; and facilitation of linkages between VET providers and industry in both the countries.

The joint working group (JWG) meeting will further assist in formulating focussed interventions to deliver on the skills agenda across both the nations. Through this partnership, we will ensure a collaborative and clear plan of action to address the priority areas in skill development. The move is in line with the joint participation of the PM of India and the PM of Australia in the India-Australia Leaders' Virtual Summit held on 4th June 2020.

2.6 When is the International Day of Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons observed?

Every year International Day of Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons is celebrated on September 26.

Aim

The aims of the day are to enhance public awareness about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity for their total elimination.

Highlights

In 2013, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) declared September 26 to be the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (Nuclear Abolition Day).

The UNGA resolution establishing the day also calls for progress on a nuclear weapons convention. Nuclear Weapons convention is a global treaty involving the nuclear armed states in the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons under strict and effective international control.

2.7 Referendum on Free Movement: Switzerland-EU

In a recent referendum, the Swiss people have rejected a bid to reduce immigration from the European Union (EU). Over five million Swiss voters cast ballots to decide whether to abandon an agreement with the EU which allows for the free movement of people across the country.

Key Points

Switzerland is not a member of the EU but has a series of interdependent treaties with Brussels (EU Headquarter) which allow it access to Europe's free trade area.

1992-2002: Switzerland negotiated and signed first bilateral agreements with the EU, making them interdependent and included the free movement of people which was again backed by a vote in 2000.

It is a member of the EU's Single Market, which allows people to move and work freely in all 27 EU countries as well as in Switzerland.

Around 1.4 million out of the 8.2 million people residing in Switzerland are EU citizens and an average of 5,00,000 Swiss citizens are believed to be living in other EU countries at the moment. If people choose to end the agreement, the Swiss government will have to unilaterally void its free movement agreement with the EU by invoking a so-called guillotine clause. This clause would have impacted other bilateral deals on transport, research and trade with the EU, disrupting economic activity.

2.8 Kyrgyzstan President SooronbaiJeenbekov resigns amid election turmoil



Kyrgyzstan President **SooronbaiJeenbekov** stepped down from his position on October 15, 2020 to bring an end to the turmoil that has gripped the nation after the disputed parliamentary elections. In an official statement, Jeenbekov stated that holding on to power wasn't worth the integrity of the country and agreement in society. He further said that for him, "peace in Kyrgyzstan, the country's integrity, the unity of our people and calm in the society are above all else."

The decision came after intense calls from protestors and political opposition, demanding for SooronbaiJeenbekov's resignation.

Kyrgyzstan's Election Turmoil

- Kyrgyzstan was plunged into crisis after October 4 General Elections, which were swept by pro-government parties. The opposition criticised the elections, accusing the government of vote-buying and other irregularities.
- Following the election results, protestors took over government buildings and looted some offices.
- The Central Election Commission then nullified the election, following which opposition planned to oust Jeenbekov and form a new government.
- Hundreds of protestors came together in Kyrgyzstan's capital city, Bishkek to demand for Jeenbekov's resignation. The protests had continued till today morning.
- Jeenbekov had earlier on October 14 dismissed a demand to step down from the country's new prime minister, saying he would stay on the job until the political situation in the Central Asian country stabilises.
- The president had insisted that stepping down could trigger “unpredictable developments to the detriment of the state.”
- The official statement from the President's office had emphasized then that he will only agree to resign after “he takes the country back into the legal field, after holding parliamentary and calling presidential elections.”

State of Emergency

- Jeenbekov had introduced a state of emergency in the capital, Bishkek, which was endorsed by the parliament on October 13. The authorities had deployed troops to Bishkek over the weekend and introduced the curfew. The move eased tensions in the city, where residents feared looting that had accompanied the previous uprisings and began forming vigilante groups to protect property.
- Jeenbekov had also supported the appointment of SadyrZhaparov, a former lawmaker who was freed from jail by demonstrators last week, as the country's new prime minister. He endorsed Zhaparov's new Cabinet.
- Jeenbekov said in his statement that the situation in Bishkek remained tense despite the formation of the new Cabinet and he did not want to escalate these tensions.
- He said on one side, there were protestors, on the other, the law enforcement and in this case, blood will be shed, it is inevitable. He continued by saying, “I don't want to go down in history as a president who shot at his own citizens and shed blood.”

Background

Kyrgyzstan is a country comprising 6.5 million people located on the border with China. The recent turmoil marks the third time in 15 years that demonstrators have moved to oust a government in Kyrgyzstan. Similar uprisings had resulted in the ousting of Presidents in 2005 and 2010. Kyrgyzstan is one of the poorest nations to emerge from the former Soviet Union.

2.9 China, Pakistan re-elected to UNHRC: US slams UN for electing authoritarian regimes



- The UN General Assembly on October 12, 2020 elected Pakistan, China, Russia and 12 other countries to serve as members of the UN Human Rights Council for three-year terms starting from January 1, 2021.
- China was re-elected to the UNHRC after it defeated Saudi Arabia in the elections to win a seat by the smallest margin. Pakistan and Nepal have also been re-elected to the UN Human Rights Council.
- Following the election results, Human Rights Watch's UN Director Louis Charbonneau tweeted saying that the voting shows more states are disturbed by China's abysmal rights record.

Key Highlights

- This year's elections to the Human Rights Council saw 16 candidates from four regional groups - African, Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, Latin American and Caribbean and Western European - competing for a seat at the Geneva-based body.
- Countries needed to get the required majority of 97 votes to be elected to the council. China received 139 votes in the UN General Assembly voting and will be serving at the council along with Nepal, Pakistan and Uzbekistan.
- China managed to secure a win despite its treatment of the Uighur Muslim minority and opposition of several countries and human rights groups. However, its number of votes have

gone down, in comparison to its 180 votes in 2016. They were also the lowest among all countries that got elected.

- Though Saudi Arabia has also been criticized for its human rights record, its defeat was a surprise as it had received 152 votes in the 2016 elections when it was last elected.
- Russia, which was defeated in 2016 by two votes, received 159 votes in favor this time and will join the Eastern European group along with Ukraine, which was re-elected for a second term with 166 votes.

Countries protest against China's treatment of Uighur Muslims

- Thirty nine countries led by Germany had issued strong criticism against China last week at the United Nations expressing concern regarding the human rights situation in Xinjiang and the recent developments in Hong Kong.
- China has reportedly been held responsible for closing, demolishing many major shrines, mosques and other holy structures across Xinjiang region in recent years. China has also been accused of keeping millions of Uighur Muslims in concentration camps, where they are systematic persecution.
- As per a report by Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), around 8,500 mosques across Xinjiang have been completely demolished since 2017 and over millions of Uighurs have been arrested and put in concentration camps which Beijing calls “re-education camps”.

US slams UN for electing authoritarian regimes

- The United States Secretary of State Michael Pompeo slammed the United Nations for electing “authoritarian regimes” such as China, Russia and Cuba into the UN Human Rights Council. He added saying that the US' decision to withdraw from the council has been “validated”.
- Pompeo in the statement also accused the global human rights council of "anti-Israel bias and membership rules that allow the election of the world's worst human rights abusers to seats on the Council."
- He stated that after the US' exit, the nation has urged the UN member states to take immediate action to reform the Council before it became irreparable but unfortunately, those calls went unheeded, as once again the UNGA elected countries with abhorrent human rights records including China, Russia, and Cuba. Another such nation, Venezuela was elected to the UNHRC in 2019.
- Pompeo further stressed that the US' commitment to human rights consists of far "more than just words". He emphasised that the US has punished human rights abusers in Xinjiang,

Myanmar, Iran, and elsewhere.

2.10 India contributes USD 1 million to UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees

- The Indian government on October 14, 2020, contributed USD 1 million to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestinian refugees in the Near East.
- The contribution which has also been hailed by the UN body is for the Palestinian refugees who have been facing extreme challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Indian government had handed over the cheque to the United Nations Agency through Sunil Kumar, it's representative in Palestine. UNRWA- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East has thanked India for its timely help.



2.11 UNRWA faces increased demand due to the increased number of Palestinian refugees:

As per the authorities, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency has been facing a huge budgetary deficit with a majority of 5.6 million refugees who have been living under the poverty line. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has broken down the backbone of the infrastructure in the areas they live in.

The UN Agency has been facing increased demand in the services which results from growth in the number of registered Palestinian refugees, the extent of their deepening poverty, and vulnerability.

India' help to Palestinian Refugees: Highlights

- Director of Communications at UNRWA, Sami Mshasha acknowledged that India has always been a consistent supporter of Palestinian refugees for decades and this contribution by India is more significant at the crucial time.
- On June 23, 2020, during an Extraordinary Ministerial Pledging Conference for UNRWA which was held virtually, V. Muraleedharan, the Minister of State for External Affairs had announced that India will contribute USD 10 million to UNRWA in the next 2 years.
- The Indian government has also increased its annual financial contribution to the UN agency from USD 1.25 million in 2016 to USD 5 million in 2018 and 2019.

- India had also contributed USD 2 million to UNRWA in May 2020 which takes the total contribution for this year to USD 3 million.
- India has also sent the medicines and other essential supplies to the Palestinian National Authority to help with the COVID-19 situation.

India-Palestine Development Partnership:

Under this partnership, India has been currently funding 8 ongoing developmental projects that are worth USD 59 million dollars. It includes building an Information Technology Park, 215 Bed Super Specialty Hospital in Bethlehem, National Printing Press, Diplomatic Training Institute, Turathi-Women empowerment project, three schools in various governorates in the Palestinian Territories, and Diplomatic Training Institute.

What is UNRWA and what is its objective?

It is a UN agency which was established by the UN General Assembly in 1949. The agency is mandated to provide protection and assistance to some 5.6 million Palestine refugees who are registered with UNRWA across its 5 fields of operation.

The mission of UNRWA is to help the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, West Bank, including Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem achieve their full human development potential.

The services of UNRWA encompass health care, education, camp infrastructure, relief and social services, and protection, improvement, and microfinance among the Palestinian refugees.

2.12 India join and supports UK-led campaign against encrypted social media messages



India and seven other countries have decided to back a UK-led campaign against the end-to-end encryption of the social media messages by giants such as Facebook which hinders law enforcement by blocking all the access to them.

The United Kingdom and India have been joined by Canada, United States, New Zealand, Japan, and Australia in a joint statement that was addressed to all the tech companies to ensure that they

must not blind themselves from the illegal activities on their platforms, including child abuse images.

This move marks an expansion of the 'five eyes' group of nations which is a global alliance on the intelligence issues, to include Japan and India.

What does the statement to tech companies entail?

- The statement, while directing at all the tech firms makes a reference to the fact that the population of the 7 countries who have signed the statement represents a fifth of Facebook's users all over the world. It clearly claims that end to end encryption policies that have been employed by social media giants erode the public's safety online.
- The 7 signatories of the international statement have made it extremely clear that when end-to-end encryption is applied with no access to the content online, it undermines the companies' ability to take action against any form of illegal activity on their own platforms.
- The international statement also calls on the tech companies to ensure that there is no reduction in the safety of users when designing their encrypted services and to enable law enforcement access to the content where it is required and to work with the government to facilitate this.
- The United Kingdom and its international partners have been clear that they are in support of the strong encryption but not in a way where it precludes all the legal access to the content, therefore putting users at the risk of harm.

The purpose behind the campaign against encrypted social media messages:

- Priti Patel, UK Home Secretary while referring to the statement which was issued on October 11, 2020, stated that we owe it to all of our citizens, especially children, to ensure their safety by working to unmask terrorists and sexual predators who have been operating online.
- She further noted that it is important that the tech companies do not turn a blind eye to this gruesome problem and hamper their as well as law enforcement's ability of tackling these sickening criminal acts. The countries that have joined the campaign have urged all the tech companies to work with us to find a solution that will put public safety first.

Facebook on the question of end-to-end encryption:

According to a Facebook spokesperson, the Company has long argued that end-to-end encryption is necessary in order to protect people's most private information as in all of these countries users prefer end-to-end encrypted messaging on various apps as it keeps their messages safe from criminals, hackers, and foreign interference.

Facebook has also led the industry in developing new ways that will help to prevent, detect, and respond to any form of abuse while maintaining high security.

2.13 Massive World War II bomb ' Tallboy' detonates underwater in Poland



- A massive World War II bomb exploded underwater in Poland on October 12, 2020 during a delicate operation by the Polish Navy. The information was shared by the Navy on its Facebook page.
- Over hundreds of local residents were evacuated from the area ahead of the military operation undertaken by Polish Military Divers to defuse the five-tonne bomb in a channel near the Baltic Sea. No one was harmed during the operation. The operation was initially planned to take until Friday, depending on the weather.
- The five-tonne bomb— nicknamed “Tallboy”, also known as an “earthquake bomb”, was dropped by the British Royal Air Force in an attack on a Nazi warship in 1945.

How was the Second World War bomb discovered?

The Second World War bomb was discovered in 2019 during dredging close to the port city of Swinoujscie, which was formerly know as Swinemunde and was a part of Nazi Germany in the far northwest of Poland. It was discovered at a depth of 12 metres (39 feet) in the ground with just its nose sticking out.

Significance

- This is the first time that a well preserved World War bomb has been detonated underwater. The spokesperson of the Polish Navy’s 8th Coastal Defence Flotilla, Grzegorz Lewandowski said, "It’s a world first. Nobody has ever defused a Tallboy that is so well preserved and underwater.”
- Ahead of the operation, Lewandowski had called it "a very delicate job," adding that "the tiniest vibration could detonate the bomb".

Key Highlights

- Tallboy, which was more than six metres long, was laden with 2.4 tonnes of explosives that is equal to almost 3.6 tons of TNT.
- The Polish Navy had earlier decided against going for the traditional option of a controlled explosion due to the fear of destroying a nearby bridge.
- The Navy then planned to deploy a technique called deflagration, which involves burning of the explosive charge without causing a detonation using a remotely controlled device to pierce through the shell to begin combustion.
- However, the deflagration process turned into detonation in the end. There was though no risk to the individuals directly involved.
- The bomb can now be considered neutralised.

Hundreds evacuated

- Almost around 750 local residents were requested to evacuate beforehand from an area of 2.5 km around the bomb. Some residents though stayed put because of COVID-19 pandemic scare. The evacuated people were being housed at a sports hall during the operation.
- The maritime traffic on the navigation channel and surrounding waterways was also suspended in an area of 16 kilometres around the bomb disposal operation.

Background

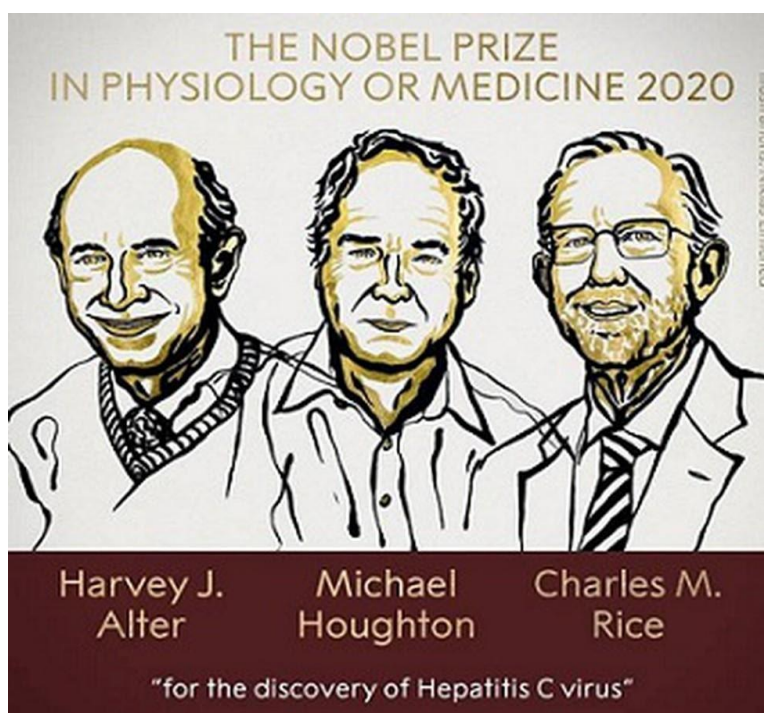
- Swinoujscie, which was Swinemuende, a part of Germany during World War II was home to one of Germany's most significant Baltic bases. Hence, it was subjected to massive bombardments.
- Tallboy was dropped by the British Royal Air Force in an attack on the Nazi warship Luetzow cruiser in April 1945. The ship's cannons were being used to hold back the advance of the Red Army, (Army of USSR) in the dying days of the war.
- On April 16, 1945, the British Royal Air Force sent 18 Lancaster bombers to attack the Luetzow cruiser. The bombers dropped 12 Tallboys, one of which failed to explode at the time. The Tallboy bombs were designed to explode underground next to the intended target, triggering shock waves that would cause massive destruction.

3. NOBEL PRIZE – 2020

- The Nobel Prizes regarded as the most prestigious awards given for intellectual achievement in the world are awarded annually from a fund bequeathed for that purpose by the Swedish inventor and industrialist Alfred Nobel.
- It is announced every year for excellence in Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Literature, Economics, and a distinguished achievement towards humanity – commonly known as the Nobel Peace Prize.

3.1 NOBEL PRIZE FOR MEDICINE OR PHYSIOLOGY 2020

- Americans Harvey J Alter and Charles M Rice, and British scientist Michael Houghton were chosen for the Nobel Prize for Medicine or Physiology for the discovery of the Hepatitis C virus.
- The prestigious award comes with a gold medal and prize money of 10 million Swedish kronor (over \$1,118,000), courtesy of a bequest left 124 years ago by the prize's creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel.



Highlights

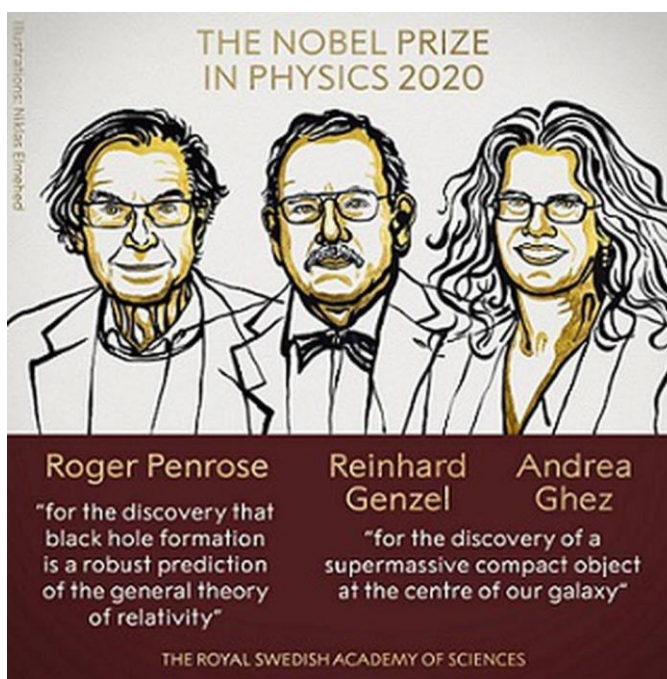
- The World Health Organisation estimates there are over 70 million cases of Hepatitis worldwide and 400,000 deaths each year.
- The disease is chronic and a major cause of liver inflammation and Cancer.
- The medicine prize carries particular significance this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, which has highlighted the importance that medical research has for societies and economies around the world.

3.2 NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSICS 2020

The Nobel Prize in Physics 2020 has been awarded, with one half to Roger Penrose and the other half jointly to Reinhard Genzel and Andrea Ghez for their discoveries about Black hole.

Highlights

- Roger Penrose used ingenious mathematical methods in his proof that black holes are a direct consequence of Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity.
- Einstein did not himself believe that black holes really exist, these super-heavyweight monsters that capture everything that enters them. Nothing can escape, not even light.
- Reinhard Genzel and Andrea Ghez each lead a group of astronomers that, since the early 1990s, has focused on a region called Sagittarius A* at the centre of our galaxy.
- Their pioneering work has given us the most convincing evidence yet of a supermassive black hole at the centre of the Milky Way.



3.3 NOBEL PRIZE IN CHEMISTRY 2020

- Recently, Emmanuelle Charpentier of France and Jennifer Doudna of the U.S. won the Nobel Chemistry Prize for the gene-editing technique known as the CRISPR-Cas9 DNA snipping "scissors".
- This is the first time a Nobel science prize has gone to a women-only team.

About the winners

- Charpentier, 51, and Ms. Doudna, 56, are just the sixth and seventh women to receive the Nobel Prize in Chemistry.
- Using the tool, "researchers can change the DNA of animals, plants and microorganisms with extremely high precision".
- The CRISPR-Cas9 tool has already contributed to significant gains in crop resilience, altering their genetic code to better withstand drought and pests.
- This technology has had a revolutionary impact on the life sciences, is contributing to new cancer therapies and may make the dream of curing inherited diseases come true.



About CRISPR technology

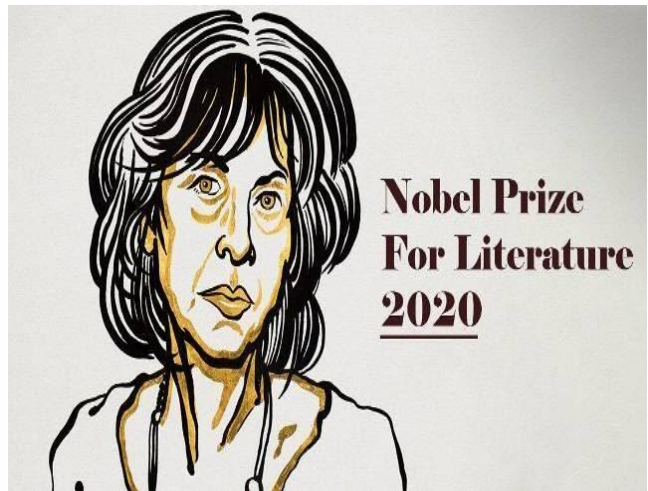
- The CRISPR stands for Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats and was developed in the year 2012.
- It has revolutionised and has made gene editing very easy and has imparted extreme efficiency in gene editing.
- The technology works in a simple way it locates the specific area in the genetic sequence which has been diagnosed to be the cause of the problem, cuts it out, and replaces it with a new and correct sequence that no longer causes the problem.
- The technology replicates a natural defence mechanism in some bacteria that use a similar method to protect itself from virus attacks.

3.4 NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

- The Nobel Prize in Literature 2020 has been awarded to American poet Louise Glück for her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal.
- Louise Glück has won several prestigious awards including the Pulitzer Prize in 1993 and the National Book Award in 2014.

About Louise Glück

- Louise Glück has published twelve poetry collections and some volumes of essays on poetry. All her written pieces are characterized by a striving for clarity.
- The main theme of her written work has revolved around childhood and family life and a close relationship with parents and siblings.
- In most of her works, Glück seeks the universal and in this, she takes inspiration from myths and classical motifs.
- Some of her works including *The Triumph of Achilles* (1985) and *Ararat* (1990) found a growing audience in the US and abroad.
- Louise Glück is not only affected by the shifting conditions of life, but she is also a poet of radical change and rebirth, where the forward leap is taken after a deep sense of loss.
- In one of her most popular collections - *The Wild Iris* (1992), she described the miraculous return of life after winter in the poem "Snowdrops". She won the Pulitzer Prize for the literary piece.



- Another one of her works - *Averno* (2006) is a masterly collection, which is a visionary interpretation of the myth of Persephone's descent into hell in the captivity of Hades, the god of death.

3.5 **NOBEL PEACE PRIZE FOR 2020**

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2020 to the World Food Programme (WFP) for its efforts to combat hunger and for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for preventing the use of hunger being weaponised in war and conflict.

ABOUT THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

- In his will, signed by Alfred Nobel on November 27, 1895, he mentioned that one part of his fortune that went towards the Nobel Prizes would be dedicated to "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses".
- The Nobel Peace Prizes have been awarded since 1901 and was not awarded on 19 occasions including 1914-1916, 1918, 1939-1943 among some other years.
- This is because the statutes of the Nobel Foundation mention, "If none of the works under consideration is found to be of the importance indicated in the first paragraph, the prize money shall be reserved until the following year.
- If, even then, the prize cannot be awarded, the amount shall be added to the Foundation's restricted funds." Therefore, fewer awards were given during the two World Wars.

ABOUT WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

- The World Food Programme (WFP) is the food-assistance branch of the United Nations and the world's largest humanitarian organization focused on hunger and food security.
- Founded in 1961, it is headquartered in Rome.
- In 2019, the WFP provided assistance to close to 100 million people in 88 countries who are victims of acute food insecurity and hunger.



- In 2015, eradicating hunger was adopted as one of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.
- The WFP is the UN's primary instrument for realising this goal.
- The World Food Programme was an active participant in the diplomatic process that culminated in May 2018 in the UN Security Council's unanimous adoption of Resolution 2417, which for the first time explicitly addressed the link between conflict and hunger.

3.6 NOBEL PRIZE 2020 IN ECONOMICS

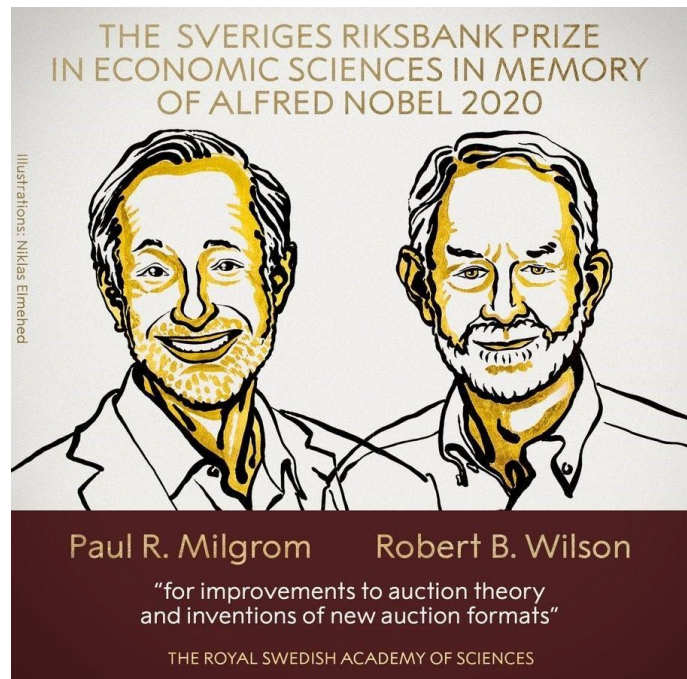
- Two American economists Paul R Milgrom and Robert B Wilson jointly won this year's Nobel Prize in Economics.
- Both economists are based at Stanford University in California.

Background

- The award caps a week of Nobel Prizes and is technically known as the SverigesRiksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel.
- Since its establishment in 1969, it has been awarded 51 times and is now widely considered one of the Nobel prizes.

Highlights

- Paul Milgrom and Robert Wilson were chosen for the Nobel Prize in Economics for improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auction formats.
- The new auction formats are a beautiful example of how basic research can subsequently generate inventions that benefit society.
- The unusual feature of this example is that the same people developed the theory and the practical applications.



4. INDIAN ECONOMY

4.1 Centre sets up panel to screen foreign investment proposals from China

- The Indian government has set up a screening panel to vet all the Chinese foreign investment proposals and those which will be considered non-controversial could be approved.
- The screening panel has been headed by the Home Secretary and has the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Secretary as a member. As per the senior official, more than 100 proposals involving the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from China are pending.
- In April 2020, prior government clearance was made mandatory for FDI from the countries sharing a land border. The step was widely seen to be directed at curbing Chinese takeover of companies amid stock market volatility during the COVID pandemic.

Screening Panel for investment proposals:

- An inter-ministerial committee or screening panel has been set up to go through the proposals that various ministries have received and that were forwarded to the Home Ministry for the security clearance.
- Only the proposals that are non-controversial can be approved after the committee examines the proposals from the point of view of ownership and its implications for security.

Is there a ban on Chinese investment?

- Nirmala Sitharaman, the Union Finance Minister, on the question of whether there is a ban on Chinese investment clarified that there has been no ban on Chinese investments. If there is a feeling that India has stopped investors from a particular Country, it is not true and the government has not taken any such step.
- She further added that the investments are being regulated but they are not stopped. Between April 2020 and June 2020, Foreign Direct Investment from China was a total of \$2.4 billion.

Prior approval for critical sector investments:

- On April 18, DPIIT had notified the new FDI Policy stating that an entity of a country that shares a land border with India, can invest only under the government route. The step was taken to curb the opportunistic acquisitions/takeovers of the Indian companies due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- Under the rule, The prior approval or clearance by the Ministry of Home Affairs will be required to the investments in the critical sectors which include satellites, defence, mining, civil aviation, private security agencies, media, and telecommunications. They will have to determine the security criteria and also look at it from the perspective of data theft.

4.2 International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) prescribes regulatory framework for REITs and InvITs in IFSC

The IFSCA - International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), to develop the financial products and services in the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City International Financial Services Centre (GIFT IFSC) has prescribed the regulatory framework for Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) & Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) in IFSC.

Highlights:

- IFSCA has permitted global participants that are REITs & InvITs incorporated in FATF compliant jurisdictions to list on the stock exchanges in GIFT IFSC. InvITs have been allowed to raise funds through private placements also.
- The REITs & InvITs registered in IFSC have been permitted to invest in real estate assets and infrastructure projects, respectively in IFSC.
- The REITs and InvITs that are listed in any of the permissible jurisdictions other than IFSC (currently USA, Japan, South Korea, United Kingdom excluding British Overseas Territories, France, Germany, Canada and India) or India have been permitted to list and trade on the recognised stock exchanges in IFSC, subject to compliance with their respective laws of the home jurisdiction.
- The listing of REITs and InvITs in IFSC shall be following the requirements of the stock exchanges in IFSC.
- The entities in IFSC can participate and benefit from the growth of real estate and infrastructure sector in international jurisdictions.

4.3 PCA Decision on Retrospective Taxation by India



The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague (Netherlands) ruled that India's retrospective imposition of a tax liability, as well as interest and penalties on Vodafone Group for a 2007 deal was violation of the Bilateral Investment Treaty with Netherlands and the arbitration rules of United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Key Points

- In May 2007, the British telecommunication company Vodafone Group had bought a 67% stake in a company called Hutchison Whampoa.

- For this, the Indian government for the first time raised a demand of capital gains and withholding tax from Vodafone, under the Income Tax Act of 1961. The government argued that Vodafone should have deducted the tax at source before making a payment to Hutchison.
- It is the tax paid on income that derives from the sale or exchange of an asset, such as a stock or property that's categorized as a capital asset.
- In 2012, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Vodafone Group.
- Later, the Finance Act was amended (2012) giving the Income Tax Department the power to retrospectively tax such deals.
- Vodafone then initiated arbitration in 2014 invoking the Bilateral Investment Treaty signed between India and the Netherlands in 1995.
- The International Arbitration Tribunal at Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled that the government's demand is in breach of fair and equitable treatment.
- The government must cease seeking the dues from Vodafone.
- This was a unanimous decision meaning that India's appointed arbitrator also ruled in favour of Vodafone.
- India has said it would study the order and all its aspects and take a decision on further course of action including legal remedies before appropriate fora.
- According to Indian Government, as Vodafone had not paid the initial tax demand and interest and penalty on it, the question of India paying back the amount does not arise.
- India has the option to move to Singapore International Arbitration Centre as well.

4.4 ESG Funds Becoming Popular in India

The ESG funds are increasingly becoming popular in the mutual fund industry in India. Recently, ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund has come out with its ESG fund.

The first ESG mutual fund was launched by the State Bank of India - SBI Magnum Equity ESG Fund.

Key Points

- ESG is a combination of three words i.e. environment, social and governance.
- It is a kind of mutual fund. Its investing is used synonymously with sustainable investing or socially responsible investing.
- Typically, a mutual fund looks for a good stock of a company that has potential earnings, management quality, cash flows, the business it operates in, competition etc.
- However, while selecting a stock for investment, the ESG fund shortlists companies that score high on environment, social responsibility and corporate governance, and then looks into financial factors.

- Therefore, the key difference between the ESG funds and other funds is 'conscience' i.e the ESG fund focuses on companies with environment-friendly practices, ethical business practices and an employee-friendly record.
- The fund is regulated by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

4.5 India and South Africa ask World Trade Organisation to waive rules for COVID-19 drugs



According to a letter to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), India and South Africa have asked to waive off the intellectual property rules in order to make it easier for the developing countries to import or produce the drugs for COVID-19.

The two countries in their letter dated October 2, 2020, have called on the global trade body to waive parts of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), which governs trademarks, patents, copyright, and other intellectual property rules globally.

What does the letter by South Africa and India state?

- The letter which was also posted on the Geneva-based WTO's website mentioned that as new diagnostics, vaccines, therapeutics for Coronavirus are developed, there are significant rising concerns that how these will be able made available promptly, in sufficient quantities, and at an affordable price which will meet the global demand
- The letter further asks that the WTO's Council for TRIPS recommends a waiver to the General Council which is WTO's top decision- making body in Geneva 'as early as possible'. It does not further mention that how much of the support South Africa and India have from other countries.
- South Africa and India, both are the developing nations that have been disproportionately affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. The intellectual property rights by World Trade Organisation (WTO), which includes patents, can be a barrier to the provision of affordable medicine which will be essential to meet the rising demand in both the nations domestically.
- A draft General Council decision text which was submitted with the letter says that the waiver should last an as-yet an unspecified number of years and should be reviewed annually.

What are the intellectual property rules by WTO?

- Intellectual property refers to the creations of the mind and these creations can take many forms such as signs, symbols, expressions, discoveries, new diagnostics in the scientific field among many others. To prevent others from using their new achievements, the government grant creators certain rights.
- The TRIPS agreement by WTO mentions that the governments have to ensure that intellectual property rights can be enforced to deter or prevent violations. The TRIPS agreement must be applied equally to the enforcement of IP rights and the WTO members must grant non—discriminatory treatment to the nationals of all WTO members and must not favour their own Nationals.

4.6 42nd GST Council Meeting: Government disburses compensation cess worth Rs 20,000 crore to all states



The Government released **compensation cess worth nearly Rs 20,000 crore** to all the states on October 5, 2020. The announcement for the same was made by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman after the 42nd GST Council meeting.

The Finance Minister while briefing the media stated by next week, Centre will also disburse **Rs 25000 crore towards Integrated GST** for 2017-18 to those states that received less amount due to the anomalies.

The Finance Minister also informed that the GST Council has deferred the decision on the mode of payment of pending GST compensation share of the states to the Council's October 12 meeting.

42nd GST Council Meeting: Key Highlights

- The GST Council took up the long-pending issue of Integrated Goods and Services Tax and decided to disburse Rs 25000 crore to all the states that have received less amount due to various reasons.
- The GST Council also recommended the extension of compensation cess levy beyond the transition period of five years that is beyond June 2022, for such period as may be required to meet the revenue gap.

- The Council, however, deferred the main point of contention- the decision on pending GST compensation to states-to October 12, when the GST Council is expected to meet again to smoothen out the differences.
- Further, from January 1, small taxpayers whose annual turnover is less than Rs 5 crore will not be required to file monthly returns i.e GSTR 3B and GSTR1. They will now be required to file quarterly returns.
- Besides this, the GST panel increased the borrowing limit to Rs 1.1 lakh crore instead of earlier Rs 97,000 crore in the centre's first borrowing option given to states.
- The GST Council meeting was attended by Finance Ministers of all States and Union Territories.
- Following the meeting, FM Nirmala Sitharaman stated that about 20 to 21 states chose one of the two options given by the Centre that allowed the states to borrow to cover the compensation shortfall.
- Other states, the opposition-run ones, did not choose any option and wanted the Centre to borrow and pay for the shortfall.

Centre's two borrowing options

The centre had given the States two options in August to meet their GST shortfall at a time when revenue generation has been severely hit by the pandemic. The two options were as follows:

- 1. Borrow Rs 97,000 crore from a special window facilitated by the RBI.**
- 2. Borrow Rs 2.35 lakh crore from the market.**

While 21 states, mostly led by BJP or those who had supported its options, opted to borrow Rs 97,000 crore by mid-September to meet the GST revenue shortfall in the current fiscal, most of the opposition-ruled states including Rajasthan, Telangana, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry and Punjab have not yet accepted the two borrowing options given by the Centre.

GST Compensation issue

- Under GST compensation, the states are guaranteed to be compensated for any loss of revenue owing to the implementation of the GST, which entailed them giving up powers to collect taxes under the earlier system. The loss incurred by the states is computed based on a formula provided in the GST (Compensation to States) Act.
- Under the formula, states are guaranteed 14% compounded growth in GST revenue each year and any shortfall is required to be met through a compensation cess that is levied on luxury and sin goods and goes to the compensation fund.

- According to the centre, the compensation requirement by the states in the current fiscal would be Rs 3 lakh Crore, out of which Rs 65,000 crore is expected to be met from the cess levied in the GST regime. A shortfall of around Rs 2.35 lakh crore is estimated.
- The payment of GST compensation to States became an issue after revenues from the imposition of cess started falling since August 2019. The GST compensation payout amount was Rs 69,275 crore in 2018-19 and Rs 41,146 crore in 2017-18.

4.7 India, Myanmar agree to work towards the operationalization of Strategic Sittwe Port in first quarter of 2021



- India and Myanmar on October 5, 2020, agreed to work towards the operationalization of Sittwe Port in the first quarter of 2021. The decision was taken during General M.M. Naravane, Indian Army Chief, and Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Indian Foreign Secretary's visit to Myanmar.
- Both the Indian officials traveled to Myanmar in a two-day visit. They also called on State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Myanmar's Commander in Chief of Defence Services.
- The announcement regarding the work of Sittwe Port came post the conclusion of the two-day visit. The Indian delegation during their visit also presented 3,000 vials of Remdesivir to Myanmar's State Counsellor, as a symbol of cooperation between the countries to fight COVID-19.

Bilateral discussion between India and Myanmar:

As per the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the ongoing infrastructure projects assisted by India such as Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project and trilateral highway were also part of the bilateral discussion between India and Myanmar. Both the nations during the discussion also agreed to work towards the operationalization of Sittwe Port in the Rakhine State in the first quarter of 2021.

Agreement on Sittwe Port:

- India began working on the mega infrastructure project, which had several components, in Myanmar in 2010. One of the key aspects was the construction of an Integrated port and Inland waterway transport terminal at Sittwe, which was completed in 2018 at the cost of Rs. 517.29 crores.
- India had also signed an agreement with the Myanmar government for the operationalization of the port in October 2018. However, the conflict between the Myanmar military and the insurgent group Arakan Army impacted the operationalization. In 2019, the Arakan Army had specifically targeted the Kaladan project by abducting officials and Indian workers.
- Once in operation, the project will not only link India's northeast to the Southeast region, but it will also allow the goods to be transported from Kolkata to Sittwe and then onwards by roads to the river to Mizoram. The project aims at developing the transport infrastructure in northeast India and southwest Myanmar.

Sittwe Port: Background

The port is a deep underwater port constructed by India at Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State in Myanmar, on the Bay of Bengal. Sittwe port is situated at the mouth of Kaladanriver and is being financed by India as a part of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, a collaboration between India and Myanmar.

4.8 India's economy to contract by 9.6 percent in FY21 due to Covid-19: World Bank



- India's economy is expected to contract by 9.6 per cent in the current fiscal year (2020-21) because of Covid-19 pandemic, the World Bank said on October 8, 2020. India's economy is the largest in South Asia.
- The World Bank in its biannual regional update stated that South Asia is set to plunge into its worst-ever recession as the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on the region's economies linger on. This would take a toll on the informal workers and push millions into extreme poverty in South Asia.
- The World Bank's report titled 'Beaten or Broken? Informality and Covid-19' forecasts a sharper than expected economic slump across the South Asia region.

Key Highlights

- As per the World Bank report, the regional growth of South Asia is expected to contract by 7.7 per cent in 2020 after topping 6 per cent annually in the past five years. However, the regional growth is projected to rebound to 4.5 per cent in 2021.
- The income-per-capita in the region will remain 6 per cent below 2019 estimates, factoring growth in population. This indicates that the expected rebound will not offset the lasting economic damage caused by the pandemic.
- The WB report further stated that in case of previous recessions, falling investment and exports led the downturn but this time it is different as private consumption, which is traditionally the backbone of demand in south Asia and a core indicator of economic welfare, will decline by more than 10 per cent, further spiking poverty rates.
- Besides this, a decline in remittances is also expected to accelerate loss of livelihoods for the poorest in some countries.
- According to World Bank Vice President for the south Asia region, Hartwig Schafer, the collapse of south Asian economies during Covid-19 has been more brutal than anticipated, worst of all for small businesses and informal workers who suffer sudden job losses and vanishing wages.
- Schafer stated that though immediate relief has dulled the impacts of the pandemic, but governments still need to address the deep-seated vulnerabilities of their informal sectors through smart policies and allocate their scarce resources wisely."

Significance

- Almost three-quarters of all workers in south Asia depend on informal employment, especially in sectors such as hospitality, retail trade and transport and these sectors are most affected by COVID-19 containment measures.
- The World Bank report warns that informal workers and firms have very less space to cope with the unexpected magnitude of COVID-19. While the poor suffered severely due to rising food prices, Covid-19 crisis has dealt a further blow to many informal workers in the middle of the income distribution who experienced sharp drops in earnings. Only a few informal workers are covered by social insurance or have savings or access to finance, the report reveals.

4.9 **BRICS Bank approves USD 741 million for Delhi-Meerut rapid rail, Mumbai metro project**



The New Development Bank, also known as BRICS Bank has approved funds worth USD 741 million for infrastructure projects in India including Delhi-Meerut rapid rail and the Mumbai metro.

NDB's Board of Directors approved a loan worth USD 500 million for the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) Project and a loan worth USD 241 million for the Mumbai Metro Rail II (Line 6) Project.

This was informed by the Shanghai-based bank in a press statement.

Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) Project

- BRICS' bank's loan amount for the Delhi NCR region will be used by the Indian Government for on-lending to the National Capital Region Transport Corporation Limited (NCRTC) for construction of a rapid rail corridor.
- The rapid rail network will connect the National Capital Territory of Delhi with the cities of Meerut and Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh.
- The Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) will be at least 82.15km long, out of which 68.03km will be an elevated stretch and 14.12 will be underground with 25 stations.
- It will also have a design speed of 180 km per hour and a maximum operating speed of 160 km per hour and high-frequency operations that will reduce the journey time from Delhi to Meerut to 60 minutes.
- The Project will help develop a sustainable regional transport system that will be safe, fast, reliable and comfortable.
- It will also help reduce congestion in Delhi by offering people an alternative of settling in surrounding cities.

Mumbai Metro Rail II (Line 6) Project

- The loan amount for Mumbai Metro will be used by the Indian government for on-lending to the Maharashtra state government for the construction of the metro rail Line 6 project.
- The metro rail line 6 will have a length of about 14.47 km. It will provide much needed rail connectivity between the western and eastern suburbs.
- It will also contribute towards an integrated seamless public transport network in Mumbai.
- The metro rail project will be implemented by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority.
- Besides this, the New Development Bank is also supporting the implementation of metro lines in Mumbai with length totaling to about 58 km (Line 2 and Line 7) by financing of the Mumbai Metro Rail Project approved by the bank in November, 2018.

What is NDB?

The New Development Bank was established by BRICS nations- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The bank's main focus is to mobilize funds for sustainable development projects in BRICS countries and other emerging economies.

4.10 Government bans sale of natural gas, coal-bed methane to self



The government has banned sale of **natural gas and coal-bed methane (CBM)** to self under its newly notified gas marketing freedom guidelines. This means that natural gas/ CMB producers will no longer be able to buy their own produce.

The government had notified new Natural Gas Marketing Reforms on October 15, 2020. The notification came after the Union Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the new gas reforms.

The reforms give producers The freedom to discover the market price of gas through a standard e-bidding process.

Key Details

- As per the notified guidelines, producers have the liberty to market or sell the gas produced to anyone including affiliates but the producer or any member of its gas field consortium cannot bid and buy the fuel.
- The government guidelines state that sale to affiliates will be allowed if affiliates participate in the open competitive process. However, the contractor or its constituents will not be able to participate in the bidding process.
- The notifications added saying that the seller of conventional natural gas and coal-bed methane and buyer cannot be the same entity.
- In 2017, Reliance Industries had outbid all other bidders and bought all the gas from its Sohagpur East and Sohagpur West CBM blocks in Madhya Pradesh. Reliance had outbid state-owned GAIL India Ltd for gas from Sohagpur till March 2021.
- The company used the gas at its Nagothane and Patalganga petrochemical plants in Maharashtra, Jamnagar and Vadodara in Gujarat.

- GAIL had criticized the move saying that the bid had given Reliance a 14 per cent tax advantage, as stock transfer within the company is not subject to VAT.
- Subsequently, the Oil Ministry had sought an explanation from Reliance, which had responded saying that the gas was sold through an open and transparent bidding process through an independent third party in compliance with provisions of the CBM contract policy.

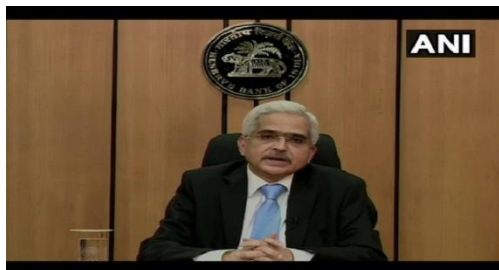
New Guidelines on Natural Gas/ CMD Sale

- The Government's newly notified gas marketing freedom guidelines aim to put such ambiguity to rest, as the October 15 notification states that the "April 11, 2017 notification on Early Monetization of CBM will stand amended."
- Under the new guidelines, the contractor shall get the bids invited through an electronic bidding portal and discover market price by following a transparent bidding process notified by the government.
- The bidding will be conducted through an independent agency, from a panel maintained by the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH). The DGH is currently in the process of empanelling such agencies.
- The government's notification restricts market freedom of the sellers. It states that the market price of the natural gas/ CMD shall be decided through e-bidding.
- However, the policy will not apply to the contracts where the contractor is required to get the formula of sale approved from the Government or is required to sell the gas as per the conditions specified under the contract.

Significance

This means that the gas produced by state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL) from fields given to them on a nomination basis would continue to be governed by government-dictated price. The government dictated price currently stands at USD 1.79 per million British thermal unit.

4.11 RBI Monetary Policy Updates: MPC keeps policy repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent



The Reserve Bank of India's Governor Shaktikanta Das announced RBI bi-monthly Monetary Policy review on October 9, 2020. The RBI Governor announced the decisions taken by RBI's recently constituted Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

The Government had earlier this week appointed three eminent economists- Ashima Goyal, Jayanth R Varma and Shashanka Bhide as members of the MPC, in place of Chetan Ghate, Pami Dua, and Ravindra Dholakia whose term ended on September 29, 2020. The committee began its three-day deliberations on October 7, 2020.

The RBI Governor in address announced that the Monetary Policy Committee had decided to keep repo rates unchanged at 4 percent. The MPC has also decided to maintain an accommodative stance as long as required for growth.

The RBI Governor also announced a host of new measures to be undertaken by the central bank.

Key Announcements

- The MPC evaluated domestic and global macroeconomic and financial conditions and voted unanimously to leave the policy repo rate unchanged at 4 percent.
- It also decided to continue with the accommodative stance of monetary policy as long as necessary at least during the current financial year and into the next year to revive growth on a durable basis and mitigate the impact of COVID-19, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target going forward.
- The Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and the Bank rate will remain unchanged at 4.25 per cent. The reverse repo rate will also remain unchanged at 3.35 per cent.

Global Economy

- The RBI Governor stated that after a steep decline in the second quarter of 2020, global economic activity appears to have rebounded sequentially in the third quarter, but unevenly among and within economies.
- He noted that there have been improvements in manufacturing, labour markets and retail sales powered strong recoveries in some countries, while in others rise in new infections prompted a slower pace of unlocking or reimposition of restrictions which, in turn, stalled the upturn.
- He stated that while investment has remained in retrenchment, consumption and exports have started to improve. Massive policy support across all countries has prevented a deeper downside, providing a floor underneath employment, household incomes and businesses. Financial conditions continue to remain benign.

4.12 Indian Economy

The RBI Governor stated that the Indian economy is entering into a decisive phase in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic. Several high-frequency indicators are pointing to the easing of contractions in various sectors of the economy and the emergence of impulses of growth.

The RBI Governor assured that by all indications, the deep contractions of Q1:2020-21 are behind us and silver linings are visible in the flattening of the active caseload curve across the country.

Key Focus

The RBI Governor stated that the focus must now shift from containment to revival. Undeterred by the pandemic, the rural economy looks resilient.

Food Grains Production

RBI Governor revealed that Kharif sowing has already surpassed last year's sown area. Further he stated that improved soil moisture conditions with healthy reservoir levels have brightened the outlook for the rabi season. The early estimates suggest that food grains production is set to cross another record in 2020-21.

Job Creation

The Job creation under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) has provided incomes and employment in rural areas. Migrant labour is returning to work in urban areas, and factories and construction activity are coming back to life.

Optimism rising

- The RBI Governor noted that the mood of the nation has shifted from fear and despair to confidence and hope. In the September 2020 RBI survey, it was found that households expect inflation to decline modestly over the next three months, indicative of hope that supply chains are mending.
- RBI projections indicate that inflation would ease closer to the target by Q4:2020-21. Our other surveys conducted in September indicate that consumer confidence is turning upbeat on the general economic situation, employment and income. Though the current assessment of the overall business situation remains in contraction in Q2, it has moved up from a low in Q1.
- The manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) for September 2020 rose to 56.8, its highest mark since January 2012, supported by acceleration in new orders and production. These expectations are also reflected in RBI's growth projections, which suggest that GDP growth may break out of contraction and turn positive by Q4.

Shape of Recovery?

It is still not clear what the shape of recovery would look like. Will it be V, U, L, or W? There is still an ongoing debate over it. There are also talks of a K-shaped recovery.

According to RBI Governor, modest recovery in various high-frequency indicators in September 2020 could strengthen further in the second half of 2020-21 with progressive unlocking of economic activity. It is expected that agriculture and allied activities could lead the revival by boosting rural demand.

Further, the RBI Governor noted that both private investment and exports are likely to be subdued, especially as external demand is still anaemic. For the year 2020-21 as a whole, therefore, real GDP is expected to decline by 9.5 per cent, with risks tilted to the downside.

5. ENVIRONMENT

5.1 JAL JEEVAN MISSION

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 6 mega development projects in Uttarakhand under the Namami Gange Mission through Video Conference.
- Modi also inaugurated the Ganga Avalokan Museum, the first of its kind on the River Ganga at Haridwar.

About the mission

- The JalJeevan Mission aims at providing every rural household in the country with the piped-water connection.
- The new logo of the Mission shall continue to inspire the need to save every drop of water.
- Referring to the Margadarshika, the Prime Minister said that they are equally important for the Gram Panchayats, people living in rural areas as well as for the Government machinery.
- Unlike the previous programs, JalJeevan Mission adopts a bottom to top approach, where the users and PaaniSamitis (Water Committees) in the villages envision the whole project from its implementation to maintenance and operation.
- The mission has also ensured that at least 50% of the members of the water committee would be women.
- The Mardarshika Guidelines released today will guide the members of the Water Committee and Gram Panchayats in taking the right decisions.

5.2 WILDLIFE WEEK IN INDIA

- The Wildlife Week is celebrated all over the country every year between 2nd October and 8th October.
- The aim is to preserve animal life in India.

Background

- Throughout the week events and campaigns are organized to teach people about animal life and

Funding Pattern

Under the scheme, Union Territories without legislatures are **100% centrally funded**

The central-state **funding share is 90:10** for northeast states, Himalayan states and UTs with a legislature

It is a **50:50** fund-sharing pattern for all other states

Additional funding is also available for states that show good physical and financial progress



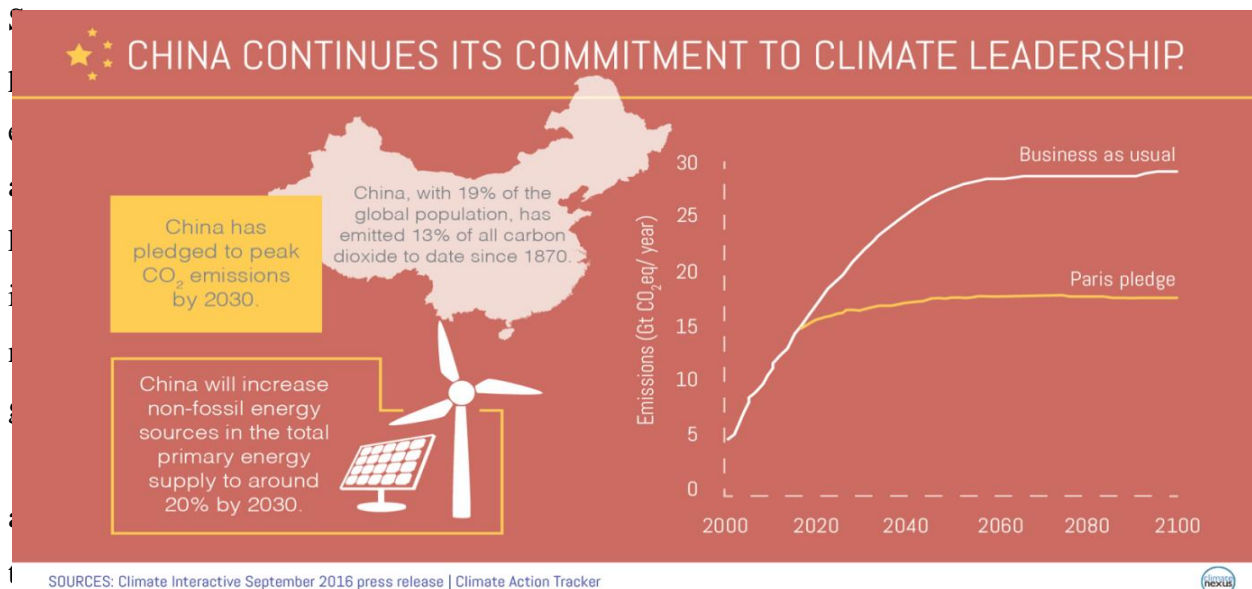
encourage them save large number of animals by not killing them for food and other purposes.

- Theme: Life Below Water: For people and planet.

Highlights

- It is because of animal population in forest and other areas the environmental balance is preserved in nature.
- There is lack of awareness about this fact.
- According to The Science Magazine, around 5,500 species of birds, amphibians and reptiles are being sold in world markets.
- It is a multi – dollar business and is considered as the most severe threats of biodiversity
- During the week, many experts conduct seminars to introduce challenging aspects of wildlife conservation.

5.3 CHINA'S CLIMATE COMMITMENT



The UN General Assembly, Chinese President Xi Jinping made two promises that came as a welcome surprise to climate change watchers.

About the commitment

- First, Xi said, China would become carbon net-zero by the year 2060.
- Net-zero is a state in which a country's emissions are compensated by absorptions and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.
- Absorption can be increased by creating more carbon sinks such as forests, while removal involves application of technologies such as carbon capture and storage.
- Second, the Chinese President announced a small but important change in China's already committed target for letting its emissions "peak", from "by 2030" to "before 2030".
- That means China would not allow its greenhouse gas emissions to grow beyond that point.

- Xi did not specify how soon “before 2030” means, but even this much is being seen as a very positive move from the world’s largest emitter.

About the significance

- China is the world’s largest emitter of greenhouse gases.
- It accounts for almost 30% of global emissions, more than the combined emissions in the United States, the European Union and India, the three next biggest emitters.
- Getting China to commit itself to a net-zero target is a big breakthrough, especially since countries have been reluctant to pledge themselves to such long term commitments.
- So far, the European Union was the only big emitter to have committed itself to a net-zero emission status by 2050.

5.4 ERIOCAULON



- Scientists from Agharkar Research Institute, Pune, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology, discovered two new species of pipeworts from the Western Ghats of Maharashtra & Karnataka.
- It belongs to genus Eriocaulon.

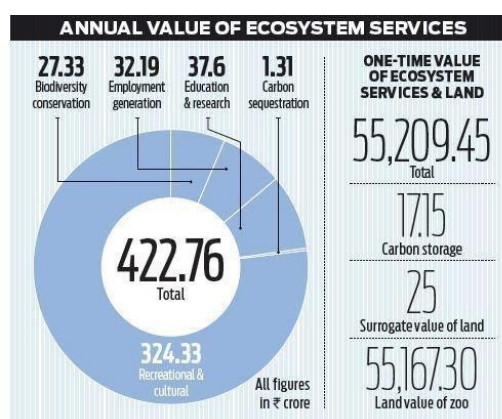
About Pipeworts

- Some of the previously-discovered plant species have medicinal values
- They also have anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and anti-cancerous properties.
- However, the team is yet to trace the hidden medicinal applications of these two species.
- Some 111 species exist in India, most of which are endemic to the Western Ghats and eastern Himalayas.

- The two newly-discovered species display different floral characters than previously known species.
- All species of *Eriocaulon* appear very similar to one another.
- The team has taken up DNA barcoding works of this species to understand the evolution of this genus in India.
- The other reported from Kumta, Karnataka was named as *Eriocaulonkaraavalense* (named after Karaavali = Coastal Karnataka region).
- The one reported from Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra was named as *Eriocaulonparvicephalum* (due to its minute inflorescence size).

5.5 ECONOMIC VALUATION OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, NATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL PARK, NEW DELHI

- In a first of its kind of study by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), the total annual economic value of ecosystem services provided by the Delhi zoo for 2019-20 was estimated to be over Rs 55,500 crore.
- The economic valuation of the ecosystem services provides a way of valuing the many benefits that nature provides and helps make the contribution of nature to livelihoods and economies visible.



Background

The CZA, under the Union environment ministry, had requested The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) to conduct a study titled ‘Economic valuation of ecosystem services of National Zoological Park, New Delhi’ to understand the annual value of key ecosystem services such as biodiversity conservation, carbon storage and sequestration, employment generation, recreational and cultural, education and research.

Highlights

- The total annual economic value of the ecosystem services provided by the National Zoological Park for 2019-20 is estimated to be Rs 422.76 crore.
- The total value of the onetime cost of services and land value provided by the zoo is estimated to be Rs 55,209.45 crore.
- Almost 77 per cent of the contribution comes from the recreational and cultural service which indicates the significance of this service to the zoo.

- Education and research, the next most important service, contributes 9 per cent to the total economic value.
- This study is first of its kind for habitats such as zoological parks in India. Irrespective of the contributions, every service is important as it contributes towards the improvement of the local environment.
- The benefits of the zoo are not restricted to its visitors but also reach Delhi's citizens.
- Hence, it is necessary to ensure the proper maintenance of the zoo to improve its services.
- Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to humankind's well-being which support our survival and quality of life.
- The valuation of ecosystem services provides a powerful tool to enable rational decision-making and eases the incorporation of ecological values into economic policies.
- This can facilitate more effective planning and management.
- There is a need for valuation because the environment offers many services that, in essence, are free and do not have any traditional 'market values' attached.

5.6 EMISSION NORMS FOR TRACTORS

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has said that emission norms for Tractors will be applicable from October 2021 and for Construction Equipment Vehicles, the norms will be applicable from April 2021.

Highlights

- The Ministry has notified amendment to Central Motor Vehicle Rules 1989 on 30th September, 2020 deferring the applicability date for implementing the next stage of emission norms for tractors and Construction Equipment Vehicles.
- The amendment includes separate emission norms for agricultural machinery (agricultural tractors, power tillers and combined harvesters) and construction equipment vehicles.
- There is also change in the nomenclature of emission norms from Bharat Stage (CEV/TREM)IV and Bharat Stage (CEV/TREM)V to TREM Stage-IV and TREM Stage-V for agricultural tractors and other equipment.
- The Ministry had received the request in this regard from the Ministry of Agriculture, Tractor Manufacturers and agriculture associations.

5.7 INTER-STATE WATER DISPUTE

- The Centre will determine the jurisdictions of the Krishna and Godavari river management boards (KRMB and GRMB), Union Water Resources Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said.

- He was speaking after convening an apex council meeting involving the Centre, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the second since 2016.

Background

- The meeting is primarily to resolve the conflict between the two States over executing irrigation projects and sharing water from the Krishna and Godavari rivers.
- The headquarters of the KRMB would be located in Andhra Pradesh.

Highlights

- With regards to sharing of river waters, the Telangana Chief Minister agreed to withdraw the case filed in Supreme Court, to allow the Centre to refer water sharing issues to the Krishna Godavari tribunal.
- Regarding the sharing of Godavari waters, both the States were asked to send in their requests to the Centre so that it could refer them to the tribunal, a statement from the Water Resources Ministry said.
- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and his Telangana counterpart had taken tough stand on projects such as the Rayalaseema lift irrigation scheme and enhancement of the carrying capacity of the Pothireddypadu head regulator.

5.8 STOCKHOLM CONVENTION

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved the Ratification of seven (7) chemicals listed under Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).
- The Cabinet further delegated its powers to ratify chemicals under the Stockholm Convention to Union Ministers of External Affairs (MEA) and Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MEFCC) in respect of POPs already regulated under the domestic regulations thereby streamlining the procedure.

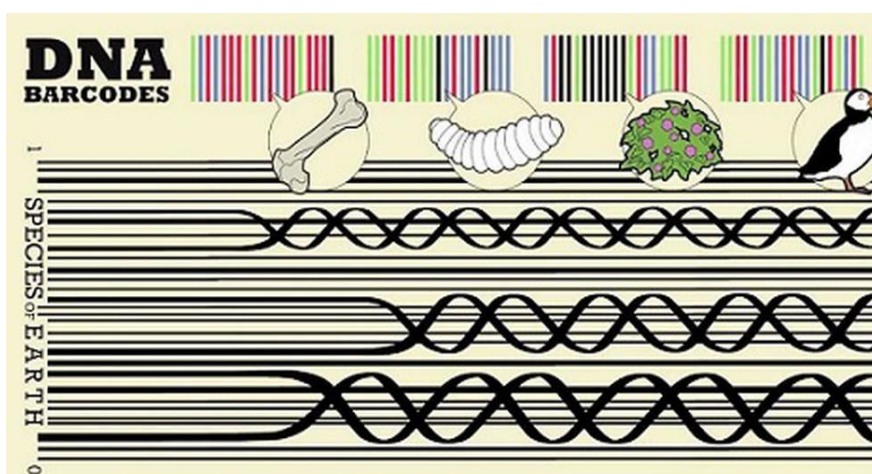
About the Convention

- The Stockholm Convention is a global treaty to protect human health and environment from POPs, which are identified chemical substances that persist in the environment, bio-accumulate in living organisms, adversely affect human health/ environment and have the property of long-range environmental transport (LRET).
- Exposure to POPs can lead to cancer, damage to central & peripheral nervous systems, diseases of immune system, reproductive disorders and interference with normal infant and child development.
- POPs are listed in various Annexes to the Stockholm Convention after thorough scientific research, deliberations and negotiations among member countries.

Highlights

- India had ratified the Stockholm Convention on January 13, 2006 as per Article 25(4), which enabled it to keep itself in a default "opt-out" position such that amendments in various Annexes of the convention cannot be enforced on it unless an instrument of ratification/ acceptance/ approval or accession is explicitly deposited with UN depositary.
- Considering its commitment towards providing safe environment and addressing human health risks, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) had notified the 'Regulation of Persistent Organic Pollutants Rules, on March 5, 2018 under the provisions of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- The regulation inter alia prohibited the manufacture, trade, use, import and export seven chemicals namely (i) Chlordecone, (ii) Hexabromobiphenyl, (iii) Hexabromodiphenyl ether and Heptabromodiphenylether (Commercial octa-BDE), (iv) Tetrabromodiphenyl ether and Pentabromodiphenyl ether (Commercial penta-BDE), (v) Pentachlorobenzene, (vi) Hexabromocyclododecane, and (vii) Hexachlorobutadiene, which were already listed as POPs under Stockholm Convention.
- The Cabinet's approval for ratification of POPs demonstrates India's commitment to meet its international obligations with regard to protection of environment and human health.
- It also indicates the resolve of the Government to take action on POPs by implementing control measures, develop and implement action plans for unintentionally produced chemicals, develop inventories of the chemicals' stockpiles and review as well as update its National Implementation Plan (NIP).
- The ratification process would enable India to access Global Environment Facility (GEF) financial resources in updating the NIP.

5.9 INTERNATIONAL BARCODE OF LIFE (iBOL)



The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in June, 2020 between Zoological Survey of India

(ZSI), a subordinate organization under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and International Barcode of Life (iBOL), a Canadian not-for-profit corporation.

Highlights

- ZSI and iBOL have come together for further efforts in DNA barcoding, a methodology for rapidly and accurately identifying species by sequencing a short segment of standardized gene regions and comparing individual sequences to a reference database.
- iBOL is a research alliance involving nations that have committed both human and financial resources to enable expansion of the global reference database, the development of informatics platforms, and/or the analytical protocols needed to use the reference library to inventory, assess, and describe biodiversity.
- The MoU will enable ZSI to participate at the Global level programmes like Bioscan and Planetary Biodiversity Mission.

5.10 HAR GHAR JAL

- Goa has become the first HarGharJal State in the Country by providing tap water connection to every rural household.
- The State has provided tap water connection to two lakh Thirty thousand rural households.

About the scheme

North Goa with one lakh 65 thousand rural households and South Goa

with 98 thousand rural households in 191 Gram Panchayats are fully saturated with assured piped water supply through tap connections.

- Jal Shakti Ministry said, Goa's achievement is an example for other States to emulate and ensure every rural home gets tap connection and especially in these times of Covid-19 pandemic.



Har Ghar Jal

f | t | i DrPramodPSawant

The State of Goa had a coverage of **87.11%** with piped water connections as on 1st April 2020.

The State of Goa proudly announces that all the Rural Households in the State have access to potable water and 100% target is achieved.

I appeal to the households who are having their own source of water for drinking purpose to come forward if PWD piped water connections are required.

- The Ministry said the State is now planning for a sensor-based service delivery monitoring system to monitor the functionality of water supply.

5.11 BRAHMA KAMAL FLOWER

- Brahma Kamal flowers, which used to bloom from August to mid-September, are now blooming in Garhwal of Chamoli district, Uttarakhand in October due to climate change.
- In the upper areas of Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand, Brahmakamal has continued to bloom in large numbers around Nandikund in the off-season in October.

Background

Although the first snowfall of this season has caused a little damage to the Brahmakamal plants, it is still flowering in huge numbers.

About the flower

- It is said that Brahma Kamal - named after God Brahma who is believed to have created the universe - takes about two hours to bloom to about eight inches in diameter.
- The flower only blooms for a few hours, and is said to bring good luck and prosperity.
- Scientifically known as *Saussurea Obvallata*, the flower finds mention in the scriptures and is offered in many holy shrines, including Kedarnath, Badrinath and Tunganath.
- Brahma Kamal is called the King of Himalayan Flowers, and is also the state flower of Uttarakhand.
- The State government has now started nurseries in the Chamoli district to conserve the flower.
- The flower is highly valued in Tibetan medicine and Ayurveda for its healing properties.
- It is extensively used by the local population to treat cuts and bruises.

5.12 ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK

- Biologists have found a rare Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a bird with both female and male plumage colours, in the United States' Pennsylvania.
- The Rose-breasted Grosbeak gynandromorph was



caught by biologists from Powdermill Nature Reserve of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History's environmental research centre in Rector, PA.

Background

- The Rose-breasted Grosbeak derives its name from the male of the species who have a ruby-red triangular marking on a white chest and dark black wings with pink wing pits.
- The females are much less showy, with no patches on its beige body, brown wings and yellow wing pits.
- Rose-breasted grosbeaks are sexually dimorphic, meaning they have both males and females have different colour plumage.

Highlights

- Researchers at Powdermill Nature Reserve made the extraordinary find on September 24.
- While catching and banding birds for the Avian Research Center, the team came across the Rose-breasted Grosbeak.
- This Grosbeak observed at the reserve was split right down the middle - pink on the right side, yellow on the left.
- Researchers said the condition is called bilateral gynandromorphism, means the bird is both male and female, with one ovary and one testis.
- This occurs when two sperm fertilize an egg that has two nuclei instead of one, which results in the egg to develop a chromosome from each sex.
- A gynandromorph is an organism that has both male and female characteristics - or, a male-female chimaera.
- It is often seen in insects, though gynandromorphic birds, snakes, lobsters and other animals have been observed, too.
- The extremely rare phenomenon occurs when two sperm fertilize an egg that has two nuclei instead of one.
- The egg can develop male sex chromosomes on one side and female on the other, leading to a bird with testis and other male characteristics on one half of its body and an ovary and other female characteristics on the other.
- Gynandromorphs are not all that uncommon in the wild, though the colouration or markings of some species make the results more striking than others.

5.13 AAREY FOREST

- Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced that the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress government has decided to move the proposed car-shed for the underground Metro 3 rail out of Aarey.
- This has long been a contentious issue between environmental activists and the government.

About the issue

- The tussle has been ongoing since 2014. While the 33.5-km underground Metro 3 is an ambitious project connecting Colaba-Bandra-SEEPZ, the location for the car-shed was identified as Aarey — 1,800-plus acres of green space in suburban Goregaon, which is home to 290 species wild of flora and fauna, and surrounded on many sides by concrete structures.
- On October 4 last year, the Bombay High Court dismissed four petitions challenging the decision to cut trees at Aarey.
- The petitioners had questioned the propriety and legality of the BMC Tree Authority’s permission, and asked for Aarey to be declared a flood plain and a forest. Within hours of the court’s decision, the MMRCL (an SPV executing the underground project) axed 2,135 trees in 24 hours.
- This led to activists and Aarey locals pouring out on the street, protesting under the ‘Save Aarey’ banner.
- The then BJP-led government (the Shiv Sena was part of it but opposed to the tree-felling) invoked Section 144 in Aarey, which is home to about 10,000 people living in its 27 tribal hamlets, and deployed about 500 policemen. Twenty-nine protesters were arrested, but released on bail following directions of the Supreme Court.

5.14 GOVT BANS IMPORTS OF AIR CONDITIONERS WITH REFRIGERANTS

- The government banned imports of air conditioners with refrigerants with a view to promote domestic manufacturing and cut imports of non essential items.
- “Import policy of air conditioners with refrigerants ...is amended from free to prohibited,” directorate general of foreign trade in a notification.

Background

Govt bans import of air conditioner with refrigerants

Major Manufacturer of air conditioner

		
Stock Price*: ₹638 Chg: 4% Returns (in 2 yrs): 11%	Stock Price*: ₹701 Chg: 4% Returns (in 2 yrs): 38%	Stock Price*: ₹ 698 Chg: 2% Returns (in 2 yrs): 15%
		
Stock Price*: ₹2065 Chg: 0.13% Returns (in 2 yrs): 40%	Stock Price*: ₹703 Chg: 8% Returns (in 2 yrs): -29%	

#MOMarketupdates *as on 16th Oct 2020

PHYGITAL **MOTILAL OSWAL**
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Investment in securities market are subject to market risks, read all the related documents carefully before investing.

to

said

- The government is taking steps to promote domestic manufacturing and reduce import bill of non-essential goods.
- In June, the government imposed curbs on imports of certain new pneumatic tyres used in motor cars, busses, lorries and motorcycles.

Highlights

- Non-essential electronic goods have been under the purview of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry since the government decided to push for self-reliance in various sectors this year.
- Air conditioners, specifically, have been singled out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as an example of a segment where self-reliance was required.
- In July, the government imposed restrictions on the imports of various colour TV sets as well.

5.15 'LOST RIVER' RAN THROUGH THE CENTRE OF THAR DESERT NEAR 172 THOUSAND YEARS AGO

- Researchers have found the evidence of a "lost" river that ran through the central Thar Desert, near Bikaner, as early as 172 thousand years ago, and may have been a life-line to human populations enabling them to inhabit the region.
- The findings, published in the journal Quaternary Science Reviews, represent the oldest directly dated phase of river activity at Nal Quarry in the central Thar Desert.

Background

The study by researchers from The Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Germany, Anna University in Tamil Nadu, and IISER Kolkata indicates that Stone Age populations lived in a distinctly different Thar Desert landscape than we encounter today.

About the findings

- This evidence indicates a river flowed with phases of activity dating to approximately up to 172 thousand years ago, nearby to Bikaner, Rajasthan, which is over 200 kilometres away from the nearest modern river.
- These findings predate evidence for activity in modern river courses across the Thar Desert as well as dried up course of the Ghaggar-Hakra River, the researchers said.
- The presence of a river running through the central Thar Desert would have offered a life-line to Paleolithic populations, and potentially an important corridor for migrations, they said.
- The researchers noted that the potential importance of 'lost' rivers for earlier inhabitants of the Thar Desert have been overlooked.
- Studies of satellite imagery have shown a dense network of river channels crossing the Thar Desert, according to the researchers.

5.16 ECONOMIC COST OF BEING 'FILTHY INDIA'

Last week, US President Donald Trump referred to it as “filthy India” during the final presidential debate and India received a lot of unwanted attention.

About the questions

This raises two important questions. 1. One, how “filthy” are we per se and also when compared to other countries? I am presuming here that regardless of how hurtful it sounds, not many would argue that we have a long way to go before we call ourselves a clean country.

2. Two, what does it cost us as an economy to be this filthy? Because, frankly, if being filthy and polluted doesn't cost us then that would be a great “economic” argument in favour of staying filthy.

Highlights

- According to the website “Our World in Data”, part of Oxford University, “an estimated 775,000 people died prematurely as a result of poor sanitation in 2017. “
- This was 1.4% of global deaths.

STATE OF GLOBAL AIR 2020

➤ Indians had the highest average exposure to PM2.5 in the world last year

➤ Air pollution now the biggest health risk in India, contributing to over 16.7 lakh deaths in 2019

➤ Indians' PM2.5 exposure up in past 10 years (see chart)

WORLD AIR QUALITY REPORT 2019

India was the **5th most polluted** country in terms of population weighted exposure to PM2.5 in 2019, **behind Bangladesh, Pakistan, Mongolia and Afghanistan**

- In low-income countries, it accounts for 5% of deaths.
- In India, this share has been higher than its neighbours such as Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- In 2015, 68% of the world population had access to improved sanitation facilities. In other words, almost one-third of people did not have access.
- In India, only 40% of the population had access to improved sanitation.
- This is much lower than its next-door neighbours such as Sri Lanka (95%) and Pakistan and Bangladesh (both over 60%).

5.17 INDIA–AUSTRALIA CIRCULAR ECONOMY HACKATHON (I-ACE)

The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) will organise a two-day hackathon on circular economy, ‘India–Australia Circular Economy Hackathon (I-ACE)’ in association with CSIRO on 7th and 8th December 2020.

Background

- The idea of I-ACE was put forward during a virtual summit between the Indian and Australian prime ministers on June 4, 2020.
- This was decided in order to explore innovative ways to boost the circular economy in India and Australia.



About I-ACE

- I-ACE will focus on to identify and to develop innovative technological solutions by bright-minded students, start-ups and MSMEs of India and Australia.
- Shortlisted students and start-ups MSMEs will be invited for the hackathon. where two winners will be announced comprising one student and one start-up MSME per theme from each country.
- The hackathon will be organized under four themes:
 - Innovation in reducing packaging waste.
 - Innovation in food supply chains avoiding waste.
 - Creating opportunities for plastic waste reduction.
 - Recycling critical energy metals and e-waste.

5.18 COMMISSION FOR AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

In the first, the Centre has come up with a law, through an Ordinance, for tackling air pollution in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) and setting up a commission for it.

Background

- The Commission will have the authority to shut down or regulate water and electricity supply to industries or sites which cause air pollution.
- It will also have the powers to seize and search under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and also issue a warrant.

Highlights

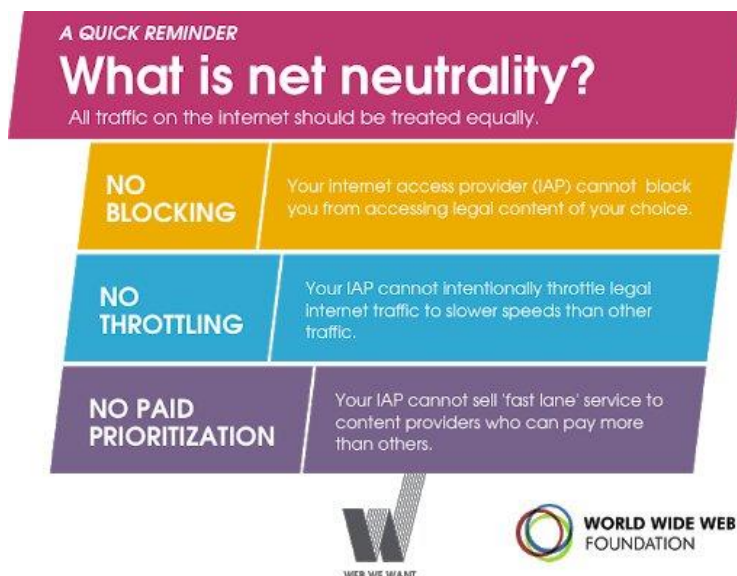
- The President signed the ordinance titled 'The Commission for air quality management in the National Capital Region and adjoining areas, 2020'.
- The already existing Environment Pollution (prevention & control) Authority (EPCA), formed in 1998, has been dissolved.

- The EPCA was formed after a Supreme Court order two decades back but its powers and functions were limited, especially regarding coordination with states.
- EPCA had almost similar powers but failed miserably in cleaning the air even after being in force for more than 20 years.
- The question of whether it's a positive move or just a distraction and wasteful exercise will be decided on the fact whether the ordinance changes the status quo when it comes to ground implementation and action on polluters or not,.
- Against seven members of the EPCA, the new Commission will have 18 members, including a Chairperson and Secretary as well as eight associate members from different ministries.
- It will have “exclusive jurisdiction” in the NCR on matters relating to air quality management.
- It has been provided discretionary authority to search, seize any polluting site and issue a warrant.

6. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

6.1 MONITORING NET NEUTRALITY

- Recently, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recommended the creation of a multi-stakeholder body (MSB) to ensure that Internet access providers adhere to the provisions of net neutrality.
- The MSB should be set up as a non-profit entity.



About the functions

- To provide advice and support to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) in the monitoring and enforcement of net.
- To investigate complaints regarding the violation of net neutrality; (3) To help DoT in the maintenance of a repository of reasonable traffic management practices.
- MSB could include telecom service providers, Internet service providers, content providers, researchers, academic and technical community, civil society organisations, and the government.

6.2 PRADHAN MANTRI MATSYA SAMPADA YOJANA

The Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying released the 2nd edition of the newsletter “MatsyaSampada” and a Beneficiary Booklet on PradhanMantriMatsyaSampadaYojana (PMMSY) which provides a comprehensive outline of the different components/activities of the PMMSY scheme and modalities of submission of the proposals, which would be a valuable resource for fishermen and other stakeholders in the sector.

Objective

This “Beneficiary Booklet of the PMMSY” will act as an all-inclusive guide to all the beneficiaries and

#AatmaNirbharDesh

Rs 20,000 Crores for Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (1/2)

- PMMSY to be launched for integrated, sustainable, inclusive development of marine and inland fisheries
- Rs. 11,000 Cr for activities in marine, inland fisheries & aquaculture
- Rs. 9000 Cr for Infrastructure- Fishing Harbors, Cold Chain, Markets etc.
- Key Activities will be cage culture, seaweed farming, ornamental fisheries & new fishing vessels, traceability, lab network etc.

20 LAKH CRORE FOR 2020 Dated: 15 MAY, 2020

stakeholders in assisting them in knowing the modalities of availing the benefits from the PMMSY and also serve as an indispensable tool to the beneficiaries in knowing about different activities of the PMMSY.

About PMMSY

- PMMSY aims to enhance fish production to 220 lakh tons by 2024-25.
- This is a media outreach plan of the Department of Fisheries to reach out to fishermen and fish farmers of India.
- The ambitious scheme will result in doubling export earnings to Rs.1,00,000crores and generate about 55 lakhs direct and indirect employment opportunities in fisheries sector over a period of next five years.

6.3 INDIA SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRES BrahMos SUPERSONIC CRUISE MISSILE

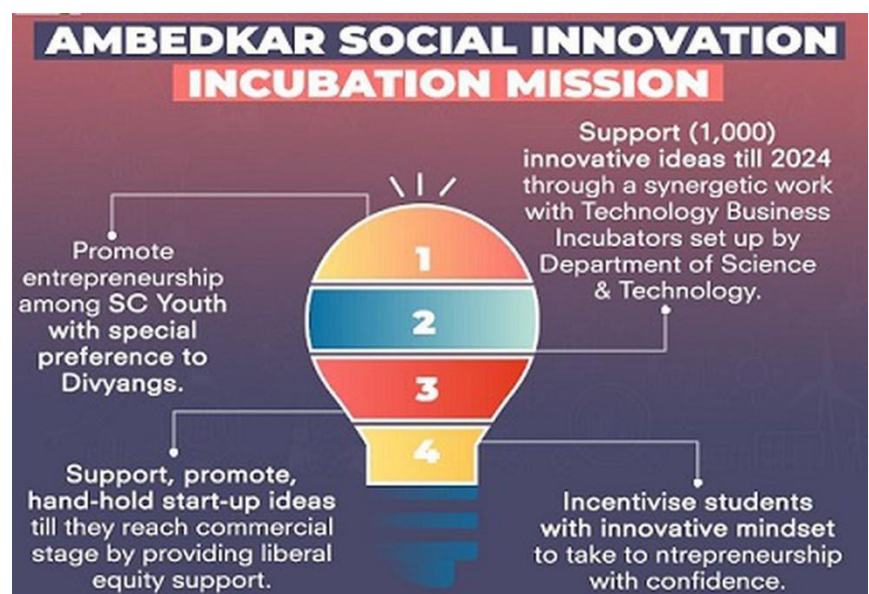
- India successfully test-fired BrahMos supersonic cruise missile with several indigenous features.
- The test firing of the missile was carried out by the Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO from Balasore in Odisha.

About BrahMos

- BrahMos surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile features indigenous Booster and Airframe Section along with many other 'Made in India' sub-systems.
- Defence Ministry said, the BrahMos Land-Attack Cruise Missile was cruising at a top speed of Mach 2.8.
- It is one more major step in enhancing the indigenous content.

6.4 AMBEDKAR SOCIAL INNOVATION AND INCUBATION MISSION

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched the Ambedkar Social Innovation and Incubation Mission (ASIIM) under the Venture Capital Fund for SCs.
- The Ministry of Social Justice had launched the Venture Capital Fund for SCs (VCF-



SC) in 2014-15 with a view to developing entrepreneurship amongst the SC/Divyang youth and to enable them to become 'job-givers'.

Background

- The objective of this fund is to provide concessional finance to the entities of the SC entrepreneurs.
- Under this fund, 117 companies promoted by SC entrepreneurs have been sanctioned financial assistance to set up business ventures.

About the mission

- Ministry launched "Ambedkar Social Innovation and Incubation Mission" to create start-up companies headed by Dalit techies.
- Under it, 1,000 SC youth will be identified in the next four years with start-up ideas through the Technology Business Incubators in various higher educational institutions.
- They will be funded 30 lakh rupees in three years as equity funding to translate their start-up ideas into commercial ventures.
- Successful ventures would further qualify for venture funding of up to five Crore rupees from the Venture Capital Fund for SCs.

Objectives

- To promote entrepreneurship among the SC Youth with special preference to Divyangs
- To support, promote, hand-hold the start-up ideas until they reach commercial stage by providing liberal equity support
- To incentivise students with innovative mind-set to take to entrepreneurship with confidence.

6.5 TRIBES INDIA E-MARKETPLACE

- In a Path breaking Initiative, ShriArjunMunda launched Largest Market of Tribal Products 'Tribes India e-Marketplace'.
- ShArjunMunda also launched Pakur Honey by Trifed& Tribes India.

About the initiatives

- New TRIFED Initiatives to Showcase Tribal Produce and Handicrafts.
- This will Connect Tribal Forest Dwellers and Artisans with National and International Markets.
- Tribes India E-Marketplace (market.tribesindia.com) on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti(October 2, 2020).
- Keeping in line with the vision of the Prime Minister of making India Aatmanirbhar this is a pathbreaking initiative of TRIFED .

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs will showcase the produce and handicrafts of tribal enterprises from across the country.
- This will help them market their produce/ products directly, is also a major leap towards the digitisation of tribal commerce.

Highlights

- Tribes India e-Marketplace is an ambitious initiative through which TRIFED aims to onboard 5 lakh tribal producers .
- These tribals are outsourcing various handicraft, handloom, natural food products across the country and brings to you the best of tribal produce.
- The suppliers comprise of individual tribal artisans, tribal SHGs, Organisations/ Agencies/ NGOs working with tribals.
- The platform provides the tribal suppliers with an Omni-channel facility to sell their goods.

6.6 RAISE 2020

- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and NITI Aayog are organizing a Global Virtual Summit on Artificial Intelligence (AI), RAISE 2020- 'Responsible AI for Social Empowerment 2020,' from October 5-9, 2020.
- The Summit will be inaugurated by PM Modi.

Background

- RAISE 2020 is India's first Artificial Intelligence summit to be organized by the Government in partnership with Industry & Academia.
- The summit will be a global meeting of minds to exchange ideas to use AI for social empowerment, inclusion and transformation in key areas like Healthcare, Agriculture, Education and Smart Mobility amongst other sectors.
- The event will start with a Startup Challenge – Pitchfest followed by the two-day summit, organized by Government of India along with Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

About RAISE 2020

- RAISE 2020 is a first of its kind, a global meeting of minds on Artificial Intelligence to drive India's vision and roadmap for social empowerment, inclusion and transformation through responsible AI.
- It is India's first Artificial Intelligence summit to be organized by the Government in partnership with Industry & Academia.

- The summit will be a global meeting of minds to exchange ideas and charter a course to use AI for social empowerment, inclusion and transformation in key areas like Healthcare, Agriculture, Education and Smart Mobility amongst other sectors.
- It will facilitate an exchange of ideas to further create a mass awareness about the need to ethically develop and practice AI in the digital era.

6.7 DEFENCE OFFSETS

- In simplest terms, the offset is an obligation by an international player to boost India's domestic defence industry if India is buying defence equipment from it.
- Since defence contracts are costly, the government wants part of that money either to benefit the Indian industry, or to allow the country to gain in terms of technology.

Background

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) defined offsets as a “mechanism generally established with the triple objectives of: (a) partially compensating for a

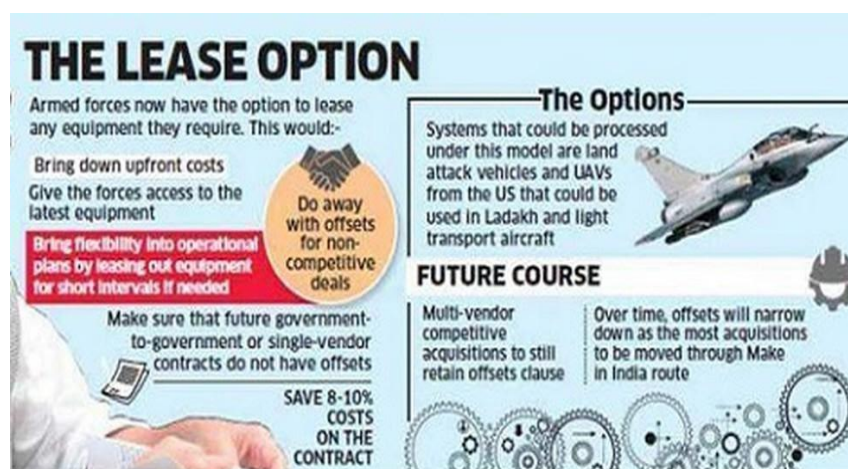
significant outflow of a buyer country's resources in a large purchase of foreign goods (b) facilitating induction of technology and (c) adding capacities and capabilities of domestic industry”.

About the policy

- The policy was adopted on the recommendations of the Vijay Kelkar Committee in 2005.
- The idea was that since India has been buying a lot of defence equipment from foreign countries, so that India can leverage its buying power by making them discharge offset obligations, which are the norm world over.
- The Sixth Standing Committee on Defence (2005-06) had recommended in December 2005 in its report on Defence Procurement Policy and Procedure that modalities for implementation of offset contracts should be worked out.
- The first offset contract was signed in 2007.

Highlights

- There are multiple routes. Until 2016, the vendor had to declare around the time of signing the contract the details about how it will go about it. In April 2016, the new policy amended it to



allow it to provide it “either at the time of seeking offset credits or one year prior to discharge of offset obligations”.

- Investment in ‘kind’ in terms of transfer of technology (TOT) to Indian enterprises, through joint ventures or through the non-equity route for eligible products and services.
- Investment in ‘kind’ in Indian enterprises in terms of provision of equipment through the non-equity route for manufacture and/or maintenance of products and services.
- Provision of equipment and/or TOT to government institutions and establishments engaged in the manufacture and/or maintenance of eligible products, and provision of eligible services, including DRDO (as distinct from Indian enterprises).
- Technology acquisition by DRDO in areas of high technology.

6.8 VAIBHAV 2020 SUMMIT

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has inaugurated Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) Summit.
- The VAIBHAV Summit is a global virtual summit of overseas and resident Indian Researchers and Academicians and is being organized from 2nd October to 31st October 2020.

Objective

- The aim of the summit is to bring Indian origin luminaries in academic institutes and R&D organizations across the world and resident counterparts on a single platform to debate upon collaboration mechanisms to strengthen academic and S&T base in India for global development.
- The initiative involves multiple levels of interactions among overseas experts and Indian counterparts over a month-long series of webinars, video-conferences, etc.

Highlights

- Key areas of discussion will include – quantum technologies, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, communications technologies, computational and data sciences, and aerospace technologies among others.
- The Summit is a joint effort of various Science & Technology (S&T) and Academic organizations, including the Department of S&T, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

6.9 EXERCISE BONGOSAGAR

- The second edition of Exercise Bongosagar, bilateral naval exercise between India and Bangladesh, is scheduled to commence in Northern Bay of Bengal on 3rd October 2020.
- Its first edition was held in 2019.

Objective

- The aim is to develop interoperability and joint operational skills through the conduct of a wide spectrum of maritime exercises and operations.
- Naval ships from both the countries along with the maritime patrol aircraft and helicopters will be participating in the exercise.
- It will be followed by the 3rd edition of India-Bangladesh Coordinated Patrol (IN-BN CORPAT), wherein both countries will undertake joint patrolling along the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).
- CORPATs have strengthened understanding between both the navies and instituted measures to stop the conduct of unlawful activities.

Significance

- The exercise reflects the priority that Indian Navy accords to the Bangladesh Navy as part of the SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) Vision.
- This year's edition assumes greater significance since it is being conducted during MujibBarsho, the 100th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh MujiburRahman.
- It strengthens the close and long-standing India-Bangladesh relations covering a wide spectrum of activities and interactions. Both countries share close cultural bonds and a shared vision of democratic society and a rules-based order.

6.10 MULTI-MODE HAND GRENADES

The Ministry of Defence announced it had signed a contract with a Nagpur-based private entity for supply of 10 lakh of units indigenously designed and developed Multi-Mode Hand Grenades (MMHG) to the Indian Army at a cost of over Rs 400 crore.

Highlights

- These grenades will be replacing the World War-II vintage 'Mills Bomb' type 36M hand grenades now used by the Army.
- DRDO's facility Terminal Ballistic Research Laboratory (TBRL) which has developed the MMHG.



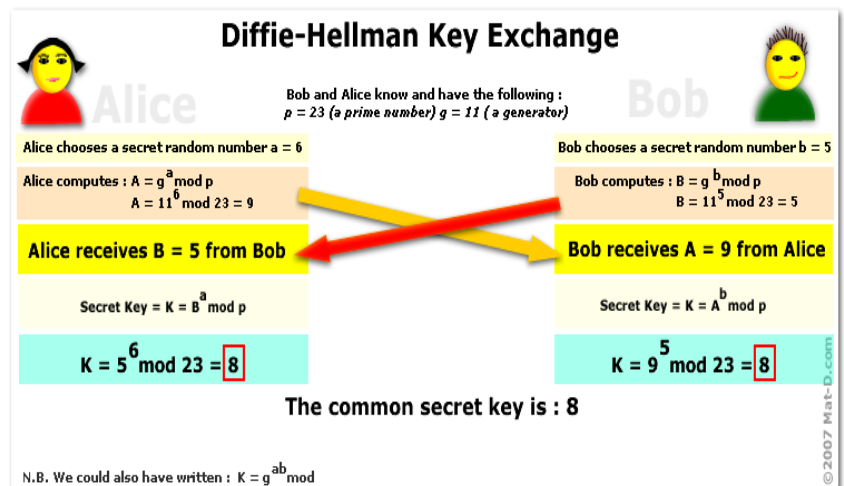
- The MMHG can be used in two different structures resulting in two different modes — defensive and offensive.
- The defensive mode grenades are to be hurled when the thrower is in a shelter or has a cover and the target is in an open area and can be harmed by fragmentation.
- On the other hand, the offensive grenades do not fragment, and the adversary is harmed by the blast or is stunned while the thrower is safe.
- The grenades being used by the forces in India till now have been mainly the defensive mode grenades.

6.11 DIFFIE-HELLMAN KEY EXCHANGE

- Television news channels have shared leaked WhatsApp chats of film actors.
- This has led to concerns whether communication over platforms such as WhatsApp is secure or not.
- Also, these events have prompted Facebook-owned WhatsApp to come out with a statement on its use of end-to-end encryption to secure user messages.

Technology used

- WhatsApp uses the encryption protocol developed by Open Whisper Systems (a project known best for its Signal app) which also uses the same open-source framework to ensure privacy.
- Many closed messaging applications now use the Signal protocol.
- Each and every WhatsApp chat has a security code used to verify that calls and the messages that are sent to that chat are end-to-end encrypted.
- The technology that forms the basis for this is called the ‘Diffie-Hellman key exchange’.
- In a 1976 Whitfield Diffie and Martin E. Hellman saw the futility of the old ways of sharing a key securely in the emerging digital world.
- They proposed a way for secure communication via a method of a shared secret key, and that too when the communication is over a not-so-secure channel.
- It is all about math and is designed in a way that a third party eavesdropping on an exchange finds it computationally unfeasible to arrive at the secret key from the information overheard.



Issues

- End-to-end encryption cannot prevent leaks from happening if a third party has access to a device which contains these messages.
- Encryption also does not help in cases where in the sender or the receiver of a message shares it with others, a member of a group shares it with others, or messages are stored in a different format on a different application or platform open to others.
- Through mobile phone cloning technique, data and cellular identity of a device can be copied into a new phone.
- This can be done with the help of an app and without access to the phone that needs to be cloned.
- In the process, the transfer of the International Mobile Equipment Identity can also happen.

6.12 INDIA PV EDGE 2020

- Recently, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is going to organize the 'India PV EDGE 2020'.
- It is a global symposium which is going to be organised by NITI Aayog, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Invest India.

About the pledge

- It is aimed at catalyzing the cutting-edge PV manufacturing in India.
- It will include a 'Investors Conclave' on PV Manufacturing.
- Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh states will participate in the conclave.
- The cutting-edge giga-scale solar manufacturing stands on three pillars:
 - disruptive PV chemistries,
 - manufacturing by custom-engineered advanced production equipment, and
 - utilisation of innovative BOM components like special glasses and coatings.

6.13 MINI APP

- Amid growing calls among developers and founders for an Indian app store, Paytm, announced the launch of its 'Mini App Store'.
- The launch was accompanied by a pledge to help homegrown startups scale and "Indian developers to take their innovative products to the masses."

Background

The announcement, splashed on the covers of leading newspapers comes also at a time when Google, facing backlash from apps, has decided to defer its 30 percent commission on in-app purchases by a year, to 31 March 2022, and hold more talks with Indian start-ups on their concerns.

About the app

- The mini apps are a custom-built mobile website that give users app-like experience without having to download them, and can be built using HTML and Javascript technologies.
- Paytm will add a new section on its main application wherein these mini apps will be listed and can be accessed by Paytm app users.

6.14 SHAURYA MISSILE

- A successful trial of the nuclear-capable Shaurya missile was conducted by India.
- Shaurya is a land-based parallel of the submarine-launched K-15 missile.

About the missile

- It is a land variant of short-range SLBM K-15 Sagarika, which has a range of at least 750 kilometres.
- These ballistic weapons belong to the K missile family — codenamed after late Dr APJ Abdul Kalam — which is launched from Arihant class of nuclear submarines.
- Because these missiles are to be launched from submarines, they are lighter, smaller and stealthier than their land-based counterparts; the Agni series.

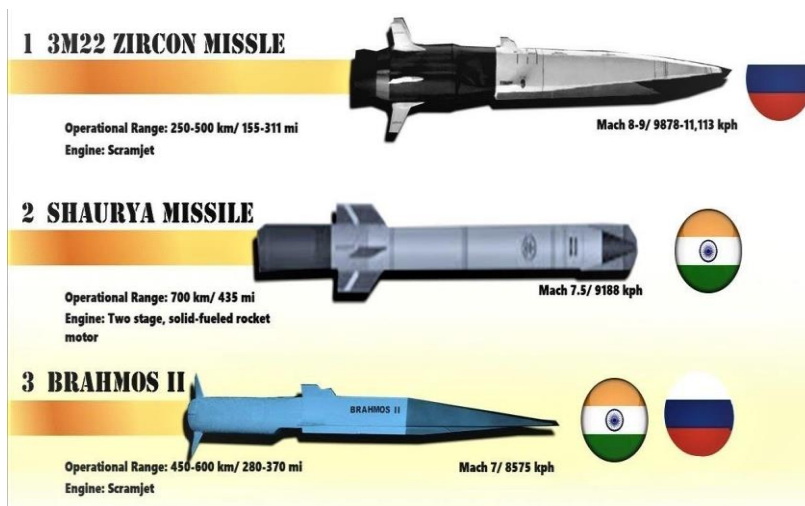
About K missile

- The K family of missiles is primarily Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs), which have been indigenously developed by DRDO.
- These are named after Dr Kalam, the central figure in India's missile and space programmes who also served as the 11th President of India.
- The development of this naval platform launched missiles began in the late 1990s as a step towards completing India's nuclear triad (land, sea and air-based).

6.15 NATIONAL STARTUP AWARDS

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is inviting applications for the first-ever National Startup Awards 2020.
- Applications for this year will be open till December 31 and startups need to DPIIT-recognised to apply.

About the award



- The National Startup Awards seek to recognize and reward outstanding startups and ecosystem enablers that are building innovative products or solutions and scalable enterprises, with high potential of employment generation or wealth creation, demonstrating measurable social impact.
- The measure of success will not only be the financial gains for the investors but also the contribution to the social good.
- The awards for startups will be given in 35 areas, classified into 12 broad sectors like agriculture, education, enterprise technology, energy, finance, food, health, Industry 4.0, space, security, tourism, and urban services.
- In addition, there are three special awards for startups from educational institutions, making impact in rural areas and women entrepreneurs.



Highlights

- A cash prize of Rs. 5 lakhs shall be awarded to one winning Startup in each of the Subsectors.
- The winner and four Runner ups shall be given opportunities to present their solutions to relevant public authorities and corporates for potential pilot projects and work orders.
- The Winners and Runners up shall be given priority for participation in various National and International Startup events sponsored by DPIIT.
- INCUBATORS: A cash Prize of Rs. 15 Lakh shall be awarded to one winning Incubator
- ACCELERATORS: A cash Prize of Rs. 15 lakh shall be awarded to one winning Accelerator

6.16 SUPERSONIC MISSILE ASSISTED RELEASE OF TORPEDO (SMART)

- A successful flight test of the Supersonic Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART) system was conducted from Wheeler Island, off the coast of Odisha.
- The system a game changer in anti-submarine warfare.

Background

- The development of the system has been crucial in capacity building of naval platforms to strike beyond the torpedo range.
- The system will be a significant addition to India's anti-submarine warfare capabilities and the test is a key step towards its deployment.

Highlights

- SMART is a missile assisted release of lightweight Anti-Submarine Torpedo System for Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) operations far beyond Torpedo range.
- This launch and demonstration is significant in establishing Anti-Submarine warfare capabilities.
- A number of DRDO laboratories including DRDL, RCI Hyderabad, ADRDE Agra, NSTL Visakhapatnam have developed the technologies required for SMART.

6.17 NATIONAL AWARDS FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY COMMUNICATION

The National Council for Science & Technology Communications (NCSTC), a Division of Department of Science & Technology (DST) has invited nominations for National Awards 2020 for Science & Technology Communication.

Highlights

- The awards shall be presented at New Delhi at a special ceremony on the 28th February, on National Science Day, every year.
- The awards carrying a citation, a memento, and cash award is presented every year to an individual or an institution for outstanding contribution in the field of science and technology communication and for promoting scientific temper during the last five years in 6 categories.
- The categories are:
 - outstanding efforts in science & technology communication,
 - science & technology communication through print media including books and magazines,
 - science & technology popularization among children,
 - translation of popular science & technology literature,
 - science & technology communication through innovative and traditional methods,
 - science & technology communication in electronic medium

The awards are conferred annually and are open to all Indian citizens above 35 years of age as well as to institutions registered in India or created by the Central/ State governments/ Union Territories recommended in writing by a competent authority.

6.18 DBT-BIRAC CLEAN TECH DEMO PARK

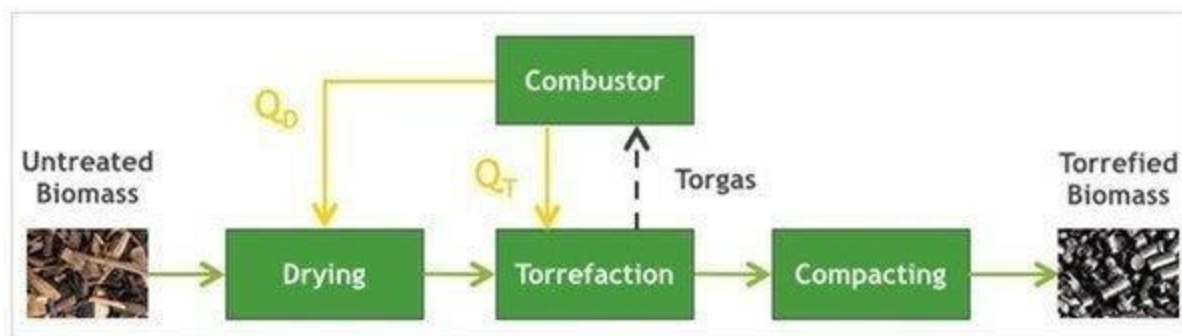
Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister for Science & Technology, Health & Family Welfare and Earth Sciences, inaugurated the “DBT-BIRAC Clean Tech Demo Park” at Barapullah drain site, near Sundial Park, Sarai Kale Khan, New Delhi in a virtual event in the presence of Lt. Governor of Delhi, Shri. Anil Baijal.

About the park

- This Clean Tech Demo Park would be a good attraction not only for Innovators/ Investors but also for students and common public for awareness and popularization of clean technological solution for waste management.
- The novel indigenous technologies developed for the treatment of sewage and industrial waste waters should be promoted and given wide publicity to ensure their commercialization and adoption for achieving Swachh Bharat and Atmanirbhar Bharat goals.
- The DBT-BIRAC Clean Tech Demo Park will be used to demonstrate innovative Waste-to-Value technologies with support from Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a DBT PSU.
- This park will be managed by the Clean Energy International Incubation Centre (CEIIC), a public-private-partnership incubator set up jointly by DBT, BIRAC and Tata Power.

6.19 PUSA DECOMPOSER

BASIC TORREFACTION PRINCIPLE



- Recently, the scientists developed a bio-decomposer technique called ‘PUSA Decomposers’ for converting crop stubble into compost.
- Satellite remote sensing data from the Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI) show a five-fold increase in the number of farm fires in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh during the first six days of October compared to the corresponding dates in 2019.

Background

- The burning of paddy stubble left in the fields after harvest has been a cause of concern for the past several years as it contributes to air pollution in the northern Gangetic plains and it’s already polluted cities like Delhi.

- Several solutions have been proposed over the years to tackle the issue. The most recent one is the 'Pusa Decomposer' capsule developed by IARI.

About PUSA decomposers

- The decomposers are in the form of capsules made by extracting fungi strains that help the paddy straw to decompose at a much faster rate than usual.
- The fungi help to produce the essential enzymes for the degradation process.
- This would then rule out the need to burn the stubble, and also help in retaining the essential microbes and nutrients in the soil that are otherwise damaged when the residue is burned.

About the significance

- The decomposer improves the fertility and productivity of the soil as the stubble works as manure and compost for the crops and lesser fertiliser consumption is required in the future.
- It is an efficient and effective, cheaper, doable and practical technique to stop stubble burning.
- It is an eco-friendly and environmentally useful technology and will contribute to achieving Swachh Bharat Mission.

6.20 SYSTEM-BASED AUTOMATIC CAUTION-LISTING OF EXPORTERS

In an effort to provide flexibility to exporters in the realisation of export proceeds, the Reserve Bank has decided to discontinue the system-based automatic caution-listing of exporters.

Background

- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the decision will also empower exporters to negotiate better terms with overseas buyers.
- Stating that exports have been adversely affected due to the pandemic related contraction in demand, Mr. Das said the decision is likely to make the system more exporter-friendly and equitable.

Highlights

- The decision will also empower exporters to negotiate better terms with overseas buyers.
- As part of automation of the Export Data Processing and Monitoring System, the 'Caution/De-caution Listing' of exporters was automated in 2016.
- Accordingly, the exporters were to be caution-listed automatically, if any shipping bill against them remained outstanding for more than two years.
- After contracting for six months in a row, India's exports grew by 5.27 percent year-on-year to 27.4 billion dollars in September while the trade deficit narrowed to a three-month low of 2.91 billion dollars.

6.21 NATIONAL SUPER COMPUTING MISSION

- National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune for installing a state of the art supercomputer in the process of becoming part of the National SuperComputing Mission of the Government of India.
- A total of 10 Centrally Funded Institutions have been inducted into NSM including IISc, Bangalore and seven IITs in addition to NIT, Trichy.

Objective

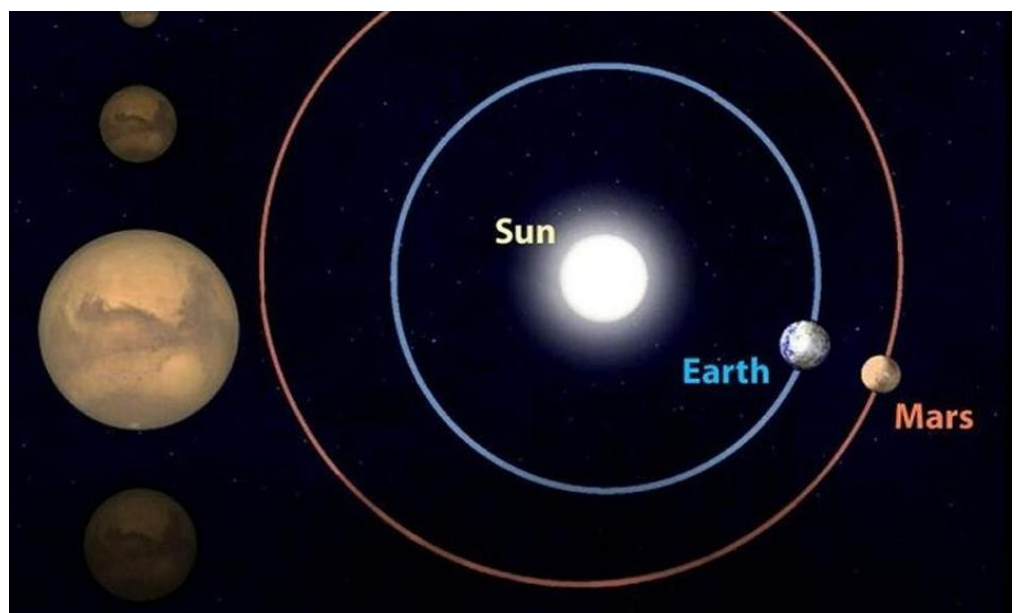
- The objective of the NSM is to empower technology institutions with high-performance computing capabilities that can be used for solving socially relevant, computationally intensive problems.
- The superComputing facility worth 17 crore rupees will be made available to neighbouring educational institutions, as mandated and in line with NEP-2020.

About National Supercomputing Mission

- NSM is a proposed plan by GoI to create a cluster of seventy supercomputers connecting various academic and research institutions across India.
- In April 2015 the government approved the NSM with a total outlay of Rs.4500 crore for a period of 7 years.
- The mission was set up to provide the country with supercomputing infrastructure to meet the increasing computational demands of academia, researchers, MSMEs, and startups by creating the capability design, manufacturing, of supercomputers indigenously in India.
- Currently there are four supercomputers from India in Top 500 list of supercomputers in the world.

6.22 MARS ‘OPPOSITION’ EVENT

- Due to an event referred to as “opposition”, which takes place every two years and two months, Mars will shine the brightest.
- ‘Opposition’ is the event when



the sun, Earth and an outer planet (Mars in this case) are lined up, with the Earth in the middle.

About the 'Opposition' event

- The time of opposition is the point when the outer planet is typically also at its closest distance to the Earth for a given year, and because it is close, the planet appears brighter in the sky.
- An opposition can occur anywhere along Mars' orbit, but when it happens when the planet is also closest to the sun, it is also particularly close to the Earth.
- It will outshine Jupiter, becoming the third brightest object (moon and Venus are first and second, respectively) in the night sky during the month of October.

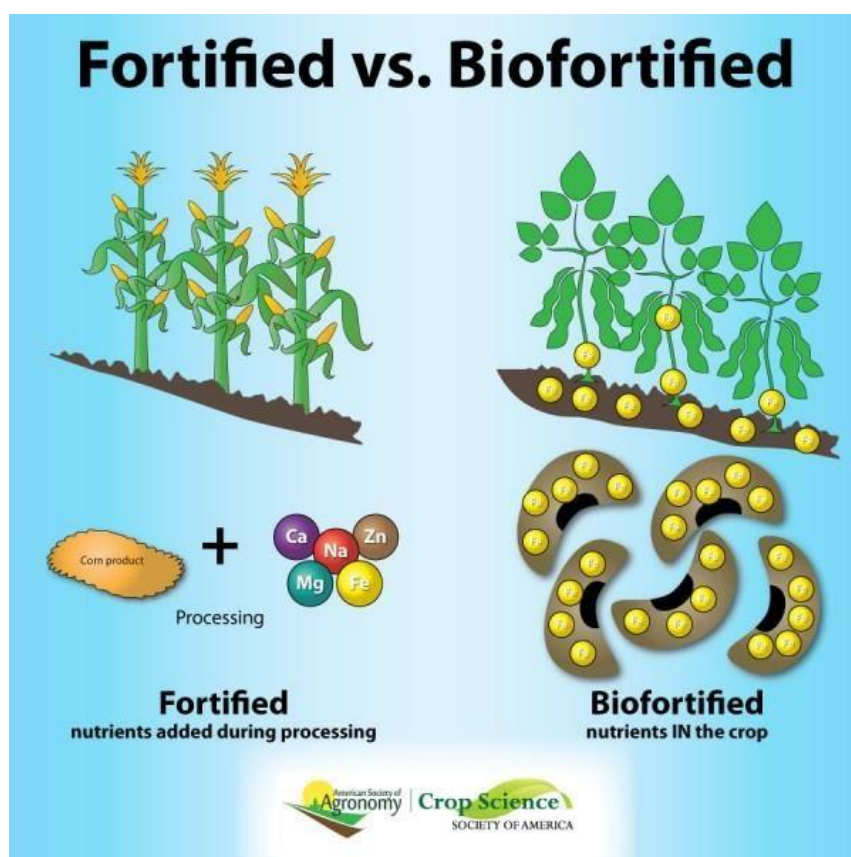
Highlights

- Earth and Mars orbit the sun at different distances (Mars is farther apart from the sun than Earth and therefore takes longer to complete one lap around the sun).
- In fact, the opposition can happen only for planets that are farther away from the sun than the Earth.
- In the case of Mars, roughly every two years, the Earth passes between sun and Mars, this is when the three are arranged in a straight line.
- Further, as the Earth and Mars orbit the sun, there comes a point when they are on the opposite sides of it, and hence very far apart.
- At its farthest, Mars is about 400 million km from the Earth.
- In case of opposition, however, Mars and Sun are on directly opposite sides of the Earth.
- In other words, the Earth, sun and Mars all lie in a straight line, with the Earth in the middle.

6.23 BIO-FORTIFIED

VARIETIES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi



on October 16 dedicated to the nation 17 recently developed bio-fortified varieties of eight crops on World Food Day.

About the varieties

- These varieties, along with other food ingredients, will transform the normal Indian thali into nutri-thali.
- These varieties have been developed by utilizing the local landraces and farmer's varieties.
- The high zinc rice has been developed from landraces of Assam rice collected from Garo hills and those of finger millets from Gujarat collections of Dang district.

About ICAR

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has started Nutri-Sensitive Agricultural Resources and Innovations (NARI) programme.
- Its objective is to promote family farming linking agriculture to nutrition, nutri-smart villages for enhancing nutritional security.
- Under it, location specific nutrition garden models are being developed and promoted by KVKs to ensure access to locally available, healthy and diversified diet with adequate macro and micronutrients.

6.24 BRAHMOS

- BRAHMOS, the supersonic cruise missile was successfully test fired from Indian Navy's indigenously-built stealth destroyer INS Chennai, hitting a target in the Arabian Sea.
- BRAHMOS as a prime strike weapon will ensure the warship's invincibility by engaging naval surface targets at long ranges, thus making the destroyer another lethal platform of Indian Navy.

Highlights

- BrahMos Aerospace, an India-Russia joint venture, produces the supersonic cruise missile that can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft, or from land platforms.
- In the last few weeks, India has test fired a number of missiles including a new version of the surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile BrahMos and anti-radiation missile Rudram-1.
- The original 290-km range BrahMos has already been deployed in Ladakh as well as Arunachal Pradesh during the ongoing military confrontation with China.
- The armed forces have already inducted the 290-km range land and warship-based versions of the BrahMos missiles, which fly almost three times the speed of sound at Mach 2.8, over the last decade.

6.25 ANTI-TANK GUIDED MISSILES

- On 1 October 2020, Laser Guided Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) was successfully test-fired defeating a target located at a longer range.

- It is indigenously developed.

About Anti-tank guided missile

- It is a medium or long-range missile whose primary objective is to destroy tanks and other armoured vehicles.
- As we know that various rockets and missiles are employed against armoured



- vehicles, but the most sophisticated are Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM).
- They can be directed to the target by several different guidance systems like laser guiding, television camera, or wire guiding.
- In fact, ATGMS can be launched from aircraft or land vehicles or by infantry.
- It can also be used against fortified positions or low-speed aircraft.
- In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the first ATGMs were developed.
- They employed with manual guidance systems that require the operator to steer the missile to the target by wire with a joystick or similar control device.

6.26 MALABAR NAVAL EXERCISE

As India Seeks to increase cooperation with other countries in the maritime security domain and in the light of increased defence cooperation with Australia, Malabar 2020 will see the participation of the Australian Navy.

About the exercise

- Exercise Malabar is a trilateral naval exercise involving the United States, Japan and India as permanent partners.
- Originally begun in 1992 as a bilateral exercise between India and the United States, Japan became a permanent partner in 2015.
- Past non-permanent participants are Australia and Singapore.
- The annual Malabar series began in 1992 and includes diverse activities, ranging from fighter combat operations from aircraft carriers through Maritime Interdiction Operations Exercises.

About the significance of Australia's inclusion

- Earlier, India had concerns that it would give the appearance of a “quadrilateral military alliance” aimed at China.
- Now both look forward to the cooperation in the ‘Indo-Pacific’ and the strengthening of defence ties.
- This has led to a convergence of mutual interest in many areas for a better understanding of regional and global issues.
- Both are expected to conclude the long-pending Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) as part of measures to elevate the strategic partnership.

6.27 DRDO PROCUREMENT MANUAL 2020


- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh released a new version of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Procurement Manual 2020 (PM-2020).
- The previous Procurement Manual was modified in 2016.

Highlights

- The previous Procurement Manual of DRDO was last modified in 2016.
- Its objective is to encourage more participation of Indian industry, including Start-ups and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Defence Research & Development (R&D) for achieving ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’.
- Bid security declaration option for earnest money deposit, increase of threshold limit for advance payment, placement of order on lowest bidder 2 (L2) in case L1 backs out are some of the salient features of the new manual.
- Some more enabling measures of PM-2020 are exemption of bid security and performance security up to Rs 10 lakh, no negotiations for commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) items/services wherever price discovery is happening through market forces.
- Performance security for service contracts is linked to the payment cycle instead of total contract value.
- Procurement of stores from development partners, safeguarding of free issue material through insurance cover instead of bank guarantee (BG) are other facilitating measures adopted to help the industry.

New rules of engagement

DRDO's new procurement manual seeks to encourage more participation from Indian industry, especially start-ups and MSMEs. Here are some key changes

HIGHER ADVANCE PAYMENT: The amount given to vendors has been raised to almost 40% of the cost, instead of 15%	NEW BIDDING SYSTEM: To avoid delay, the organisation can place order with second lowest bidder (L2) if L1 (the lowest bidder) backs out	LEASING OPTION: It introduces a provision for leasing of equipment required for a short period if it is a better option to an outright purchase	DELIVERY PERIOD EXTENSION: The new manual empowers project directors to take decisions on delivery period extension
KEEPING IT SIMPLE: Internal processes have been simplified for ensuring faster procurement	<p style="margin: 0;">"The new manual will facilitate the indigenous defence industry by simplifying the processes and ensure their participation in design and development activities"</p> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: 0.7em;">Rajnath Singh, defence minister</p>		
ENABLING EXEMPTIONS: Another enabling measure includes exemption of bid security and performance security up to ₹10 lakh			

- The liquidated damage (LD) rate for development contracts has been reduced.
- The delivery period (DP) extension process has been simplified for faster decision making.

6.28 **INDIA INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FESTIVAL**

- The 5th India International Science Festival (IISF) is being held in Kolkata, West Bengal from 5-8 November 2019.
- The four-day festival was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi via video conference.

Objective and Theme

- **IISF Objective:** To instil scientific temper among people, showcase India's contribution in field of Science and Technology as well as encourage translation of its benefits to people. It also aims to build a strategy for inclusive advancement of Science and Technology.
- **IISF 2019 theme:** RISEN- Research, Innovation and Science Empowering the Nation.

About IISF

- The 5th edition of annual event is jointly organized by Union Ministry of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences and Vijnana Bharati (or VIBHA).
- More than 12,000 school and college students from across India are expected to attend event.
- The IISF was first started in 2015 with the vision of promoting science and technology by showing public how STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) provides us solutions to improve our lives.
- The first IISF was held at IIT Delhi in December 2015, in which India had set world record with 2000 school students performing two experiments.

6.29 **STAND-OFF ANTI-TANK (SANT) MISSILE**

- India successfully test fired the Stand-Off Anti-Tank Missile called SANT.
- It was developed by the Defence Research and Development Organization for the Indian Air Force.
- The missile was test fired at the Chandipur test range.

About the missile

- The missile has both lock-on before launch and lock-on after launch capabilities.
- SANT missile is a variant of Nag missile.
- The other variants of Nag missile are Helina (or Dhruvastra) and MP-ATGM.
- SANT is an upgraded version of HELINA.
- It was successfully tested in Pokhran in November 2018.
- This upgraded version of the Nag Missile has a nose-mounted active radar homing seeker with an extended range of 15 to 20 km.
- HELINA is usually referred to as upgraded SANT.

- India has been frequently conducting missile tests.
- Of all the missile test fires, the missile test of Nirbhay was a failure.

6.30 TUBARIAL SALIVARY GLANDS

- Scientists in the Netherlands have discovered a potential new organ in the human throat that they stumbled upon while carrying out research on prostate cancer, Livescience reported.
- Researchers at the Netherlands Cancer Institute have identified a set of salivary glands deep in the upper part of the throat and have named them “tubarial salivary glands”.

Background

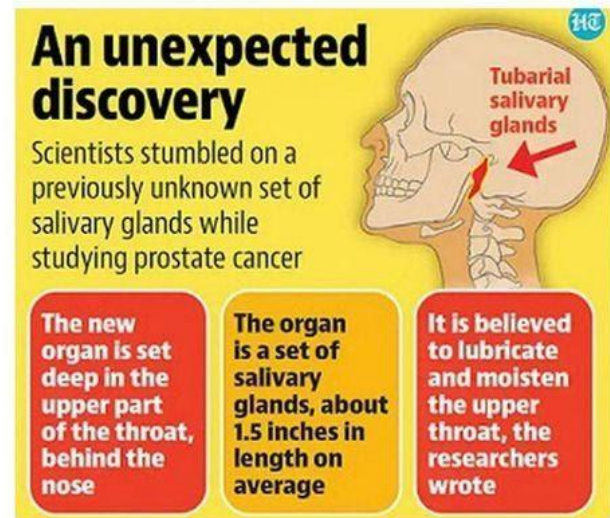
- According to a study published in the journal Radiotherapy and Oncology, the researchers confirmed the presence of the glands after examining at least 100 patients.
- The discovery may be important for cancer treatment.
- So far, this nasopharynx region — behind the nose — was not thought to host anything but microscopic, diffuse, salivary glands.
- The newly discovered glands are about 1.5 inches (3.9 centimeters) in length on average and are located over a piece of cartilage called the torus tubarius, Livescience reported.
- According to the researchers, the glands probably lubricate and moisten the upper throat behind the nose and mouth.

Highlights

- Until now, there were three known large salivary glands in humans: one under the tongue, one under the jaw and one at the back of the jaw, behind the cheek.
- The new organ was discovered while scientists were studying prostate cancer cells using PSMA PET-CT technology — a combination of CT scans and positron emission tomography (PET) — which is good in detecting salivary gland tissues.
- In this technique, a radioactive “tracer” is injected into the patient that binds to the protein PSMA, which is elevated in prostate cancer cells.

TUBARIAL SALIVARY GLANDS

Scientists in the Netherlands have discovered a potential new organ in the human throat that they stumbled upon while carrying out research on prostate cancer.



- Doctors using radiotherapy for treating cancers in the head and neck try to avoid the main salivary glands as damaging them could make eating, speaking or swallowing difficult for patients.
- However, in this case, the newly discovered glands were getting hit by radiation as doctors were not aware of their existence in the human body.
- Thus, the new discovery may result in fewer side effects for cancer patients.

6.31 INS KAVARATTI

The last of four indigenously built Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) stealth corvettes (a small warship) “INS Kavaratti” under Project 28 (Kamorta class) is scheduled to be commissioned into the Indian Navy.

About the submarine

- It is referred to as a potent Stealth ASW Corvette.
- It has anti-submarine warfare capability.
- It was indigenously designed by the Indian Navy’s in-house organisation, Directorate of Naval Design(DND).
- It was built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.
- Kavaratti has state-of-the-art weapons and sensor suite capable of detecting and prosecuting submarines.
- The ship also has a credible self defense capability and good endurance for long-range deployments.

6.32 FLASH FLOOD GUIDANCE SERVICES

Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Dr. M. Rajeevan dedicated Flash Flood Guidance services, first of its kind for South Asian countries namely India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Background

The system was launched virtually and was participated by distinguished National and International dignitaries including Head of Hydrological and Water Resources Services Division, World Meteorological Organization, Dr.Hwirin Kim, Director, Hydrologic Research Centre, USA Dr.Konstantine P. Georgakakos, and Member Secretary NDMA, G.V.V. Sarma.

Highlights

- It has been developed by India Meteorological Department.
- Under it, an automated mode of dissemination is to be established with the stakeholders along with the use of social media, so that the information reaches to concerned disaster authorities in a timely manner.

- The Guidance for flash floods in the form of Threats (6 hours in advance) and Risks (24 hours in advance) will be provided by Regional Centre to National Meteorological & Hydrological Services, National and State Disaster Management Authorities for taking mitigation measures to reduce the loss of life and property in the South Asian Region countries.

6.33 **THE PLASMA THERAPY DEBATE**

- Recently published findings on convalescent plasma therapy on Covid-19 patients have triggered a debate over its efficacy.
- After the country's largest such trial, known by the acronym PLACID, found that convalescent plasma was ineffective in arresting Covid-19, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has been considering dropping this option from the national guidelines.
- However, in several states including most-affected Maharashtra and Delhi, health authorities continue to push the option while those running plasma blood banks promote it with anecdotal accounts on social media.

About Plasma Therapy

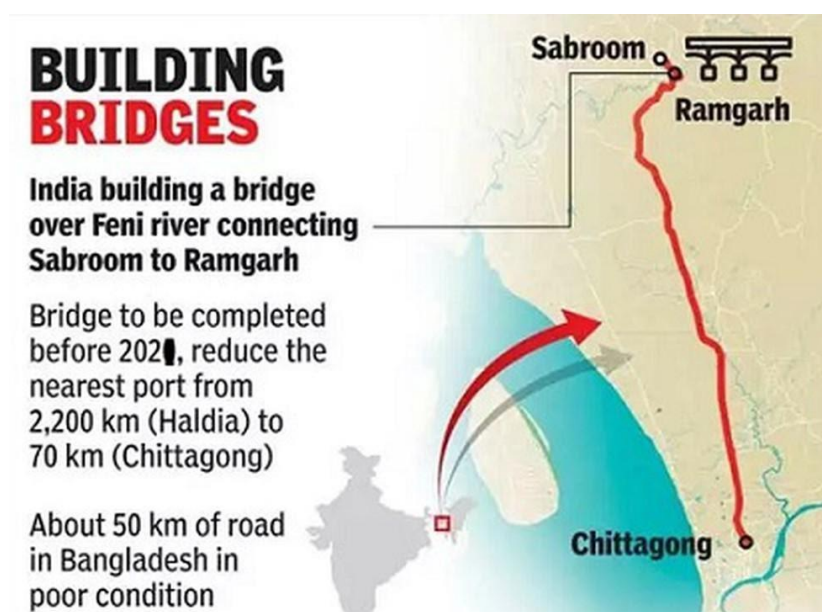
- Plasma is the liquid part of the blood. Convalescent plasma, extracted from the blood of patients recovering from an infection, is a source of antibodies against the infection.
- The therapy involves using their plasma to help others recover. For Covid-19, this has been one of the treatment options.
- The donor would have to be a documented case of Covid-19 and healthy for 28 days since the last symptoms.

Highlights

- An ICMR study has found convalescent plasma was not associated with a reduction in progression to severe Covid-19 or all-cause mortality.
- The results of the PLACID trial at multiple centres, first out on a pre-print server in September, were published in the peer-reviewed British Medical Journal on October 22.

6.34 **FENIBRIDGE**

Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari announced that the 1.8 kilometre long Fenibridge connecting Sabrum in India with



Ramgarh in Bangladesh will be completed by December this year.

About the Bridge

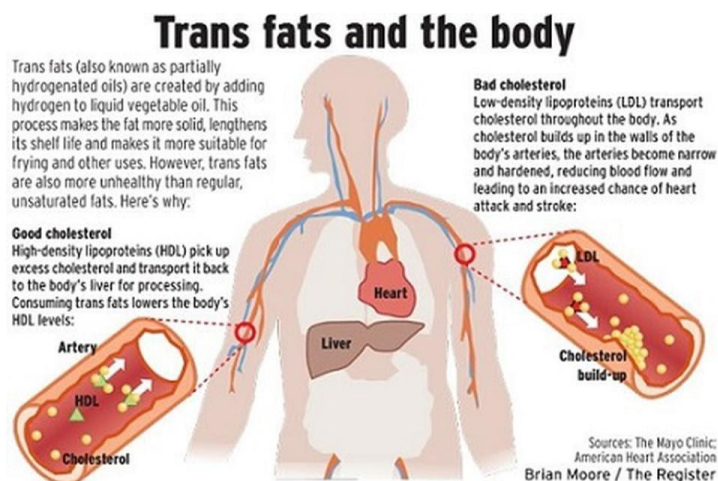
- Feni Bridge is known as MaitreeSetu in Chattogram.
- The bridge is being built over the Feni River and will connect Tripura with Chittagong port of Bangladesh.
- The foundation of the bridge was laid in 2015 jointly by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The project is scheduled to be completed by April next year.
- The bridge is being constructed by the National Highways Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd of Ministry of Road and Transport highways, Government of India.

Highlights

- It is being developed as a corridor for trade and commerce between India's North-East and Bangladesh.
- It will provide direct road connectivity between South Tripura and Chittagong allowing India to use Chittagong as a "port of call" and promoting trade, tourism and people-to-people ties.
- The bridge will facilitate carrying heavy machines and goods to and from the north-eastern states and the rest of India via Bangladesh through Chattogram.

6.35 TRANS FATS

- Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said that due to the unprecedented challenges faced by the world on account of the coronavirus pandemic, there has been a renewed focus on food, nutrition, health, immunity and sustainability.
- Presided over an event organised by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to celebrate World Food Day, Vardhan reminded everyone of the government's effort to make India free of trans-fat by 2022, a year ahead of WHO's target.



Objective

- The key focus of this year is the elimination of trans-fat from the food supply chain.
- Present in partially hydrogenated vegetable oils such as vanaspati, shortening and margarine, trans-fat is a major contributor to the rise in non-communicable diseases in India.

Highlights

- Trans-fat is a modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular diseases (CVD).
- Eliminating CVD risk factor is especially relevant during COVID-19 as people with CVD are predisposed to have serious conditions having an impact on mortality
- FSSAI's Eat Right India movement targets to promote safe and healthy food for everyone in an environmentally sustainable way.
- It is a part of its mandate to provide safe and wholesome food for all citizens. This will improve the food safety ecosystems and lift the hygiene and health of our citizens.

6.36 INDIA'S FIRST SEAPLANE PROJECT

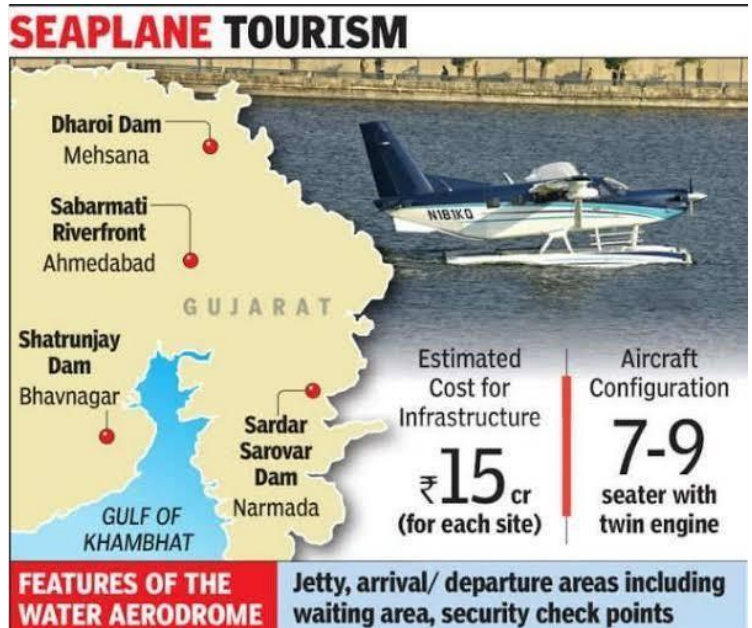
The first of the five seaplane services in Gujarat, connecting Sabarmati River in Ahmedabad to the Statue of Unity in Kevadia in Narmada district, was inaugurated on October 31.

About India's first seaplane

- A seaplane is a fixed-winged aeroplane designed for taking off and landing on water.
- It offers the public the speed of an aeroplane with the utility of a boat.
- The first seaplane project of the country is part of a directive of the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- As per the directive, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) requested state governments of Gujarat, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and the administration of Andaman & Nicobar to propose potential locations for setting up water aerodromes to boost the tourism sector.

About the impact

- The water aerodrome is not a listed project/activity in the Schedule to the Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 and its amendments.
- However, the activities proposed under the water aerodrome project may have a similar type of impact as that of an airport.
- There has to be a bathymetric and hydrographic survey by Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI).
- During seaplane operations, there will be turbulence created in the water while takeoff and landing of seaplanes.



- This will lead to more operation process i.e. mixing of oxygen in the water.
- This will have a positive impact on the aquatic ecosystem near seaplane operations increasing oxygen content and decreasing carbon content in this system.

6.37 CUREd

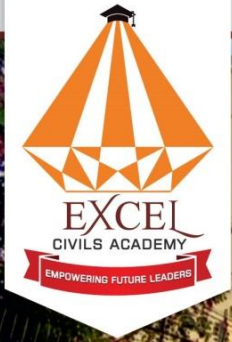
- The Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan on October 20, 2020, launched CuRED (CSIR Ushered Repurposed Drugs).
- A website that will provide comprehensive information about the COVID-19 trials that CSIR-Council of Scientific and Industrial Research is engaged in a partnership with ministries, government departments, and industries.

Background

- While addressing the event, the Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan appreciated the efforts made by CSIR in being at the forefront to fight COVID-19.
- He also highlighted its role in giving priority to the clinical trials, helping the launch of drugs and diagnostics in the market, and generating data for the regulatory approval of the trials.

About CuRED

- As per the official release by the Science and Technology Ministry, CuRED will be providing information about diagnostics, drugs, and devices.
- It will also include the current stage of the trials, partnering institutions as well as their role in the trials along with other details.



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