EXCEL QUEST

EXCEL CIVILS ACADEMY
EMPOWERING FUTURE LEADERS

VOLUME- 10, October 2020

MISSION KARMAYOGI: RULES-BASED TO ROLES-BASED

National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB)

- Shift from 'Rules-based' to a 'Roles-based' human resource management
- Emphasise role of "On-Site learning" in complementing "Off-Site learning"
- Linking training and development of competencies of civil servants
- Transforming training institutions into Centres of Excellence
- Ministries to directly invest and co-create a common learning ecosystem
- Focus on massive scale training on e-learning

Mission Karmayogi

Germany drifts away from China, adopts new India-Pacific strategy

₹11,170 crore
FUNDS FOR STATES UNDER SDRF

75% Centre's contribution of SDRF allocation for general category states and UTs

90% Centre's contribution for special-category states like J&K, HP and NE states

State SDRF Allocation

Maharashtra	1,611
Uttar Pradesh	966
Madhya Pradesh	910
Odisha	802
Rajasthan	740
Bihar	708
Gujarat	662

In an order issued on March 14, the home ministry had said it has decided to treat Covid-19 as a "notified disaster" for the purpose of providing assistance under the SDRF.

Ministry of Education
Government of India

Toy and Puppet making skills will be developed among kids through Kala Utsav

- Indigenous toy making will be included as a theme
- Puppet Shows will be organised for secondary and higher secondary students

kala utsav

Death count
While the number of accidental fatalities and deaths by suicide grew in 2019 compared to the previous year, the rate of increase fell marginally

% change in accidental deaths   % change in suicides

DATA FOR ACCIDENTAL DEATHS AND SUICIDES

Government to infuse Rs 20,000 crore in Public Sector Banks

PM NarendraModi's address at 75th UN General Assembly: Get Full Statement here
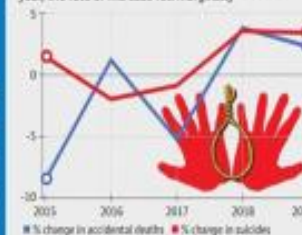
India storms out of SCO meeting after Pakistan projects controversial map

Director's message

Dear Aspirants,

'Uncertainty is the only certainty' holds true to CS Examinations. CSE-2020 Prelims exams held on 4th October, 2020 sprung a number of surprises to most of the Candidates all over the Country. While some of the candidates have done well, most felt that the Papers were tough and some though knew the answers could not comprehend the questions and hence are not sure of crossing the initial filtration at the Prelims level. However, since the cutoff marks keep varying from year to year and can never be said with certainty, everyone who took the Prelims are expected to continue and intensify their preparation for the Mains which are scheduled from Jan 8th 2021, leaving very little time to cover the syllabus for the Mains which calls for effective time management even if it means burning midnight oil. The entire world still continues to be in the grip of COVID-19 with appropriate Vaccine still eluding the scientific community. So far, more than 10,99,184 deaths and 3,89,84,808 infections have been reported from all over the world with India alone accounting for 1,12,161 deaths and 73,70,468 infections. Experts believe that India is likely to experience second wave in the next 2 to 3 months due to change in climate and hence sound a word of caution to take all preventive steps while ramping up health facilities to handle the challenge. Europe has already started facing the onslaught of second wave and hence initiated a string of measures to control the pandemic. WHO already sounded an alarm urging the Govts to step up efforts with cases crossing over one lakh daily. The European Continent starting from France to Britain to the Czech Republic is seeing a surge in daily cases mounting a load on hospital beds and increased death toll necessitating imposition of further lockdowns and restrictions. As per reports, WHO's European director Hans Kluge said the current situation was, 'more than ever, pandemic times for Europe". "The fall (autumn) and winter surge continues to unfold in Europe, with exponential increases in daily cases and matching percentage increases in daily deaths," said Kluge in a media briefing. France had already imposed curfew from 9 PM to 6 AM in Paris region and eight other metropolitan areas, beginning from 17th October 2020 for the next four weeks. Germany already decided to impose nationwide restrictions on social gatherings and domestic travel. In Spain's Catalona region, authorities closed and restaurants for next 15

days except takeout food. In Netherlands, the Govt announced a limited lockdown and all bars and restaurants will be closed for at least four weeks and the gatherings are limited to 30 people and most of the sporting events have been suspended. Britain too imposed restrictions on people mixing indoors and discouraged using public transportation in London and in other parts too. Similar situation might await India with lockdowns lifted primarily to reignite the stalled economy and people ignoring all advisories to maintain social distancing, using of face masks, frequent sanitization of hands and other surfaces and avoiding of unnecessary movements by senior citizens and people with comorbidities. Unless the sense of complacency which set in addressed seriously and step up preparations to handle fresh surge, we as a nation, will be paying a heavy price in terms of loss of human lives unless effective vaccine is discovered in the near future.

Apart from COVID-19, another most important and keenly followed event globally is the US Presidential Elections scheduled on 3rd November 2020. Given the significance and leadership role played by the US globally, the presidential elections attracts lots of attention from rest of the world as it has an impact economically, politically and militarily as well as influencing the foreign policy and realignment of forces.

Simply speaking, unlike the Indian multiparty parliamentary democratic system which is headed by the Prime Minister assisted by a Cabinter, the US Political System is dominated by just two parties, so the president always belongs to one of them. The Republicans are the conservative Political Party in the US and their candidate in this year's election is President Donald Trump, who is hoping to secure another four years in power. The Republican Party is also known as the Grand Old Party (GOP) which in recent years stood for lower taxes, gun rights and tighter restrictions on immigration and enjoys stronger support in rural parts of America. The Democrats are the liberal Political Party in the US and their candidate is Joe Biden, an experienced Politician best-known for serving as Barack Obama's Vice President for eight years. While both the Presidential aspirants are in their 70s, at 78, Mr Biden would be the oldest first-term president in history if he wades through the electoral victory. How people vote is a contentious issue this year because of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Some politicians are calling for wider use of postal ballots, but doubts are being expressed about this resulting in voter fraud and manipulation. While the counting could take days, possibly weeks because of the expected surge in postal ballots, the new President

will be officially sworn in to office on 20th January 2021, which is held on the steps of the Capitol building in Washington DC.

Back home, the Election Commission announced elections to 243 Bihar Assembly seats and by-polls for 64 Assembly seats and one Parliamentary seat in different States around the same time on 4th September 2020. The elections are scheduled to be held in three phases; the first for 71 seats on 28th October 2020, the second for 94 seats on 3rd November 2020 and the third for the remaining 78 will be on 7th November 2020. The results will be announced on 10th November 2020. Alleged suicide death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput (hailing from Bihar) in Mumbai which is presently being probed by CBI has generated much heat politically between Maharashtra which is being ruled by a coalition Govt, Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) headed by Sh Uddhav Thackeray where as Bihar is being ruled by Janata Dal (United) and BJP headed by Sh. Nitish Kumar. While the Maharashtra Govt. attributed the death to suicide, the father of the deceased actor got a case registered in Bihar alleging it as a murder and subsequently the case got transferred to CBI for investigation. While the political slugfest continues, one needs to wait for the results of investigation to arrive at a definite conclusion about the cause of death.

WISH YOU ALL AND YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS A VERY HAPPY DUSSEHRA AND DIWALI IN ADVANCE.

Best wishes.

K. Rajendra Kumar IPS (Retd.)
Director.

Table of Content

1. NATIONAL

1.1 TEXTILE GRAND CHALLENGE 2019

- Union Minister of Textiles and Women & Child Development Smt Smriti Zubin Irani today said that the innovative spirit of India needs to be institutionalized for developing eco-friendly and cost-friendly alternative ideas that can also be utilized to create job opportunities.

- Speaking at the award giving ceremony for winners of the Textile Grand Challenge 2019 organized by Ministry of Textiles in keeping with Prime Minister ShriNarendraModi's clarion call to take decisive action for plastic waste management during his Independence Day speech on 15th August 2019, the Union Minister said that the contribution of innovative ideas by the participants is an indication that the legacy of India is steeped in equal opportunities for all.

Background

- Minister Smt Smriti Zubin Irani stressed on the need to upgrade textiles machine technology especially in the jute sector and proposed to organize a Grand Machinery Challenge for the Textile Sector to throw up new technologies.

- The Textile Grand Challenge 2019 was organized by the Ministry of Textiles with the active support of National Jute Board and the Start up India Team of the Department for Promotion of Industry & Industrial Trade (DPIIT).

About the challenge

The aim of organizing this historic event was to bring forward innovative ideas by start-ups/entrepreneurs for development of cost effective and low-weight carry bags using Jute Bio-mass, Jute Plant based bio-polymer and cotton fire waste to phase out plastic bags.

- It is also an initiative towards 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Makein India' under which innovative solutions were sought for (i) Alternative to single use Plastic bags and (ii) Alternative to Multi-use Plastic bags, using domestically grown natural fibres viz; Jute and Cotton.

- A total of 67 entries were received for the Challenge out of which 3 participants – 2 for ideas on alternative for single use plastic bags and 1 for idea on alternative for multi-use plastic bags were selected and awarded by the Ministry with cash prizes.

- The Ministry of Textiles has appealed to industry stalwarts to take forward the newly developed ideas & technologies for helping to set up new ventures for manufacturing such biodegradable and non-polluting bags and to help these new start-ups to promote and market such innovative products.

1.2 FIVE MEMBERS OF GREAT ANDAMAN TRIBE TEST POSITIVE

- Nine cases of Covid-19 have been recorded among the Great Andamanese tribe, setting off alarm bells in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration.

- A Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), the Great Andamanese now number only 59.

- While five of the coronavirus patients have recovered, the others are doing well, the officials said.

Background

- Great Andamanese are an indigenous people of the Great Andaman archipelago in the Andaman Islands.
- They are classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group(PVTG).
- They speak Jeru dialect among themselves and their number stands at just 74.
- The five PVTGS residing in Andamans are Great Andamanese, Jarwas, Onges, Shompens and North Sentinelese.

Highlights

- Survival International is a human rights organisation formed in 1969 that campaigns for the rights of indigenous and/or tribal peoples and uncontacted peoples.
- Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) is a government of India classification created with the purpose of enabling improvement in the conditions of certain communities with particularly low development indices.
- Criteria for identification of PVTGs: a) Pre-agricultural level of technology b) Low level of literacy c) Economic backwardness and d) declining or stagnant population.
- 75 tribal groups have been categorized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups PVTGs).
- They reside in 18 States and Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Island.

1.3   STATES CAN HAVE SUB-GROUPS AMONG SC/STs, SAYS COURT

- A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court held that States can sub-classify Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Central List to provide preferential treatment to the "weakest of the weak".
- It referred the issue to a larger Bench to decide.

Background

- This was because in a 2005 ruling, also by a five-judge Bench, the Supreme Court had ruled that state governments had no power to create sub-categories of SCs for the purpose of reservation.
- The Constitution, while providing for special treatment of SCs and STs to achieve equality, does not specify the castes and tribes that are to be called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

About the Highlights

- This power is left to the central executive — the President.
- As per Article 341, those castes notified by the President are called SCs and STs.
- A caste notified as SC in one state may not be a SC in another state.
- These vary from state to state to prevent disputes as to whether a particular caste is accorded reservation or not.

1.4 INDIAN RAILWAYS SET TO MEET ENERGY CONSUMPTION NEEDS BY 2030

- In order to achieve its objective of becoming 100% self-sustainable for all its power needs and also to contribute to national solar power goals, Indian Railways recently organized wide ranging discussions with key stakeholders under the chairmanship of Minister of Railways and Commerce & Industry PiyushGoyal.

- It can also be mentioned here that, Guwahati station became the first railway station in the Northeast to be fully powered with grid-connected Solar Power with commissioning of a 700 KWp solar plant in the year 2017.

Background

- It can also be mentioned here that, Guwahati station became the first railway station in the Northeast to be fully powered with grid-connected Solar Power with commissioning of a 700 KWp solar plant in the year 2017.

- Already, roof-mounted solar panels in various offices, station buildings; level crossing gates in the NFR area are generating about 2718 KWp of Solar Power which enabled savings of more than Rs. 2.22 crore from annual conventional energy bills.

About the Highlights

- It may be noted that Indian Railways is committed to utilize solar energy for meeting its traction power requirement and become a complete 'Green mode of transportation'.

- The primary areas of discussion in this meeting were as follows:

- Innovative solutions for setting up solar projects along the railway track.

- Possible power procurement routes for achieving 20 GW renewable energy target, set by the Indian Railways, to become the net zero carbon emitter by 2030.

- Challenges in large-scale deployment of solar energy projects by the Indian Railways.

- During discussion the developers acknowledged the efforts of Indian Railways in leading the development of renewable energy in the country and expressed strong support to Indian Railways on the path of going green and achieving the net zero carbon emissions target by 2030.

- This is in line with the recent directive of the Prime Minister NarendraModi to solarize railway stations and utilize vacant railway land for Renewable Energy (RE) projects.

1.5 BAMBOO CLUSTERS

- Minister of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Dr Jitendra Singh has said that three Bamboo Clusters will be developed in Jammu, Katra and Samba areas for making of Bamboo basketry, Agarbatti and Bamboo Charcol.

- He said it will provide direct employment to nearly 25 thousand people.

About the Highlights

- Dr Singh said, apart from this a Mega Bamboo Industrial Park at Ghati near Jammu and Bamboo Technology Training Centre will also come up in the region.
- The Minister said this while addressing a review meeting of the Ministry of DoNER on further steps to be taken for augmenting infrastructure and promoting entrepreneurship in the Bamboo sector in the region after the signing of MoU.
- Dr Singh said, a team from his Ministry will soon visit Jammu and explore a field training programme for Bamboo farming in the region.
- The Minister said, of late Bamboo is being used in low cost housing and as construction material.
- He said, in coming years, Bamboo Awareness camps will be organized in different parts of the country in this regard.

1.6 TELUGU LANGUAGE DAY

- Telugu Language Day, also known as Telugu Bhasha Dinotsavam, is celebrated on 29 August every year.
- The day is observed to commemorate the birthday of one of the earliest modern Telugu linguists GiduguVenkata Ramamurthy.
- Telugu is referred to as "The Italian of the East" as the language ends with vowels just like the Italian language.

About GiduguVenkata Ramamurthy

- GiduguVenkata Ramamurthy's contribution to the Telugu language specifically VyavaharikaBhasha or VaadukaBhasha (Colloquial language) is immense.
- He simplified the GranthikaBhasha into VyavaharikaBhasha for textbooks and literature and made it available to the people.
- He played a vital role in bringing to the forefront of the beauty of the colloquial language.

1.7 NATIONAL SPORTS DAY

- National Sports Day is celebrated on August 29 every year to honour the hockey legend, Major Dhyan Chand.
- The Government of India has decided to celebrate his birthday as the National Sports Day since 2012.
- Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports KirenRijiju will pay tribute to Major Dhyan Chand at Dhyan Chand Stadium in New Delhi on his birth anniversary.

About Major Dhyan Chand

- Major Dhyan Chand, the greatest Hockey player of India won three Olympic gold medals.
- At the Berlin Olympic Games in 1936, Dhyan Chand was appointed as the Captain of the Indian Hockey team.

- Dhyan Chand had scored more than 400 international goals in his international career from 1926 to 1948.
- He was awarded Padma Bhushan, the third-highest civilian honour in the year 1956 by Government of India.
- Major Dhyan Chand Singh came to be known as 'Wizard of Hockey', worldwide.
- He was born on August 29, 1905, at Allahabad (now Prayagraj) in Uttar Pradesh.
- He joined the Indian army as a soldier in 1922.

1.8 NEED FOR A COMMON ELECTORAL ROLL

The Prime Minister's Office earlier this month held a meeting with representatives of the Election Commission and the Law Ministry to discuss the possibility of having a common electoral roll for elections to the panchayat, municipality, state assembly and the LokSabha.

About the electoral rolls in India

- In many states, the voters' list for the panchayat and municipality elections is different from the one used for Parliament and Assembly elections.
- The distinction stems from the fact that the supervision and conduct of elections in our country are entrusted with two constitutional authorities — the Election Commission (EC) of India and the State ECs.
- Set up in 1950, the EC is charged with the responsibility of conducting polls to the offices of the President and Vice-President of India, and to Parliament, the state assemblies and the legislative councils.
- The SECs, on the other hand, supervise municipal and panchayat elections.
- They are free to prepare their own electoral rolls for local body elections, and this exercise does not have to be coordinated with the EC.

About the Highlights

- Each SEC is governed by a separate state Act.
- Some state laws allow the SEC to borrow and use the EC's voter's rolls in toto for the local body elections.
- In others, the state commission uses the EC's voters list as the basis for the preparation and revision of rolls for municipality and panchayat elections.
- Currently, all states, except UP, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Assam, MP, Kerala, Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, adopt EC's rolls for local body polls.

1.9 KALA UTSAV

- Union Education Minister Ramesh PokhriyalNishank has informed that in line with the vision of Prime Minister NarendraModi, Toy and Puppet making skills will be developed among school students.

- He said, indigenous toy-making will be introduced as a theme in Kala Utsav to encourage students to explore and develop a variety of local toys.

- Dr.Nishank also called for initiating puppet show in Kala Utsav for secondary and higher secondary students.

About 'Atikoppaka' dolls

- The famous art of 'Atikoppaka' dolls of Visakhapatnam district finds a place in the "Mann kiBaat" programme of Prime Minister NarendraModi.

- In the Mann Ki Baat speech, PM Modi made a special mention of the famous Atikoppaka dolls saying that the toys would be useful to unleash the creativity in children in the current Pandemic situation.

- Atikoppaka artist CV Raju, whose work was appreciated by the Prime Minister said, he is happy to be mentioned in "Mann Ki Baat" besides attracting the center of uniqueness.

- He said, it should be considered as a good opportunity for the village.

- Etikoppaka is a small village on the banks of Varaha River in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh.

- In 2017, the traditional Etikoppaka toys acquired a Geographical Indications (GI) tag.

- Toys are made of soft wood and lacquer color.

- The way of toy making is also known as turned wood lacquer craft.

1.10 THE UN'S GUIDELINES ON ACCESS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- The United Nations has released its first-ever guidelines on access to social justice for people with disabilities to make it easier for them to access justice systems around the world.

- The guidelines outline a set of 10 principles and detail the steps for implementation.

About the 10 principles

- **Principle 1** All persons with disabilities have legal capacity and, therefore, no one shall be denied access to justice on the basis of disability.

- **Principle 2** Facilities and services must be universally accessible to ensure equal access to justice without discrimination of persons with disabilities.

- **Principle 3** Persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, have the right to appropriate procedural accommodations.

- **Principle 4** Persons with disabilities have the right to access legal notices and information in a timely and accessible manner on an equal basis with others.

- **Principle 5** Persons with disabilities are entitled to all substantive and procedural safeguards recognized in international law on an equal basis with others, and States must provide the necessary accommodations to guarantee due process.

- **Principle 6** Persons with disabilities have the right to free or affordable legal assistance.

- **Principle 7** Persons with disabilities have the right to participate in the administration of justice on an equal basis with others.

- **Principle 8** Persons with disabilities have the rights to report complaints and initiate legal proceedings concerning human rights violations and crimes, have their complaints investigated and be afforded effective remedies.

- **Principle 9** Effective and robust monitoring mechanisms play a critical role in supporting access to justice for persons with disabilities.

- **Principle 10** All those working in the justice system must be provided with awareness-raising and training programmes addressing the rights of persons with disabilities, in particular in the context of access to justice.

About the definition

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted in 2007 as the first major instrument of human rights in the 21st century, defines persons with disabilities as those "who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".

1.11 MEDBOT TROLLEYS

- Indian Railways develops remote-controlled medical trolley 'MEDBOT' to deliver food, medicines to COVID-19 patients

- During Corona crisis, apart from providing transport facilities and essential items like foodgrains to people, Indian Railways has also provided facilities for COVID-19 patients.

About the trolleys

- It has developed a remote-controlled medical trolley named 'MEDBOT' to help deliver food and medicines to COVID-19 patients.
- It is providing service in the Central Hospital of the Diesel Rail Engine Factory of Indian Railways.

1.12 NO QUESTION HOUR

Functioning of Question Hour
% of time utilised out of time allotted to Question Hour
Source: PRS Legislative Research
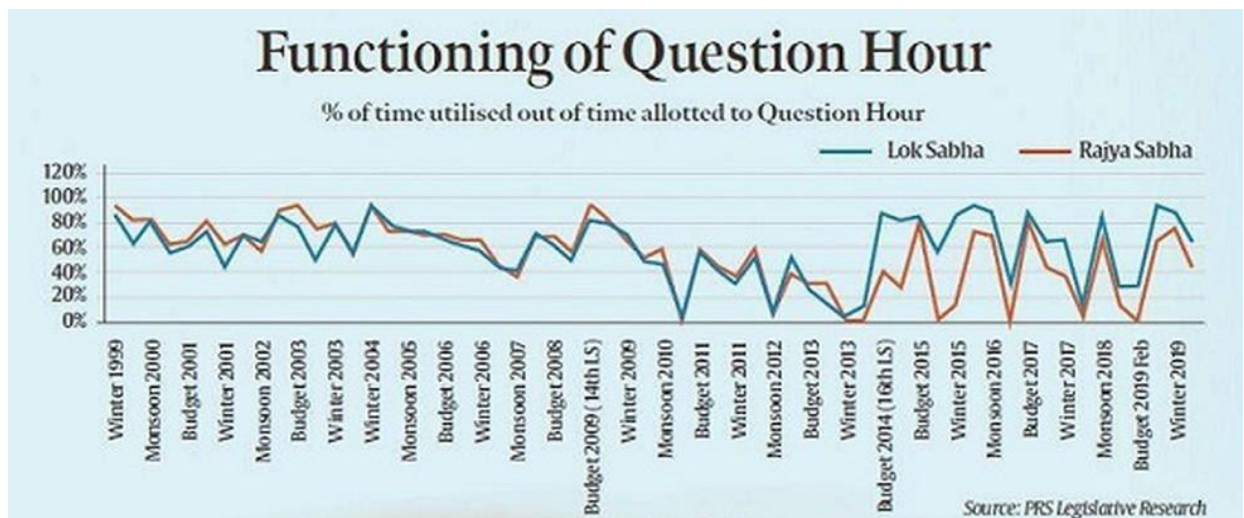
- The Modi government triggered a row with its decision to do away with the Question Hour this monsoon session of Parliament, scheduled to take place between 14 September and 1 October.
- Usually held at the end of June, the session was delayed this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

About Question Hour

- The Question Hour is a practice used by "parliamentarians to hold the government accountable for its actions".
- In this one-hour period at the beginning of the day, MPs are expected to forgo their political allegiance and act as independent legislators, questioning the administration and government policies.
- The establishment is essentially "put on trial" during the Question Hour where every minister is answerable for questions raised against their ministry's "omission and commission".
- The purpose of Question Hour is for MPs — those from the ruling party or opposition — to get an understanding of how the government is functioning. It acts as an accountability mechanism for the government.

About the Highlights

- There are four categories of questions that can be asked in this period — starred questions, unstarred questions, short notice questions and questions to private members.

- Starred questions require an oral answer from the minister-in-charge and must be submitted 15 days in advance.

- In a single day, roughly 20 starred questions are addressed, which are picked randomly via a ballot.

- Under this category, the MP raising the question is allowed two supplementary questions while other MPs can also ask questions depending on the Speaker's discretion.

- In order to give the MPs time to prepare for supplementary questions, the list of starred questions is shared three days in advance.

- Unstarred questions require a written response and generally address concerns related to data and information, but do not allow supplementary questions.

- These too must be submitted 15 days in advance.

- Nearly 230 such questions are addressed in a day.

- Short notice questions address urgent matters that have public importance and can be submitted within less than 10 days.

- While it is a rarely used procedure, much like starred questions, it is answered orally and can be followed by supplementary questions depending on the Speaker's discretion.

- Finally, questions to private members are usually related to "some Bill, Resolution or other matter connected with the business of the House for which that Member is responsible".

1.13 INDIA BANS 118 CHINESE APPS

- India has banned 118 apps with links to China, citing national security risks.

- It comes against a backdrop of rising geopolitical tensions between the two nations.

- Major gaming titles from companies including Tencent and NetEase were on the list, as well as apps from other Chinese technology giants like Baidu and Alibaba affiliate, Ant Group.

Targeting Beijing
175 mn PUBG downloads in India

ABOUT THE BAN
India has banned 118 mobile apps with links to China, including popular gaming app PUBG, over concerns they were "prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity" of the country

STRATEGIC MOVE
- The move is seen as an effort to impose economic costs on China amid the months-long border standoff and the Chinese army's recent "provocative action" along the LAC
- This is the also the third such ban. In June, the govt had banned TikTok and 58 other apps, and in July, dozens more

APPS INCLUDE
- PUBG Mobile Lite, PUBG Mobile Nordic Map
- Baidu Inc
- Alipay
- ShareSave
- CamCard - Business Card Reader
- Dawn of Isles
- Ludo World-Ludo Superstar

The apps will be given a chance to address the govt's concerns

WHAT IS PUBG, WHY IS IT RELEVANT?
- In the online multiplayer game PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (PUBG), by Chinese firm Tencent, 100 players battle with weapons until there is only one left standing
- In recent months, the game has seen its users rise during the Covid-19 lockdown, with a quarter of its installs from India although revenues from the country are still miniscule

Background

India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said that in "in view of the emergent nature of threats" it has "decided to block 118 mobile apps ... since in view of information available they are engaged in activities which is prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order."

Highlights

- The Indian government said it had "received many complaints from various sources" including reports about "misuse of some mobile apps available on Android and iOS platforms for stealing and surreptitiously transmitting users' data in an unauthorized manner to servers which have locations outside India."

- "On the basis of these and upon receiving of recent credible inputs that information posted, permissions sought, functionality embedded as well as data harvesting practices of above stated Apps raise serious concerns that these Apps collect and share data in surreptitious manner and compromise personal data and information of users that can have a severe threat to security of the State," the Indian Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said.

- The latest app ban comes as tensions flare between China and India over the disputed Himalayan mountain border in the region of Ladakh. In June, a border clash between the two nations left 20 Indian soldiers dead.

1.14 MISSION KARMAYOGI

- Dubbed as the biggest bureaucratic reform initiative, the Union Cabinet approved 'Mission Karmayogi', a new capacity-building scheme for civil servants aimed at upgrading the post-recruitment training mechanism of the officers and employees at all levels.

- Prime Minister said this exercise will "radically" improve the government's human resource management practices and asserted it will use state-of-the-art infrastructure to augment the capacity of civil servants.

Background

- Announcing the scheme, Union Minister PrakashJavadekar said officers and employees in the government will get an opportunity to improve their performance under the Mission Karmayogi.

- "Mission Karmayogi aims to prepare Indian civil servants for the future by making them more creative, constructive, imaginative, innovative, proactive, professional, progressive, energetic, enabling, transparent and technology-enabled," he said.

About the mission

- Mission Karmayogi programme will be delivered by setting up a digital platform called iGOTKarmayogi.

- Empowered with specific role-competencies, a civil servant will be able to ensure efficient service delivery of the highest quality standards, the government said.

- The platform will act as a launchpad for the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB), which will enable a comprehensive reform of the capacity building apparatus at the individual, institutional and process levels.

- NPCSCB will be governed by the Prime Minister's Human Resource Council, which will also include state Chief Ministers, Union Cabinet ministers and experts.

- This council will approve and review civil service capacity building programmes.

- Besides this, there will be a Cabinet Secretary Coordination Unit comprising of select secretaries and cadre controlling authorities.

- Also, there will be a Capacity Building Commission, which will include experts in related fields and global professionals.

- This commission will prepare and monitor annual capacity building plans and audit human resources available in the government.

- Finally, there will be a wholly-owned Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), which will govern the iGOT-Karmayogi platform.

- It will be set up under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.

1.15 NATIONAL ACADEMY OF RUDSETI (NAR)

E-Foundation stone laying ceremony of the new training Institute building of National Academy of RUDSETI (NAR) in Bengaluru was held.

Highlights

- National Academy of RUDSETI (NAR) is a resource organization committed to Entrepreneurship Development through motivation, training and facilitation. It is a joint venture promoted by two public sector Banks and an Educational Trust of Sri KshetraDharmasthala.

- National Academy of RUDSETI (NAR), an offshoot of RUDSETI movement is spearheading the concept by Training the Trainers/facilitators and mentoring the Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) established across the country.

- National Academy of RUDSETI is a Trust registered under Indian Trusts Act.

1.16 DATA FOR ACCIDENTAL DEATHS AND SUICIDES

- The poorest, but not the most uneducated, are most likely to commit suicide in India.
- Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that daily wage workers, those earning less than Rs 1 lakh per annum but educated up to the secondary level have the highest share in number of suicides in India in 2018.

Death count

While the number of accidental fatalities and deaths by suicide grew in 2019 compared to the previous year, the rate of increase fell marginally

■ % change in accidental deaths   ■ % change in suicides

Background

- Suicides of persons engaged in the farming sector, which used to be the most awaited statistic in the ADSI report have come down for the third consecutive year.
- 66% of the 134516 suicides committed in 2018 were by those who had an annual income of Rs 1 lakh or less.

About the Highlights

- A break-up by educational status and occupation shows that those educated up to secondary level and daily wage workers had the biggest shares in suicides their respective categories.
- To be sure, this high share of low income earners is likely to be an outcome of the higher share of this population group in the total population.
- Because, there is no annual data on distribution of population by consumption or income, occupation or education, it is not possible to adjust these statistics for the weight of different groups in the total population.
- Suicides of persons engaged in the farming sector have come down for the third consecutive year, the report shows.
- 10349 persons engaged in farming committed suicide in 2018, out of which 5763 were cultivators and 4586, agricultural labourers.
- 5088 out of the 5763 farmers were those who cultivated their own land while the rest leased land.
- Maharashtra and Karnataka alone account for more than half of total suicides in the farming sector in the country.
- Among major states Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal have reported zero farmer suicides, which points towards a tendency to under-report or mis-classify statistics relating to farmers' suicides.
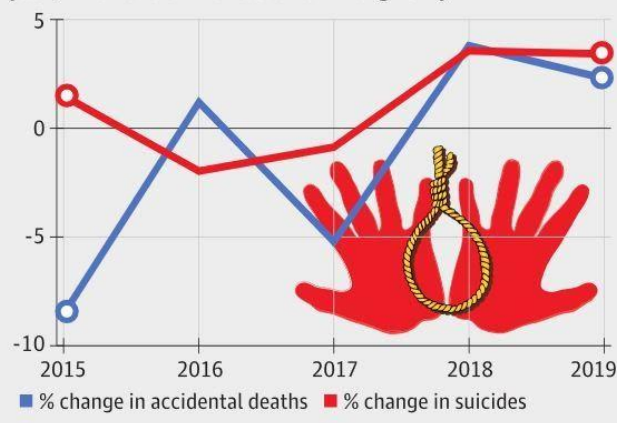
1.17 CISGENDER

- Last month, Hollywood actor William Shatner took offence to being called 'CIS', short for 'cisgendered'.

- The term cisgendered is used to define people whose gender identity matches the identity assigned to them at birth.
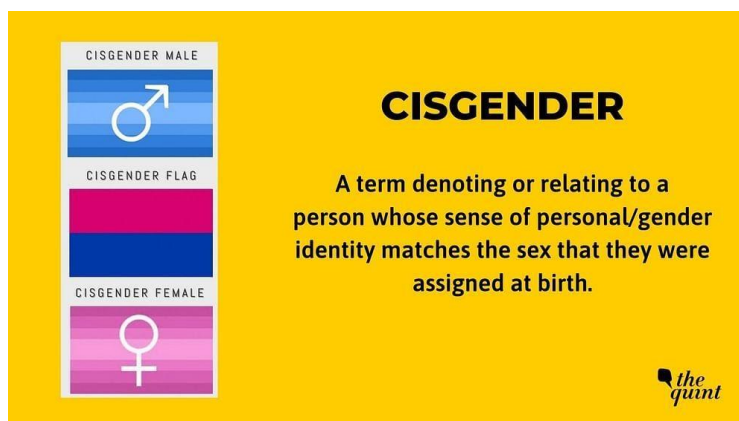
About Cisgender

- Cisgender—technically pronounced "sis-gender"—refers to "individuals whose assigned sex at birth is congruent with their gender identity.

- The prefix "cis" is actually Latin for "on this side," according to Merriam-Webster.

- "Trans," on the other hand—as in transgender—technically means "on the other side of."

Highlights

- A person assigned female at birth, for example—meaning doctors saw female sex organs or genitalia—and who still identifies as a woman today, is cisgender.

- The same goes for a person assigned male at birth who currently identifies as a man.

- The term was initially created by transgender activists in the 1990s in order to differentiate between cisgender and transgender individuals, without further adding to the marginalization of trans people.

- "The terms *man* and *woman,* left unmarked, tend to normalize cisness—reinforcing the unstated 'naturalness' of being cisgender," the text says, suggesting rather to use identifications like "cis man or "cis woman" alongside "transman" and transwoman."

1.18 NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TRIBAL RESEARCH

- In the presence of Union Minister for Tribal Affairs ShriArjunMunda, an agreement was signed today between Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) and Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi for setting up of National Institute of Tribal Research (NITR) at the IIPA campus, New Delhi.

- The proposed National Institute will be functional in a few months and will be engaged in quality tribal research in collaboration with reputed government and non-governments NGOs spread over the country.

Background

- The Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) have a very important role to play and their research should focus on drawing road map for future development.

- The Ministry is funding Tribal Research Institutions for research on various aspects of tribal life and culture but now intervention of research with policy should be emphasized in their research.

About the Highlights

- The new National Institute of Tribal Research should also have an educational wing to educate students on tribal development and tribal art & culture.

- Branding and Marketing of ethnic tribal products should be given due importance because these persuade customers to buy the products.

1.19 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CHARITY

- The International Day of Charity was observed on September 5, 2020.

- The International Day of Charity was established with the objective of sensitizing and mobilizing people, NGOs, and stakeholders all around the world to help others through volunteer and philanthropic activities.

About the day

- The date of 5 September was chosen by the General Assembly of the United Nations in order to commemorate the anniversary of the passing away of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

- Mother Teresa, the renowned nun and missionary, was born Agnes GonxhaBojaxhiu in 1910.

- In 1928 she went to India, where she devoted herself to helping the destitute.

- In 1948 she became an Indian citizen and founded the order of Missionaries of Charity in Kolkota (Calcutta) in 1950, which became noted for its work among the poor and the dying in that city.

- Mother Teresa died on September 5th 1997, at 87 years of age.

1.20 THE STATE OF YOUNG CHILD IN INDIA

- Of the total 159 million children aged below 6 years in the country, 21 per cent are undernourished, 36 per cent are underweight and 38 per cent do not receive full immunisation, said Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu quoting 'The State of Young Child in India' report.

No kidding!
The index score was computed using indicators such as poverty rate, immunisation coverage, female literacy, sex ratio and percentage of households with protected water supply. India's average score was **0.585**

Best-performing States		Worst-performing States	
State	Index score (2015-16)	State	Index score (2015-16)
Kerala	0.858	Bihar	0.452
Goa	0.817	Uttar Pradesh	0.46
Tripura	0.761	Jharkhand	0.5
Tamil Nadu	0.731	Madhya Pradesh	0.526
Mizoram	0.719	Chhattisgarh	0.555

- Naidu released 'The State of Young Child in India' report, a comprehensive account of the challenges related to early child development in India.

- He called for a well-strategized collective action on multiple fronts to ensure well-being of young children for India to take full advantage of demographic dividend.

Background

- It has been mentioned in the just-released report that of the 159 million children aged below 6 years in India, 21 per cent are undernourished, 36 per cent are underweight and 38 per cent do not receive full immunisation.

- These figures underline the crucial importance of investing in early childhood for realising the full potential in later years.

- The years from birth until the age of five were critical.

About the Highlights

- The report also pointed to the insurmountable evidence of the huge returns on investment in Early Childhood Development (ECD) at the individual, household and country levels.

- According to the report, proper nutrition, stimulation and care during the first 1,000 days of life (from conception to the second birthday) has a profound impact on the child's ability to grow, learn and rise out of poverty, and in the process shape society's long term stability and prosperity.

- It is estimated that early childhood stunting affects nearly one-in-four children younger than five globally due to lack of nutrition.

- Under-nutrition and poor sanitation can lead to developmental delays and a lack of progress in school. For a country, poor early childhood development could mean economic loss.

- As per an official release, the report has been prepared by Mobile Creches, a policy advocacy organisation which works with underprivileged children across India.

- Based on ranking and values on the Young Child Outcome Index (YCOI), the report named Kerala, Goa, Tripura and Tamil Nadu to be among the top performers, while eight states-- Assam, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar-- with scores below the national average lagged behind.

- The report has pointed to the criticality of a holistic approach to development, including public awareness and parental education, improved living conditions with access to clean drinking water, proper sanitation and reliable primary healthcare service to make a difference to health and nutritional standards among children.

1.21 TUG BOATS

- The Ministry of Shipping has directed all major ports to procure or charter tug boats which are only made in India.

- All procurements being done by major ports would now need to be carried out as per the revised 'Make in India' Order.

Background

- The Ministry of Shipping is aiming to promote Indian shipbuilding industry and also have discussion with some leading countries for Make in India shipbuilding.
- In the meantime, this decision of the Government will be a big move towards realizing Make in India in shipbuilding.

About the Highlights

- It is a step towards bolstering the revival of Indian Ship building and a big move towards AatmaNirbhar Shipping in AatmaNirbhar Bharat.
- The Government will try to create an ecosystem for shipbuilding, ship repair, ship recycling and flagging in India.
- AatmaNirbhar Shipping is going to be the order in the coming times.
- Procurement/chartering of port crafts would need to be aligned with the revised Make in India Order to promote shipbuilding in India.
- It is proposed to set up a Standing Specifications Committee under Managing Director, Indian Ports Association and comprising representatives from Cochin Ship Yard Limited (CSL), Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), Indian Register of Shipping (IRS) and Director General of Shipping.
- Standing Specifications Committee would shortlist around five variants/types of tugs and prepare a 'Approved StandardizedTug Design and Specifications.' (ASTDS).
- This ASTDS would outline specifications, general arrangements, basic calculations, basic structural drawings, key system drawings and other construction standards, etc.
- These standards would be vetted by the Standing Specifications Committee and, thereafter, certified 'in-principle' by IRS and published by the Indian Ports Association on its website.
- The Ministry will also provide some window to Major Ports so that construction time would be availed.

1.22 INDIA NOW HAS GOT WORLD'S 2ND LARGEST ROAD NETWORK

- India has now the second largest road network in the world being fuelled by the tremendous growth in construction of expressways and highways.
- Road, Transport and Highways Minister NitinGadkari said this while addressing the 60th annual convention of SIAM through video conference.

Background

- The current rate of road building per day has averaged to 30 Kilometre a day, with the highest being 40 Kilometre per day of highways.
- Mr Gadkari expressed confidence over achieving Road safety targets in near future.
- He said, the automobile industry has progressed a lot in that direction.

About the Highlights

- The Minister noted that vehicle manufacturers have implemented regulations crucial to vehicle safety such as crash norms, airbags, seat belt reminder and reverse parking assist.
- These regulations have brought the auto industry in India at par with the global auto industry.

1.23 GOJRI LANGUAGE

- The Central government's decision to add Kashmiri, Dogri, Hindi and English to the list of Jammu and Kashmir's official languages has irked Gujjar groups in the Union Territory.
- The Union Cabinet recently approved the Jammu and Kashmir Official Languages Bill, 2020, proposing to also make Kashmiri, Dogri, Hindi and English official languages of the Union Territory.

About the Highlights

- Subsequently, Gujjar groups sought PM Modi's intervention, asking him to include Gojri in the list of official languages, claiming that it is the second-most spoken language after Dogri in Jammu and Kashmiri in Kashmir Valley.
- Gurjari, also known as Gojri and Gujri is a variety of Indo-Aryan spoken by the Gurjars and other tribes of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.
- The language is mainly spoken in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, Delhi and other parts of India.

1.24 PM MODI INAUGURATES PATRIKA GATE IN JAIPUR

- Prime Minister NarendraModi inaugurated the Patrika Gate in Jaipur through a video conference.
- The Iconic Gate is built by the Patrika Group of Newspapers on the Jawaharlal Nehru Marg in the Pink City.

Highlights

- Patrika Gate derives its name from newspaper and media company-Rajasthan Patrika.
- The gate is built on Jawahar Circle near Sanganer International Airport.
- It is on the southern end of JLN Marg which connects Ramniwas Garden on the north side and Jaipur International Airport on the Southern end.
- The facade is inspired by the traditional architecture and features Jharokhas, Pols, Pavilions, and Chhatris.
- The idea of building this gate is linked with the old city gates of Jaipur walled city.
- When Maharajah Sawai Jai Singh II founded Jaipur in 1727 AD, he secured the perimeter with a wall and eight gates.

1.25 MOPLAHREBELLION

In the run up to the centenary year of the infamous Moplah rebellion (1921-22), an almost forgotten chapter of Indian history, a major ideological debate is brewing following the announcement in June of a Malayalam movie on the issue.

Background

- Variyamkunnan is set to be a biopic on VariyamkunnathKunjahammed Haji, one of the key controversial figures in the rebellion.
- The movie, expected to be released in the centenary year of Moplah rebellion in 2021, will be directed by Aashiq Abu, with actor Prithviraj in the titular role.

About the report

- The report sought the removal of names of 387 'Moplah rioters' from the list of martyrs.
- The book, Dictionary of Martyrs: India's Freedom Struggle 1857-1947, was released by Prime Minister NarendraModi last week.
- The report describes Haji as the "notorious Moplah Riot leader" and a "hardcore criminal," who "killed innumerable innocent Hindu men, women, and children during the 1921 Moplah Riot, and deposited their bodies in a well, locally known as ThoovoorKinar".
- Haji was arrested by the army, tried by an army court and shot dead on January 20, 1922.
- The Moplah or Malabar rebellion in 1921 started as resistance against the British colonial rule, the prevailing feudal system, and in favour of the Khilafat Movement in South Malabar but ended in communal violence.

1.26 KESAVANANDA BHARATI

- Prime Minister NarendraModi paid his tributes to KesavanandaBharatiSripadagalvaru, the key petitioner in a case that helped define basic rights of the Constitution, who passed away.
- Prime Minister NarendraModi remembered him for his contributions towards community service and empowering the downtrodden.

Background

- KesavanandaBharati, a petitioner in a Supreme Court case that led to the landmark doctrine of the basic structure of the Constitution, died in Kerala.
- He was 79.

Highlights

- The 79-year-old seer died in Kerala's Edaneer Mutt due to age-related ailments.
- The case in which KesavanandBharati had challenged a Kerala Land Reform Act nearly four decades ago set the principle that the Supreme Court is the guardian of the basic structure of the Constitution and the verdict involved 13 judges the largest bench ever to sit in the apex court.
- The case of KesavanandaBharativs State of Kerala was heard for 68 days and continues to hold the top spot for the longest proceedings ever to have taken place in the top court.
- The hearing in the case commenced on October 31, 1972, and concluded on March 23, 1973 and it's the most referred to case name in Indian Constitutional law.

- The KesavanandaBharati case is significant for its ruling that the Constitution can be amended but not the basic structure.

1.27 KERALA TOPS LITERACY RATE CHART

- With 96.2 percent literacy, Kerala has once again emerged as the most literate state in the country, while Andhra Pradesh featured at the bottom with a rate of 66.4 percent, showed a report based on National Statistical Office (NSO) survey.

- The report on 'Household Social Consumption: Education in India as part of 75th round of National Sample Survey - from July 2017 to June 2018' provides for state-wise detail of literacy rate among the persons aged seven years and above.

KERALA TOPS THE LIST

Literacy rates for those aged 7 or more (%)

Top 5 State/UT	Person	Bottom 5 State/UT	Person
Kerala	96.2	UP	73.0
Delhi	88.7	Telangana	72.8
U'khand	87.6	Bihar	70.9
Himachal	86.6	Rajasthan	69.7
Assam	85.9	Andhra	66.4

Background

- According to the study, after Kerala, Delhi has the best literacy rate at 88.7 per cent, followed by Uttarakhand's 87.6 per cent, Himachal Pradesh's 86.6 per cent and Assam's at 85.9 per cent.

- On the other hand, Rajasthan is the second-worst performer with literacy rate at 69.7 per cent, followed by Bihar at 70.9 per cent, Telangana at 72.8 per cent, Uttar Pradesh at 73 per cent and Madhya Pradesh at 73.7 per cent.

Highlights

- The study has pegged the overall literacy rate in the country at about 77.7 per cent.

- In rural areas, the literacy rate is 73.5 per cent compared to 87.7 per cent in urban areas of the country.

- At all-India level, the male literacy rate is higher at 84.7 per cent compared to 70.3 per cent among women.

- The survey showed that the male literacy rate is higher than female literacy rate among all states.

- In Kerala, the male literacy rate is 97.4 per cent compared to 95.2 per cent among females. Similarly, the male literacy rate in Delhi stood 93.7 per cent higher than 82.4 per cent among females.

- Even in the worst-performing states, there was a considerable gap in male and female literacy rate.

- In Andhra Pradesh, male literacy rate is 73.4 per cent, higher than 59.5 per cent among females (of the age of seven year or above).

- In Rajasthan, the gap was even wider as male literacy rate stood at 80.8 per cent compared to 57.6 per cent of females.

- In Bihar, the male literacy rate was also higher at 79.7 per cent compared to 60.5 per cent of females.

- A sample of 64,519 rural households from 8,097 villages and 49,238 urban households from 6,188 blocks was surveyed all-over India.

- The report also revealed that nearly 4 per cent of rural households and 23 per cent of urban household possessed computer.

- Among persons of age 15-29 years, nearly 24 per cent in rural areas and 56 per cent in urban areas were able to operate a computer.

- Nearly 35 per cent of persons of age 15-29 years reported use of internet during the 30 days prior to the date of survey.

- The proportions were nearly 25 per cent in rural areas and 58 per cent in urban areas.

1.28 INDIRA GANDHI PEACE PRIZE

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh conferred the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize for 2019 on British broadcaster Sir David Attenborough, whom he described as the "human voice of nature". Sir David, 94, is well known for his series The Living Planet.

Background

The Indira Gandhi Prize or the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize or the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development is the prestigious award accorded annually by Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust to individuals or organisations in recognition of creative efforts toward promoting international peace, development and a new international economic order; ensuring that scientific discoveries are used for the larger good of humanity, and enlarging the scope of freedom.

About the prize

- The prize carries a cash award of 2.5 million Indian Rupees and a citation.

- A written work, in order to be eligible for consideration, should have been published.

- The panel constituted by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust consists of prominent national and international personalities including previous recipients.

- The recipients are chosen from a pool of national and international nominees.

- The Indira Gandhi Prize First awarded in 1986.

1.29 CHUSHUL SECTOR

- The Chushul sub-sector has come into focus in the standoff between the Indian and PLA troops following the movement that took place on the intervening night of August 29 and 30.

- The Chushul sub-sector lies south

of PangongTso in eastern Ladakh.

- It comprises high, broken mountains and heights of Thatung, Black Top, Helmet Top, Gurung Hill, and Magger Hill besides passes such as Rezang La and Rechin La, the Spanggur Gap, and the Chushul valley.

Background

- Situated at a height of over 13,000 feet close to the LAC, the Chushul Valley has a vital airstrip that played an important role even during the 1962 War with China.

- Thanks to its location, Chushul is one among the five Border Personnel Meeting points between the Indian Army and the People's Liberation Army of China.

- It is here that representatives of the two armies meet for regular interactions.

- The recent brigade-level meetings between the two sides were also held here.

About its strategic importance

- Chushul enjoys tremendous strategic and tactical importance because of its location and terrain, which make it a centre for logistics deployment.

- This sector has plains that are a couple of kilometres wide, where mechanised forces, including tanks, can be deployed. Its airstrip and connectivity by road to Leh add to its operational advantages.

- Indian troops have now secured the ridgeline in this sub-sector that allows them to dominate the Chushul bowl on the Indian side, and Moldo sector on the Chinese side.

- They also have a clear sight of the almost 2-km-wide Spanggur gap, which the Chinese used in the past to launch attacks on this sector in the 1962 War.

1.30 HYPERSONIC TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATOR VEHICLE

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on September 07, 2020, successfully flight tested a Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV).

- In a giant leap for indigenous defence technologies and a significant milestone towards `Sashakt Bharat and `Atmanirbhar Bharat' India has for the second time successfully flight-tested HSTDV.

Background

- With this successful test, DRDO has demonstrated capabilities for highly complex technology.

- This will serve as the building block for NextGen Hypersonic vehicles in partnership with the private industry.

About HSDTV

- HSTDV project is an ambitious project of DRDO and is intended to serve multiple military and civil purposes.

- It is an unmanned scramjet demonstration aircraft for hypersonic speed flight.

- India is pushing ahead with the development of ground and flight test hardware as part of an ambitious plan for a hypersonic cruise missile.
- While it can be used for launching cruise missiles it will also serve the purpose for launching satellites at a low cost.
- The HSTDV is intended to attain autonomous scramjet flight for 20 seconds, using a solid rocket launch booster.
- The research will also inform India's interest in reusable launch vehicles. The eventual target is to reach Mach 6.5 at an altitude of 32.5 km.
- Under this project, DRDO is developing a hypersonic vehicle that will be powered by a scram-jet engine.
- It is being developed by DRDO with assistance from Israel, UK and Russia.

1.31 DELHI-MEERUT CORRIDOR

- The government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Tuesday signed a $500 million loan to build a high-speed 82-kilometer Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridor.
- The project will improve regional connectivity and mobility in the national capital region (NCR).
- This is the first tranche of a total $1 billion facility, which will support construction of the first of three priority rail corridors planned under the NCR Regional Plan 2021 to connect Delhi to other cities in adjoining states.
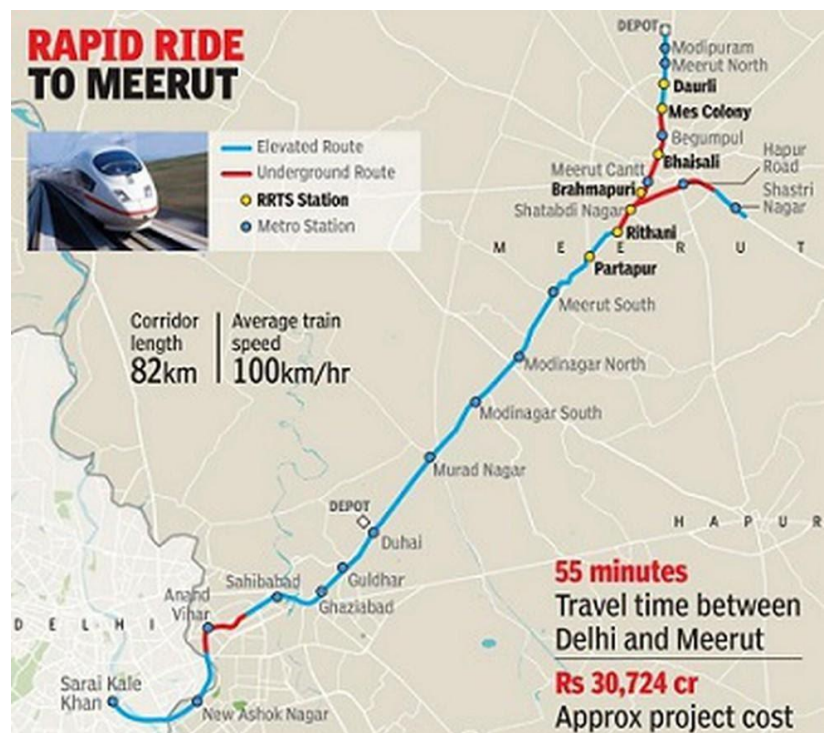
Highlights

- With a design speed of 180 km per hour and high-frequency operations of every 5–10 minutes, the 82-km corridor connecting Sarai Kale Khan in Delhi to Modipuram in Meerut in Uttar Pradesh is expected to reduce the journey time to about 1 hour from the present 3–4 hours.
- The first tranche financing will be used for constructing electrified tracks, signaling systems, multimodal hubs and stations with design features that are friendly to elderly, women, children and the disabled.

- Another $3 million grant from ADB's Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction will support various activities, including provision of visual, hearing and mobility aids, such as wheelchairs for differently abled persons, the government said.

1.32 AUGUST RAINFALL

- The tables below give monthly averages for rainfall during August at cities in India.
- Each place has a total for how many days of wet weather it usually gets this month and for the normal amount of precipitation.

Background

- The calculation of days only includes the days when precipitation totalled at least one millimetre (0.04 inches).
- The month's total rainfall is an historical average of weather data collected during 1961 to 1990.

About the Highlights

- The heavy rain in August was due to several long-lasting low-pressure systems, or rain-bearing winds, that formed in the Bay of Bengal and were vigorous enough to travel all the way from the south-eastern coast up to north-west India.
- The surplus rain was primarily in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
- IMD officials said that though August rainfall was in excess, the figure for this year's monsoon as a whole were likely to be within the department's June forecast of a normal (96 to 104% of the long period average) rainfall.
- From June to September 6, India had registered 7% more rainfall than what is normal for this period.
- In the normal course, the monsoon begins its retreat from September 15 and this can go on for nearly a month.

1.33 GLOBAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX

The 2020 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) data and publication "Charting pathways out of multidimensional poverty: Achieving the SDGs" was released on 16 July 2020.

Published by

- Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at the University of Oxford.
- Human Development Report Office of

What does the global MPI measure?
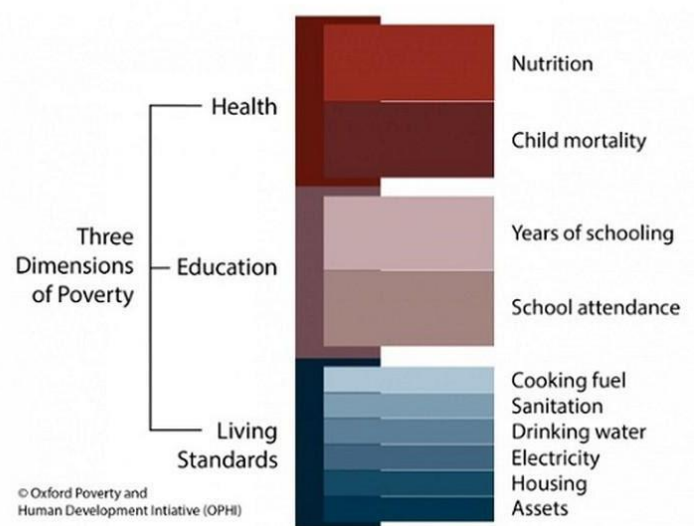
the United Nations Development Programme.

About the measure

- MPI presents estimates for 107 developing countries (77% of the world total).
- The MPI identifies overlapping deprivations that people experience across the same three dimensions i.e health, education and standard of living (HDI).
- We can also estimate the average number of deprivations each poor person experiences at the same time.
- The global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) measures the complexities of poor people's lives, individually and collectively, each year.
- This report focuses on how multidimensional poverty has declined.
- It provides a comprehensive picture of global trends in multidimensional poverty.

1.34 RESERVATION FOR MARATHA COMMUNITY

- The Supreme Court has stayed reservation for the Maratha community in government jobs and educational institutions in Maharashtra.
- A three-judge bench headed by Justice L NageswaraRao referred the case to a larger bench to consider the constitutional validity of the 2018 Maharashtra government law providing reservation to Marathas in the State.

About the Highlights

- Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Act originally provided 16 per cent reservation for Maratha community in educational institutions and government jobs.
- The law was challenged before Bombay High Court which in June 2019 upheld its validity but reduced the quota to 12 per cent in educational institutions and 13 per cent in jobs.
- Appeals were filed before Supreme Court stating that the reservation would lead to breach of the 50 per cent cap laid down by the Apex Court in its 1992 judgment of IndraSawhney versus Union of India.
- Maharashtra government had on August 26th asked the Court to place the matter before a larger bench considering the fact that it involves determination of substantial legal questions.

3 Best States	
Kerala	**46** (61)
Maharashtra	**61** (68)
Tamil Nadu	**66** (79)
3 Worst States	
Assam	**237** (300)
UP/U'khand	**201** (285)
Rajasthan	**199** (244)
India	**130** (167)

MMR per 1 lakh live births
Figures in bold for 2014-2016
while in brackets for 2011-2013

1.35 CHILD MORTALITY RATE

- Country's child mortality rate has declined substantially between 1990 and 2019.

- According to the new mortality estimates released by UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the World Bank Group, the under-five mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) in India declined to 34 in 2019 from 126 in 1990.

Highlights

- The country registered a 4.5 per cent annual rate of reduction in under-five mortality between 1990-2019.
- The number of under-five deaths in India dropped from 3.4 million in 1990 to 824,000 in 2019.
- The infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) in India declined from 89 in 1990 to 28 last year.

1.36 EASE BANKING REFORMS INDEX

- Recently, the Ministry of Finance released the results of the EASE Banking Reforms Index 2.0.
- The Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have shown a healthy trajectory as their overall score increased by 37% between March-2019 and March-2020.

Background

- The PSBs have adopted tech-enabled, smart banking in all areas, setting up retail and MSME Loan Management Systems for reduced loan turn-around time and PSBloansin59minutes.com and TReDS for digital lending.
- The Bank of Baroda, State Bank of India, and erstwhile Oriental Bank of Commerce were felicitated for being the top three in the 'Top Performing Banks' category.
- The Bank of Maharashtra, Central Bank of India & erstwhile Corporation Bank were awarded in the 'Top Improvers' category.

About the Index

- It was launched in 2018 which is aimed at institutionalizing clean and smart banking.
- It is an Enhanced Access and Service Excellence (EASE) Reform Index.
- It is jointly prepared by Indian Banks' Association (IBA) and Boston Consulting Group.
- It analyzes the performance of PSBs on six themes i.e. Responsible Banking, Governance and HR, PSBs as Udyamimitra for MSMEs, Credit off-take, Customer Responsive and Deepening Financial Inclusion & Digitisation.

1.37 SWABHIMAN ANCHAL GETS MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

- In a major development, mobile services were initiated in SwabhimanAnchal of Malkangiri.
- Joy knew no bounds for villagers of the erstwhile cut-off region and a hotbed of Maoist extremism, after the trial run for 4G mobile connectivity was completed.

Background

- The trial run of the mobile network was completed in Pipalpadar, Hantalguda and Jantapai villages.
- Airtel is the first mobile operator which has planned to set up total seven towers at Piapalpadar, Hantalguda, Jantapai, Darlabeda, Tunnel Camp, Dyke-III and Chitrakonda.

About the Highlights

- Due to threats from left wing extremists, mobile towers could not be installed until now in SwabhimanAnchal (formerly known as Cut-off area).
- Located along the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border, SwabhimanAnchal comprises 151 villages.
- The area, surrounded by water on three sides and by inhospitable terrain on another, became less remote after the construction of Gurupriya Bridge, which connected the zone with the rest of the State in 2018.
- Now, mobile network connectivity is being started in Swabhiman Area at the villages of Pipalapadar, Hantalguda, and Jantapal, which did not have mobile connectivity earlier.
- Odisha accounts for the highest number of villages that do not have mobile phone service in India.

1.38 NEW DAWN OF GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE BACKWARD DISTRICT OF GADCHIROLI

- Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways ShriNitinGadkari inaugurated three important bridges and two road improvement projects in the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra.
- The Minister also laid foundation stones for four other major bridge projects across the rivers Wainganga, Bandiya, Perikota and Perimili.

Background

- Inaugurating and laying foundation for road projects and bridges is a routine activity of Political leadership.
- What is important here is the projects that were inaugurated and foundation laid for are all situated in Gadchiroi district of eastern Maharashtra.

About the Highlights

- Gadchiroli has become hot bed or red bastion of Naxal activities in Maharashtra.
- Along with it Chandrapur, Gondiya, Yavatmal, Bhandara and Nanded districts are also Naxal prone areas.
- All these districts are situated adjoining to the Naxal-infected areas of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh causing spill over effect in these eastern districts of Maharashtra.
- This stratigic geographical location coupled with economic backwardness and inaccessible terrains of these districts have made them fertile grounds for Left extremism.
- Over 90 per cent of Gadchiroli district is a designated forest area and has almost 40 per cent tribal population making it a fertile ground for naxalism to flourish.

1.39 KISAN RAIL

- India's second and South India's first Kisan Train commenced its inaugural run from Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh to Adarsh Nagar in New Delhi recently.
- Anantapur is fast becoming the Fruit Bowl of Andhra Pradesh.

Background

- Introduction of Kisan Rail is conceptualized to provide priority to the farming sector and facilitate transportation of perishable agricultural products to various market places across the country.
- The trains with frozen containers are expected to build a seamless national cold supply chain for perishables.

About the Highlights

- Kisan Rail service was announced in the Union Budget 2020-21 and it was also stated that the Indian Railways will set up a Kisan Rail through PPP arrangements.
- The first such train runs weekly between Devlali (Maharashtra) to Danapur (Bihar).
- KrishiUdaan will be launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation on international and national routes.
- This scheme aims to assist farmers in transporting agricultural products so that it improves their "value realisation", especially in the north-east and tribal districts.

1.40 ACTOR PARESH RAWAL APPOINTED CHAIRPERSON OF NATIONAL SCHOOL OF DRAMA

- Veteran actor and former BJP MP PareshRawal was appointed as chairperson of the National School of Drama (NSD), India's premier theatre institute.
- Union Minister of Culture Prahlad Patel said on Twitter that renowned artiste PareshRawal has been appointed as Chairman of National School of Drama by RashtrapatiBhavan.

Background

- Rawal, 65, comes with years of experience in both cinema and theatre.
- The National Film award-winning actor, who started his journey in Gujarati theatre in 1972 and has been a part of plays such as "Vairee", "Jooth Bole KauvaKaate" and"Kishan v/s Kanhaiya", said his vision is to reach out to more people through quality theatre.

About National School of Drama

- National School of Drama (or NSD) is a theatre training institute situated at New Delhi, India.
- It is an autonomous organization under Ministry of Culture, Government of India.
- It was set up in 1959 by the SangeetNatakAkademi and became an independent school in 1975.
- In 2005, it was granted deemed university status, but in 2011 it was revoked.
- The origins of the school can be traced back to a seminar in 1954, where the idea of a Central institution for theatre was mooted, subsequently, a draft scheme was prepared in 1955, and

the SangeetNatakAkademi, which had Jawaharlal Nehru as its president, started drawing plans for the institution.

- Meanwhile, elsewhere in Delhi, BharatiyaNatyaSangh (BNS) with assistance from UNESCO, independently established the 'Asian Theatre Institute' (ATI) on 20 January 1958, and in July 1958, ATI was taken over by the SangeetNatakAkademi (SNA), India's National Academy of Music, dance and drama of Government of India.

1.41 FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT

- The BJP has become the first mainstream political party from India to have named itself as a foreign principal of an organisation in the United States.
- This happened after the Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBJP) registered under the 1938 Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) under the U.S. Department of Justice.

About the Highlights

- The registration was done on August 27, 2020, according to the registration statement filed by the OFBJP.
- The FARA requires "agents representing the interests of foreign powers in a political or quasi-political capacity to disclose their relationship with the foreign government and information about related finances."
- FARA is an important tool to identify foreign influence in the United States and address threats to national security.
- Following the registration, the OFBJP will have to declare any meetings with U.S. legislators, organisation of events and funding from U.S. groups.
- It will also not be possible for OFBJP members to use organisational help during the U.S. elections as it would then be seen as foreign interference.

1.42 INDIA POST LAUNCHES FIVE STAR VILLAGES SCHEME

- The Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications, has launched a scheme called Five Star Villages, to ensure universal coverage of flagship postal schemes in rural areas of the country.
- The scheme seeks to bridge the gaps in public awareness and reach of postal products and services, especially in interior villages.

About the schemes covered

- Savings Bank accounts, Recurrent Deposit Accounts, NSC / KVP certificates,
- SukanyaSamridhi Accounts/ PPF Accounts,
- Funded Post Office Savings Account linked India Post Payments Bank Accounts,
- Postal Life Insurance Policy/Rural Postal Life Insurance Policy and
- PradhanMantriSurakshaBimaYojana Account / PradhanMantriJeevanJyotiBimaYojana Account

- If a village attains universal coverage for four schemes from the above list, then that village gets four-star status; if a village completes three schemes, then that village get three-star status and so on.

1.43 SAROD PORTS

Union Minister of State for Shipping (I/C) ShriMansukhMandaviya today launched 'SAROD-Ports' (Society for Affordable Redressal of Disputes - Ports) through virtual ceremony in New Delhi.

Background

- Speaking at the launching, ShriMansukhMandaviya termed SAROD-Ports as a game-changer and added that it will become the pivotal mechanism of *ummeed* (hope), *vishwas*(trust) and *nyaya* (justice) in the Port sector of India.

- ShriMandaviya also added that enforcement of concession agreements in the letter and spirit is on the utmost priority. SAROD-Ports will resolve the disputes in fair and just manner while saving a huge amount of legal expenditure and time.

Highlights

- SAROD-Ports is established under Societies Registration Act, 1860 with the following objectives:
    - Affordable and timely resolution of disputes in fair manner
    - Enrichment of Dispute Resolution Mechanism with the panel of technical experts as arbitrators.

SAROD-Ports consists members from Indian Ports Association (IPA) and Indian Private Ports and Terminals Association (IPTTA).

SAROD-Ports will advise and assist in settlement of disputes through arbitrations in the maritime sector, including ports and shipping sector in Major Port Trusts, Non-major Ports, including private ports, jetties, terminals and harbours.

It will also cover disputes between granting authority and Licensee/Concessionaire /Contractor and also disputes between Licensee/Concessionaire and their contractors arising out of and during the course of execution of various contracts.

'SAROD-Ports' is similar to provision available in Highway Sector in the form of SAROD-Roads constituted by NHAI.

1.44 e-GOPALA APP

- To help livestock farmers amid the corona crisis, Prime Minister NarendraModi has announced E Gopala App under the PradhanMantriMatsyaSampadaYojana (PMMSY) for farmers on 10th September 2020.
- While launching E Gopala App, the Prime Minister said that the app will give farmers the freedom from middlemen and provide all information related to productivity, health and diet for the cattle.

Background

- "Along with the good breed of animals, the correct scientific information about their care is equally important. For this, technology has been continuously used for the past years. In this direction, the 'e-Gopala' app has been started today," he said.
- E Gopala is a flagship program of the Government for the development of the agricultural sector in the country under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana.

About the app

- The Prime Minister said that E Gopala App is for the Farmers' benefit across the nation.
- The Prime Minister further said that so far about six thousand crore rupees have been deposited in the bank accounts of farmers of Bihar.
- The e-Gopala app will be a digital medium that helps livestock owners.
- It will be easy to choose advanced livestock.
- They will get freedom from middlemen.
- This app will give all information related to productivity, health and diet for the cattle.

1.45 50% OF CHILDREN COMPLETE CLASS X IN VERNACULAR

Amid a raging debate over "imposition of languages", official data point to over 50% of students completing their secondary level of education with one of 12 Indian languages and senior secondary level with one of eight home languages, other than English, as the medium of instruction.

Background

- According to the National Statistical Organisation's (NSO) latest report on education, 70% or more students whose home language is Assamese, Bengali and Gujarati completed their school education in

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

The NEP 2020 reiterates the 3-language formula & suggests home language as medium of instruction till at least Class V. Here is a snapshot of India's schoolgoing population according to their medium of instruction:
Percentage of students with medium of instruction as English, or the language spoken at home

Home language	LEVEL OF CURRENT ATTENDANCE									
	Pre-primary		Primary		Upper-primary/ middle		Secondary		Higher secondary	
	Medium of instruction									
	Home language	English	Home language	English	Home language	English	Home language	English	Home language	English
Hindi	60.3	37.5	79.7	18.2	81.5	16.5	82.4	15.9	79.3	19.5
Assamese	74.3	24	91.1	7.7	89.8	9.7	91.5	7.5	79.8	18.4
Bengali	75.2	18	80	8.1	86.5	4.2	87.3	4.3	90.9	4.9
Gujarati	70.5	27.4	84.6	13.2	87.4	11.4	87.5	9.8	86	12.1
Kannada	42.1	53.4	65.3	33.7	73.8	23	74.3	23.3	56.9	40.4
Malayalam	19.1	80.9	38	60.3	41.5	55.7	51.8	44.9	20.1	78.8
Manipuri	18	67.7	8.7	76.7	4.7	71.8	7.3	68.1	2.4	93.7
Marathi	54.7	42.8	72.9	24.6	78.5	16.8	77.2	19.6	68.9	28.2
Odiya	81.4	16.5	90.5	7.2	93.7	4.1	89.6	6.7	52.9	45.8
Punjabi	19.8	77.7	35	59.7	44.1	50.1	50.3	37.4	45.3	41.5
Tamil	9.3	90.6	54.4	45.4	59.7	39.4	62.5	36.5	62.4	37.4
Telugu	17	79.8	37.7	58.6	43.7	53.1	48.8	49.2	23.4	74.5
Urdu	5.8	82.4	11.8	47.9	14.5	52.3	14.2	56.4	8.1	71.4

these vernacular languages.

- However, more students whose mother tongue is Malayalam, Telugu, Manipuri, Punjabi, Urdu, Sindhi, Konkani or Nepali opted for English as the medium of instruction at least till Class X.

About the Highlights

- In general, a significant shift towards English as medium of instruction is seen at senior secondary level- Classes XI and XII.

- The National Education Policy 2020 reiterates the three-language formula and suggests medium of instruction in home language at least till Class V.

- The RTE Act also suggests that mother tongue should be be considered as medium of instruction where ever possible.

- The NSO survey reveals that 91.1% of students whose mother tongue is Assamese are learning in their home language at the primary level, the highest for any mother tongue at this level, followed by Odiya at 90.5%.

- At upper-primary or middle school level, 93.7% of the students whose mother tongue is Odiya are learning in their language, followed by Assamese (89.8%), Bengali (86.5%) and Hindi (81.5%).

- On the other side of the spectrum are Sanskrit, Urdu, Manipuri, Bodo, Konkani, Nepali and Sindhi, where the percentage of students studying in their home language is significantly low.

- As per the survey, there are no students attending classes in Sanskrit medium.

- In the primary and middle-school level, just 8.7% and 4.7% of students have opted for Manipuri medium, while it is 11.4% and 28.6% for Nepali.

- The figures for Urdu as home language and medium of instruction are 11.8% (primary), 14.5% (middle-school) and 14.2% at secondary level.

- The report points out that majority of those with home language of Malayalam, Telugu, Manipuri, Punjabi, Urdu, Sindhi, Konkani or Nepali, opted for English as the medium of instruction.

- For example, 79.8 % of students whose home language is Telugu are learning in English medium at pre-primary level, 58.6% at primary level, 53.1% at middle-school, 49.2% at secondary level and 74.5% at senior secondary level.

- The survey also showed that preference for English as a medium of instruction is more prevalent at the starting phase of schooling and at senior secondary level.

- It says 90.6% of students whose home language is Tamil are starting their education at pre-primary level with English as medium of instruction.

- Preference for English as a medium of instruction at senior secondary level increases significantly with an exception for students with Bengali as the mother tongue, where just 4.9% are attending classes with English as medium of instruction.

- The report on "Household Social Consumption: Education", released in July, surveyed 1.13 lakh households spread across over 8,000 villages and 6,000 urban blocks between July, 2017 and June 2018.
- It involved 1.52 lakh students across different levels of study.

1.46 DEEP VEINS OF THE LEG

- The SreeChitraTirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST) in Thiruvananthapuram has indigenously developed a device for the prevention of Deep Vein Thrombosis.
- "The institute has applied for a patent and has a scientific publication on this technology," Dr AshaKishore, Director, SCTIMST said.

Background

- Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is the formation of blood clots in deeply located veins,usually in the legs.
- Normally blood in the veins of the legs is returned to the heart by the contraction of muscles of the legs during walking.

About the Highlights

- DVT is caused by prolonged immobility and bed-ridden state, post-operative immobilisation, paralysis of legs, stroke, pregnancy, dehydration, use of certain drugs, travel by long flights without moving etc.
- The symptoms of DVT are pain, swelling, redness, warmth engorged surface veins, a press release from the institute, under the department of Science and Technology, government of India, said.
- The detachment of the clot from the veins and its transport to heart and into the artery carrying impure blood from the heart to the lungs can cause 'pulmonary artery embolism,' a potentially life-threatening complication.
- The device works by compressing the veins in the legs in sequence so that the flow of blood from the veins in the legs is facilitated.
- The compression pressure isset in such a way that the veins are compressed but not the arteries.
- The device is equipped with a closed loop monitoring of compression pressure and electronic controls.
- A dedicated software is also provided in the device to ensure that safe compression levels are always maintained.
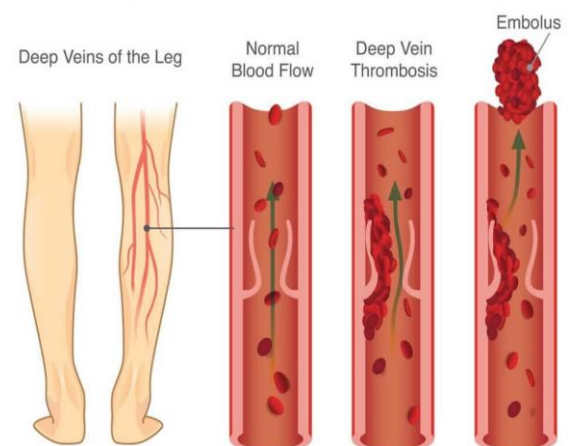
- It is also equipped with power supply backup, the release stated.
- While the cost of the imported device varies from Rs two lakh to Rs five lakh, it is estimated that the indigenous equipment can be manufactured and sold for less than Rs one lakh, Dr Asha said.

1.47 HINDI DIWAS

Streaming of well-researched documentaries leading to the historic occasion of adoption of Hindi as an official language of the Union of India on 14th September, 1949, mock enactment of the meeting of the Constituent Assembly by children and travelogues showing growth and popularity of Hindi in different States will mark the celebration of 'Hindi Diwas' by Films Division on 14th September, 2020.

About the Diwas

- The pioneering efforts of BeoharRajendraSimha, a well-known Hindi scholar-writer who rallied and lobbied in favour of Hindi along with other stalwarts like Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Maithili Sharan Gupta and Kaka Kalelkar came to fruition on Simha's 50th birth day on 14th September,1949 when the Constituent Assembly adopted Hindi as one of the official languages of the Union of India which was ratified by the Constitution of India that came into effect on the 26th of January 1950.
- Under the Article 343 of the Indian Constitution, Hindi written in Devanagari script was adopted as the official language.

1.48 PRADHAN MANTRI MATSYA SAMPADA YOJANA

- Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman on 5th July 2019 had announced to launch 'Matsya Sampada Yojana' aimed to increase the fish and aquatic products through appropriate policy, marketing and infrastructure support.

₹20,000 crores for Fishermen through Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)

- Critical gaps in fisheries value chain
- Government will launch the PMMSY for integrated, sustainable, inclusive development of marine and inland fisheries.
- ₹11,000 Cr for activities in Marine, Inland fisheries and Aquaculture
- ₹9000 Cr for Infrastructure - Fishing Harbours, Cold chain, Markets etc.
- Cage Culture, Seaweed farming, Ornamental Fisheries as well as New Fishing Vessels, Traceability, Laboratory Network etc. will be key activities.
- Provisions of Ban Period Support to fishermen (during the period fishing is not permitted), Personal & Boat Insurance
- Will lead to Additional Fish Production of 70 lakh tonnes over 5 years.
- Employment to over 55 lakh persons; double exports to ₹1,00,000 Cr.
- Focus on Islands, Himalayan States, North-east and Aspirational Districts.

Source: Government of India

- The CCE has approved renaming of SAMPADA which was Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters earlier, as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY).
- It was approved by the CCEA in May 2017 for the period of 2016-20 coterminous with the 14th Finance Commission cycle.

About the objective

- The objective of the scheme is to supplement or increase agriculture, modernize processing and decrease agricultural-waste and to utilize the potential in the fishery sector.
- The government proposed a Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) to establish a robust fisheries management framework and check gaps in the value chain.
- Government has made it clear that 'Blue Revolution' or `Neeli Kranti' and has the potential to attain the first place in the world in fish production.
- It includes MoFPI's schemes such as Food Parks, Food Safety and Infrastructure.

About the programme

- It will have a budget of Rs. 6000 and is expected to hold investment of Rs. 31,400 crore, handling about 334 lakh MT agro-produce valuing Rs. 1 lakh 4 thousand 125 crore.
- Around 2 million farmers will have benefited from this yojana and will generate about 5 lakh 30 thousand direct or indirect employment in the country in 2019-2020.
- This yojana will create modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet.
- It will increase growth of food processing sector in the country.
- It will increase GDP, Employment and investment.
- It will help in reducing huge wastage of agriculture products.
- It will help in providing better prices to farmers and double their of income.

1.49 PETROLEUM PROJECTS IN BIHAR

- The Prime Minister NarendraModi dedicated to the nation three key projects related to the Petroleum sector in Bihar.
- The projects include the Durgapur-Banka section (about 200 km) of the Paradip-Haldia-Durgapur Pipeline Augmentation Project and two LPG Bottling Plants in Banka and Champaran.

Highlights

- The line from Paradip - Haldia will now be further extended to Patna, Muzaffarpur and the pipeline coming from Kandla which has reached Gorakhpur will also be connected to it.
- These LPG plants will meet the LPG requirements of Godda, Deoghar, Dumka, Sahibganj, Pakur districts and some areas of Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand.
- They have been commissioned by IndianOil and HPCL, PSUs under the aegis of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

1.50 K.N.DIKSHIT COMMITTEE

- The government has formed an expert committee for conducting a study on the origin and evolution of Indian culture dating back to around 12,000 years ago.

- The 16-member committee will include K N Dikshit as Chairman, Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi and former Joint Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, among others.

About the committee

- A committee has been set up for conducting a holistic study of origin and evolution of Indian culture since 12,000 years before present and its interface with other cultures of the world.
- In a reply to another query on the ministry's plans to use the report of the said committee in textbooks for the purpose of educational research, he said at present, there is no such proposal.

1.51 BILLS FOR HOMEOPATHY, MEDICINE SYSTEM PASSED IN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has given its nod to two bills that propose a medical education system that improves access to quality and affordable medical education by ensuring the availability of adequate and high-quality homeopathy and the Indian system of medical professionals across the country.

Background

- LokSabha passed the National Commission for Homoeopathy Bill and the National Commission for the Indian System of Medicine Bill.
- RajyaSabha had passed them earlier, and the lower house' nod to the two proposed legislation mean that they are set to become laws after getting formal approval from President Ram NathKovind.

Highlights

- Some opposition members protested against the Bill, saying the center needed to undertake wider consultation.
- Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said the proposed laws will help in better administration of homeopathy and the Indian system of medicines.
- The proposed legislation promotes equitable and universal healthcare that encourages community health perspective and makes services of such medical professionals access to all citizens, the Union government has said.
- They promote national health goals, encourage medical professionals to adopt the latest medical research in their work, and to contribute to research with an objective, periodic and transparent assessment of medical institutions.
- They facilitate the maintenance of a medical register of homeopathy and the Indian system of medicine and enforce high ethical standards in all aspects of medical services.

1.52 HIND SWARAJ

- Mahatma Gandhi was very outspoken about the need for conserving the environment.
- In 1909 in his book 'Hind Swaraj', Gandhiji cautioned Indians against unrestricted industrialism and materialism.

Background

- He said - "The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our forefathers but on loan from our children. So we have to hand over them at least as it was handed over to us.
- Almost 100 years ago, Mahatma Gandhi criticized people for polluting the rivers and other water bodies and mills and factories for polluting the air with smoke and noise.

About the Highlights

- He believed that India, with its large population and western model of development, may exhaust the resources of mother earth.
- He said that earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed.
- It is only possible to follow his advice if one can distinguish between their real needs and artificial wants.
- He believed that one must be the change that one wants to see in the world and hence he practiced what he preached.

1.53 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY

- International Democracy Day is observed on 15 September every year to raise awareness among people about democracy.
- This day provides an opportunity to review the democracy of the state in the world.

About the day

- The theme of the International Day of Democracy 2019 is 'Participation'.
- According to UN, democracy is built on inclusion, equal treatment and participation.
- It is a fundamental building block for peace, sustainable development and human rights.
- Political participation, civic space and social dialogue make up the very foundation of good governance.
- It works with the impact of globalisation and technological progress.
- No doubt, nowadays civic space is shrinking in the whole world at an alarming rate.

1.54 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF OZONE

World Ozone Day 2020 or International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer 2020 is celebrated every year on 16 September. This year, we are celebrating 35 years of the Vienna Convention and 35 years of global ozone layer protection. The day is observed to spread awareness about ways that are effective in protecting the ozone layer.

About the Theme

- 'World Ozone Day' is observed every year on 16 September.
- The theme of World Ozone Day 2020 is 'Ozone for Life: 35 years of ozone layer protection'
- According to the UN Environment, "collective decisions and action, guided by science, are the only way to solve major global crises."

Highlights

- World Ozone Day was first observed in the year 1995.
- This day is celebrated to create awareness about the importance of the ozone layer.
- Sunlight makes life, but the ozone layer creates life as we know it today.
- When scientists working in the late 1970s discovered that humanity was making a hole in this protective shield, they voiced out their concerns.
- In 1985 the governments of the world adopted the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and took a decision to save the Ozone layer.
- Like the Montreal Protocol to the Convention, governments, scientists and industry worked together to cut 99 percent of all ozone-depleting substances.

1.55 YOSHIHIDE SUGA

- Nothing beats hard work, and there are plenty of real-life examples to prove that.
- And one of them is Japan's new prime ministerYoshihideSuga who has also been a key government adviser and policy enforcer.
- A farmer's son, Suga was elected president of the Liberal Democratic Party on September 14, 2020, and formally elected Prime Minister on September 16, 2020.

Highlights

- Once he formally takes over, Suga will serve out Abe's remaining term as party chief until September 2021.
- Suga is currently the chief Cabinet secretary of Abe's government and he will then be confirmed as Prime Minister by a special session of the country's parliament.
- The 71-year-old Suga, known as Abe's trusted aide, won 377 votes out of 534 votes cast, and 535 possible votes, in the LDP election by the party's members of parliament and representatives of its 47 local chapters.
- Suga has a reputation for inscrutability, who has become a key government adviser, spokesman and policy enforcer.
- Suga has so far served in several key political roles, including most recently as chief cabinet secretary.

1.56 PROMOTION OF KHO KHO AND KABADDI

- Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports informed RajyaSabha about steps taken for the promotion of the sports of Kabaddi and KhoKho.
- Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India and KhoKho Federation of India have been given government recognition to promote the sports of Kabaddi and KhoKho in the country.

Highlights

- They have been provided with the admissible financial assistance and other support under the various Schemes of the Ministry and the Sports Authority of India.
- Further, both Kabaddi and KhoKho are part of the Khelo India Youth Games.
- Kabaddi and KhoKho are also included in the list of games/sports which qualify the meritorious sportspersons for recruitment to Group 'C' posts in Central Government offices.

1.57 AIIMS, DARBHANGA

- The Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of a new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) at Darbhanga, Bihar.
- This will be established under the PradhanMantriSwasthyaSurakshaYojana (PMSSY).

Highlights

- The establishment of new AIIMS involves the creation of a Hospital, Teaching Block for medical & nursing courses, residential complex, and allied facilities/services, broadly on the pattern of AIIMS, New Delhi, and other six new AIIMS taken up under Phase-I of PMSSY.
- The objective is to establish the new AIIMS as an Institution of National Importance for providing quality tertiary healthcare, medical education, nursing education, and research in the Region.
- Construction of new AIIMS is fully funded by the Central Government and is likely to be completed within a period of 48 months from the date of the approval of the Government of India.

1.58 HARYANA ORBITAL RAIL CORRIDOR PROJECT

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister NarendraModi has approved the Haryana Orbital Rail Corridor project from Palwal to Sonipat-Sohna-Manesar-Kharkhauda.
- This railway line will start from Palwal and end at the existing HarsanaKalan station (on the Delhi-Ambala section).

Haryana Orbital Rail Corridor

A Snapshot view
- New broad gauge electrified double line
- From Palwal to Sonipat bypassing Delhi via Sohna, Manesar and Kharkhoda
- Length: 121.742 km (143.932 km, including connectivity)
- Project Cost: ₹5617.69 crore
- No of stations: 14 new (3 existing)
- Speed Potential: 160 kmph
- Implementation through public-private partnership

Project Objectives
- Connecting logistics hubs and promoting development of new multi-modal hubs

Milestones of the Project
- In-principle approval granted by Ministry of Railways on March 5, 2019
- The DPR approved by BOD of HRIDC on June 25, 2019

Background

- This will provide connectivity for the existing Patli station (on Delhi-Rewari line), Sultanpur station (on GarhiHarsaru-Farukhnagar line), and Asaudha station (on Delhi Rohtak line).
- The project will be implemented by the Haryana Rail Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (HRIDC), a joint venture company set up by the Ministry of Railways with the Government of Haryana.
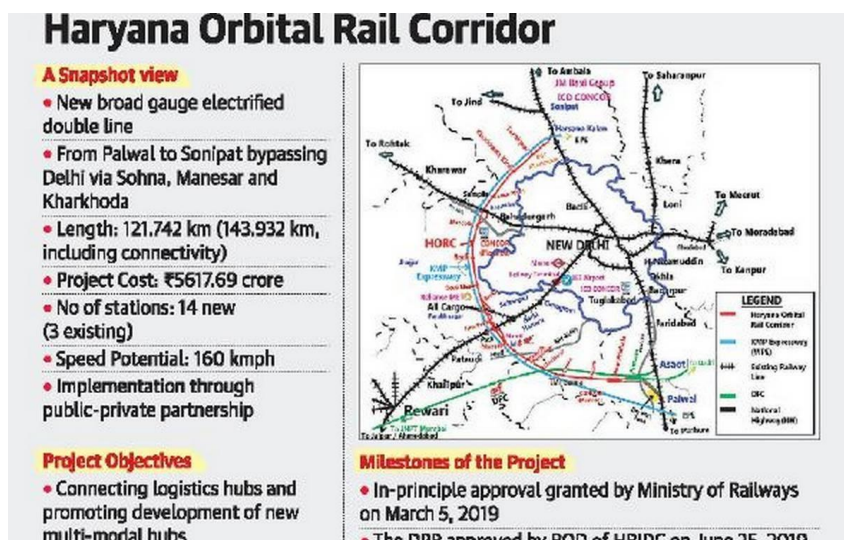
About the project

- The project will have joint participation by the Ministry of Railways, the Government of Haryana, and private stakeholders.
- The estimated full cost of the project is Rs. 5,617 croresRs.
- The project is expected to be completed in 5 years. Palwal, Noonh, Gurugram, Jhajjar, and Sonipat districts of Haryana will be benefited through this railway line.
- This will lead to the diversion of traffic out of Delhi and thus the traffic NCR will be reduced and will help in developing a multimodal logistics hub in the sub-region of Haryana state of NCR.

1.59 DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL FOR FOOTWEAR AND LEATHER INDUSTRY

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has issued a notification, constituting Development Council for Footwear & Leather Industry (DCFLI).
- Shri R K Gupta will chair DCFLI for 2 years.
- 24 other members have also been nominated.

Highlights

- The Development Council for Footwear and Leather Industry has been established for the formulation and implementation of promotional and developmental measures for the growth of labour intensive footwear and leather sectors in India.

Indian leather exports

($ billion)

Year	Value
2013-14	5.93
2014-15	6.49
2015-16	5.85
2016-17	5.64
2017-18	5.73

Source: CLE/DGCI&S

- To boost domestic production and encourage exports, the Developmental Council is envisaged to play a very proactive role in preparing a futuristic vision for development, designing and manufacturing of high quality world-class footwear and leather products in India.

1.60 NATIONAL HIGHWAYS EXCELLENCE AWARDS, 2020

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has invited proposals for the National Highways Excellence Awards for the year 2020.
- The awards are given every year in seven categories, Excellence in Project Management, Excellence in Operation and Maintenance, Green Highway, Innovation, Excellence in Highway Safety, Excellence in Toll Management and Outstanding Work in Challenging Conditions.

Background

- Applications can be submitted on the dedicated portal https://bhoomirashi.gov.in/awards by the 19th of this month.
- Winners will be announced in December this year.

Highlights

- The awards were instituted in the year 2018.

- The first cycle of awards in 2018 received wide participation from around the country.
- Following the success of the first cycle, the Ministry decided to make the National Highways Excellence Awards an annual feature.
- The aim is to recognise companies which are performing exceptionally well in the construction, operations, maintenance and tolling stages of highway development as well as in the arena of road safety.
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said, the motive behind starting an annual awards program is to create a spirit of healthy competitiveness among all stakeholders involved in the development of highway infrastructure in the country and to contribute to the larger goal of expanding the road network in the country.
- By announcing awards each year, the Ministry would acknowledge exceptional work being done in various aspects of highway management and recognize those agencies which are going beyond the scope of their work to deliver the finest quality of services.

1.61 ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020

- LokSabha passed the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020.
- The Bill will replace the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance which was promulgated in June this year.

About the Bill

- The Bill seeks to amend the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and empowers the central government in terms of production, supply, distribution, trade, and commerce of certain commodities.
- The bill empowers the central government to designate certain commodities including food items, fertilizers, and petroleum products as essential commodities.
- Supply of certain food items including cereals, pulses, potato, onions, edible oilseeds, and oils, can be regulated by the government under extraordinary circumstances as per the provisions of this bill.
- The extraordinary circumstances include war, famine, extraordinary price rise and natural calamity of grave nature.
- The Bill empowers the central government to regulate the stock of an essential commodity that a person can hold.
- The provisions of the bill regarding the regulation of food items and the imposition of stock limits will however not apply to any government order relating to the Public Distribution System or the Targeted Public Distribution System.

1.62 DRAFT OF ELECTRICITY (RIGHTS OF CONSUMERS) RULES, 2020

- The Power Ministry has drafted rules providing for Rights of Electricity Consumers for the First Time.

- According to the draft, State Electricity Regulatory Commissions, SERCs will fix the average number and duration of outages per Electricity consumer per year for DISCOMs.

Highlights

- Only two documents will be required for connection up to load of 10 KW and no estimation of demand charges will be required for loads up to 150 KW to expedite giving connection.
- There will be a time period of not more than seven days in metro cities, 15 days in other municipal areas and 30 days in rural areas, to provide new connection and modify existing connection.
- There will be option to pay bills in cash, cheque, debit cards and net banking but bills of Rs. 1,000 or more have to be paid online.
- Draft Rules have been circulated by Ministry of Power on 9th of September for seeking comments and suggestions of consumers up to 30th September.
- They shall be finalized after taking into account all the suggestions received and issued.

1.63 PARLIAMENT PASSES INSTITUTE OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH IN AYURVEDA BILLL 2020

- The Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill 2020 has been passed by RajyaSabha.
- The Bill was earlier passed in LokSabha on 19th March, 2020.

Background

- This paves the way to establish a state-of-the-art Ayurvedic institution called the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA) at Jamnagar, Gujarat, and to confer the status of Institution of National Importance (INI) to it.
- The ITRA is sought to be established by conglomerating the presently existing Ayurveda institutes at Gujarat Ayurved University campus Jamnagar.

Highlights

- This is a cluster of highly reputed institutions, namely, (a) Institute for Post Graduate Teaching and Research in Ayurveda, (b) Shree GulabKunverba Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, and (c) Institute of Ayurvedic Pharmaceutical Sciences, (d) MaharshiPatanjali Institute for Yoga Naturopathy Education & Research (to be made part of the Department of Swasthvritta of the proposed ITRA).
- These institutions had come up over the past many decades, and together made a unique family of Ayurveda institutions existing in close proximity.
- It is expected that the enactment of the proposal will further provide autonomy to the institute to develop patterns of teaching in undergraduate and postgraduate education in Ayurveda and Pharmacy.
- The synergies among the different constituent institutions will help ITRA to demonstrate high standards of such education and to emerge as a lighthouse institution to the entire AYUSH Sector.

- It is expected to provide the highest level of training of personnel in all important branches of Ayurveda including Pharmacy, and to take up in-depth study and research in the field of Ayurveda.
- ITRA will be the first institution with INI status in the AYUSH Sector, and this will enable the institution to be independent and innovative in the matter deciding course content and pedagogy.
- The decision comes at a time when global interest in health solutions based on traditional wisdom is at an unprecedentedly high level and ITRA is poised to take Ayurveda education to new vistas.

1.64 SALARY, ALLOWANCES AND PENSION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020

- The Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Bill, 2020 was unanimously passed by LokSabha.
- The Bill will replace the Salary, Allowances And Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 which was earlier passed by the Union Cabinet in April 2020.

About the features

- It reduces the basic salary of MPs by 30% for one year to meet the exigencies arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Under this, the government also amended certain Rules under the 1954 Act to reduce constituency allowance and office expenses allowance of MPs.
- These amendments have been made for a period of one year effective from April 1, 2020.
- As the economy was affected due to the Covid-19 outbreak and funds are needed to fight with the COVID-19 pandemic so this will provide more funds to government kitty for other schemes and welfare of the people.
- Earlier this year, the government suspended the MP Local Area Development (MPLAD) scheme for two years (2020-2021 and 2021-2022).
- The consolidated amount of MPLAD Funds for 2 years will go to the consolidated Fund of India.

About the Highlights

- The proposed reduction to the salaries and allowances of MPs and ministers amounts to savings of around Rs 54 crore.
- Article 106 of the Constitution empowers MPs to determine their salaries through legislation.
- In 1985, Parliament enacted a law that delegated the power to set and revise certain allowances of MPs such as constituency allowance, office allowance, and housing allowance to the central government.
- In 2018, The Finance Act, 2018 provided that the salary, daily allowance, and pension of MPs will be increased every five years, on the basis of the cost inflation index provided under the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Countries such as Australia and the UK appoint an independent authority for determining the salaries.

1.65 INDIAN BRAIN TEMPLATES

- Soon, neurologists, neurosurgeons and psychiatrists in India can map the brain structure of their patients and make an accurate assessment using Indian Brain Templates (IBT) and a brain atlas developed by a team of neuroscientists from NIMHANS.

- The neuroscientists studied over 500 brain scans of Indian patients to develop five sets of templates and a brain atlas for five age groups covering late childhood to late adulthood (six to 60 years).

About the Highlights

- While some countries have their own scale to measure the brain, Indian scientists are still dependent on the Caucasian brain template. Now they developed a scale that will measure an Indian brain.

- The templates and atlas will provide more precise reference maps for areas of interest in individual patients with neurological disorders like strokes, brain tumours, and dementia.

- These templates and atlas will also help pool information more usefully in group studies of the human brain and psychological functions, aiding our understanding of psychiatric illnesses.

- The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences is the apex centre for mental health and neuroscience education located in Bengaluru, India.

- It is an Institute of National Importance and operates autonomously under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

1.66 AIRCRAFT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020

- The Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020, that seeks to impose a penalty of up to Rs 1 crore for lapses and violation of airline rules and regulations, was passed by the RajyaSabha.

- The Bill seeks to amend the Aircraft Act, 1934 that regulates the manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import and export of civil aircraft, and licensing of aerodromes.

About the aims and objective

- It also seeks to converts three existing bodies—the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), and the Aircraft Accidents Investigation Bureau (AAIB), under the Ministry of Civil Aviation into statutory bodies.

- As per the provisions on the Bill, a violation can be punished with up to two years in jail or a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh, or both.

About the Highlights

- The bill seeks to amend the Aircraft Act, 1934, which regulates manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import and export of civil aircraft, and licensing of aerodromes.

- Further, it seeks to convert three aviation regulatory bodies under the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) –Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), and the Aircraft Accidents Investigation Bureau (AAIB) – into statutory bodies.

- Each of these bodies will be headed by a Director-General who will be appointed by the Centre.

1.67 KOSI RAIL MAHASETU

- The Prime Minister inaugurated the historic Kosi Rail Mahasetu (mega-bridge) and dedicated it to the nation through video-conference, stating, "Today, new history has been created in the field of rail connectivity in Bihar."
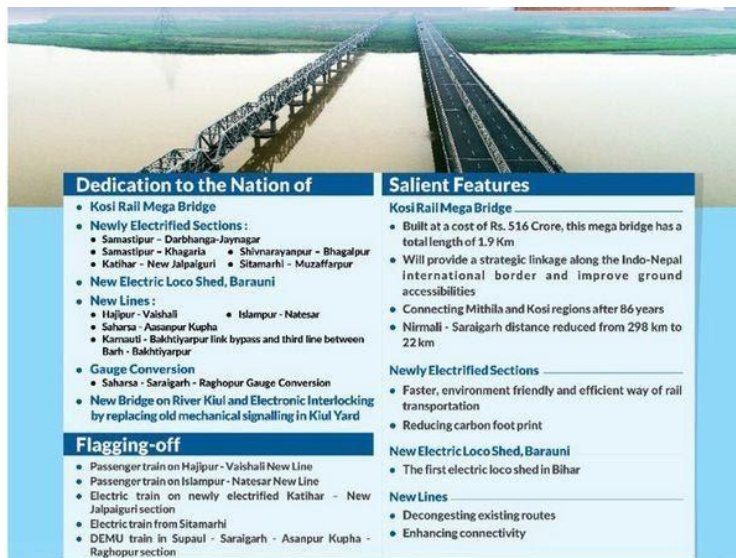
- "The people of Supaul, Araria and Saharsa districts will benefit greatly from the commencement of the train service between Asanpur-Kupaha via

KosiMahasetu," the Prime Minister said and added that, "it will also provide an alternative railroad for the companions of the North East, he added.

About the Bridge

- A new railway bridge on the Kiul River, two new railway lines, five electrification projects, one electric locomotive shed at Barauni and a third line project between Barh-Bakhtiyarpur are some of them, the release added.

- "The dedication of the Kosi Rail Mahasetu is a watershed moment in the history of Bihar and the entire region connecting to the North East. In 1887, a metre gauge link was built in between Nirmali and Bhaptiahi (Saraigarh). During the heavy flood and severe India-Nepal earthquake in 1934, the rail link was washed away. Thereafter, due to the meandering nature of Kosiriver, no attempt was made to restore this rail link for long period," it said.

- The historical project to build the bridge, which is 1.9 kilometres long and has been constructed at a cost of Rs 516 crore, was sanctioned by the Centre in 2003-04, according to the release.

- This bridge is of strategic importance along the border.

- The project was completed during the Covid-19 pandemic where the migrant labour also participated in its completion.

1.68 MAHALAYA

- Mahalaya is an amalgamation of two words- 'maha' which means great and 'alaya' meaning abode.

- Mahalaya is basically an oratorical invocation to the goddess urging her to arrive on earth.

- It marks the beginning of 10 days celebration of Durga Puja.

- As per Hindu mythology, Goddess Durga was created by all supreme powers of Universe to destroy demon Mahisasura, who was wreaking havoc on Earth.

Background

- To begin with, the day of Mahalaya marks the beginning of *Devi Paksha* and the end of the *PitriPaksha*, the latter of which, is a period of mourning.

- Hindus consider *PitriPaksha* to be inauspicious because *shradhh* or death rites are performed during this period.

- It is a 16-day lunar period during which people remember and pay homage to their ancestors using food and water offerings.

Highlights

- While there are many stories and/or folklore associated with the day, largely, people believe that on this day, Goddess Durga officially begins her journey from Mount Kailash — where she resides with her husband Lord Shiva — to her maternal home on Earth.

- Bengalis celebrate it with much fervour and remark intermittently, about the festive autumn weather and the '*pujo-pujo*' feel.

- It is believed Goddess Durga undertakes this week-long journey with her children — Ganesha, Kartik, Lakshmi and Saraswati — on a vehicle of her choice. It could be a palanquin or a boat, an elephant or a horse.

- Mahalaya is celebrated roughly seven days before Durga Puja.

- Every Bengali household wakes up early in the morning — even before the sun — to customarily listen to a collection of songs and mantras called 'MahishasuraMardini', in the sonorous voice of Birendra Krishna Bhadra.

- These mantras invoke the Goddess; the most famous one being JagoTumiJago (meaning, 'awaken, oh Goddess!')

- Some Hindu households also perform the ritual of *pitritarpan* on this day, wherein they offer prayers to the deceased in the form of '*pind-daan*' on the banks of River Ganga.

1.69 FEWER THAN 34,000 INTER-STATE MIGRANT WORKERS IN 2019-20

- Right to Information (RTI) Act request for data on inter-state migrant workers. According to the response to the RTI, in the last five years, there have been no inter-state migrant workers registered in the Delhi, Dehradun or Patna regions.

Background

- Nationwide, there were less than 34,000 workers registered in 2019-20 under the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (ISMW) Act, 1979.

- The lackadaisical approach towards this law meant that when the sudden lockdown was imposed, the government had no information about migrant workers.

About the Highlights

- The ISMW Act came into force four decades ago.
- It is meant to protect vulnerable workers who leave their own home state for employment.
- It applies to every establishment and contractor who has five or more migrants on their rolls and prohibits their employment without a certificate of registration.
- According to the Act, each registered worker must be issued a passbook with details of employment, wages and benefits.

1.70 PM GARIB KALYAN PACKAGE INSURANCE SCHEME

- The 'PradhanMantriGaribKalyan Package Insurance Scheme for Health Workers Fighting COVID-19' was announced on 30 March 2020 for a period of 90 days.
- This was extended for a further period of 90 days i.e. up to 25th Sept, 2020.

Background

- The scheme has now been extended for another 180 days i.e. 6 months.
- This Central Sector Scheme provides an insurance cover of Rs. 50 lakh to healthcare providers, including community health workers, who may have to be in direct contact and care of COVID-19 patients and therefore at risk of being infected.
- It also includes accidental loss of life on account of contracting COVID-19.

About the scheme

- The scheme also covers private hospital staff/ retired/volunteer/ local urban bodies/contract/daily wage/ ad-hoc/outsourced staff requisitioned by States/ Central hospitals/autonomous hospitals of Central/States/UTs, AIIMS & INIs/ hospitals of Central Ministries drafted for COVID-19 related responsibilities.
- The insurance provided under this scheme is over and above any other insurance cover being availed of by the beneficiary.
- There is no age limit for this scheme and individual enrolment is not required.
- The entire amount of premium for this scheme is being borne by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

About the Highlights

- The benefit/claim under this policy is in addition to the amount payable under any other policies.
- Ministry of Health and Family welfare has collaborated with the New India Assurance (NIA) Company Limited for providing the insurance amount based on the guidelines prepared for the scheme.

- Till date, under the scheme, a total of 61 claims are processed and paid. 156 claims are under examination by New India Assurance (NIA) Company Limited, and in 67 cases claims forms are yet to be submitted by the States.

1.71 KERALA TO HAVE CERTIFIED SNAKE HANDLERS

- Kerala became the first to institutionalise snake handling in the country, the Kerala Forest Department has framed guidelines for rescuing snakes and releasing them in uninhabited areas.
- The move to certify snake handlers comes amid allegations of unscientific approaches by snake catchers that tend to create stress to the animal and pose risk to their and others' lives.

Background

- Kerala has reported 334 deaths and 1,860 other cases of snake bites during the last three years.
- There have also been allegations of snakes being supplied for criminal purposes.

About the guidelines

- It is mandatory for snake handlers, aged between 21 and 65 years, to seek certification.
- The applications will be screened by the Assistant Conservators of Forest (ACF, Social Forestry) to prepare lists of snake handlers in each district.
- Various parameters, including experience, age, health as well as track record will be considered during the selection process.
- Those short-listed will be required to undergo mandatory training on safe and scientific handling of snakes.
- While the certification will be valid for five years, the respective ACFs can withdraw or cancel the same if the snake handler is found to be involved in any illegal or unethical practices.
- Certified snake handlers will be required to wear protective gear and equip themselves with safety equipment while on the task.
- Rescued snakes will also have to be released in the presence of forest officials at the earliest.
- If found injured, the snake can be released only after ascertaining its fitness.
- Non-native species, however, cannot be released and have to be handed over to the Forest Department.

1.72 SPICe+ PORTAL

- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has notified and deployed a web-form namely 'SPICe+' as a part of Govt of India's Ease of Doing Business (EODB) initiatives.
- It offers 10 services by three Central Government Ministries and Departments (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Labour & Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance), one State Government (Maharashtra) and various Banks.

About the services

- Name reservation

- Incorporation

- DIN allotment

- Mandatory issue of PAN

- Mandatory issue of TAN

- Mandatory issue of EPFO registration

- Mandatory issue of ESIC registration

- Mandatory issue of Profession Tax registration (Maharashtra)

- Mandatory Opening of Bank Account for the Company and

- Allotment of GSTIN (if so applied for)

1.73 BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of Parliament met to discuss the legislative business and other issues related to the ongoing Monsoon Session. LokSabha Speaker Om Birla presided over the meeting.

- The Business Advisory Committee of LokSabha consists of 15 members including the Speaker who is the ex-officio Chairperson.

- The members are nominated by the Speaker.

Highlights

- In practice, a new Committee after being nominated by the Speaker is constituted and assumes office in the first week of June every year.

- The Committee generally meets at the beginning of each Session and thereafter as and when necessary.

- The function of the Committee is to recommend the time that should be allotted for the discussion of such government legislative and other business as the Speaker, in consultation with the Leader of the House, may direct to be referred to the Committee.

- The Committee, on its own initiative, may also recommend to the Government to bring forward particular subjects for discussion in the House and recommend allocation of time for such discussions.

- The decisions reached by the Committee are always unanimous in character and representative of the collective view of the House.

- The Business Advisory Committee was constituted for the first time on the 14th July, 1952.

1.74 HINDUSTAN ORGANIC CHEMICALS GET BIS CERTIFICATION FOR ALL ITS PRODUCTS

- Hindustan Organic Chemicals Limited (HOCL), a PSU under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers has been granted Bureau of Indian Standards - BIS certification for all its products.

- HOCL has been a pioneer in the manufacturing of Chemicals since its inception and quality is its motto since then.

Background

- The company is supporting and implementing the Make in India initiative of the Government of India in one or other way.
- All the products of the company are widely being accepted, especially in the Pharmaceutical industry where the highest product quality is called for.

Highlights

- HOCL, a leader in chemical industry has manufacturing unit at Kochi in Kerala.
- It provides basic organic chemicals essential for vital industries like Drugs and pharmaceuticals, resins and laminates, dyes and dyes intermediates, rubber chemicals, paints, pesticides and Textile industry, virtually touching every facets of life.
- It is also manufacturing sanitizers in this period of COVID pandemic.
- HOCL incorporated in 1960 as the first endeavor to indigenize manufacture of basic chemical, attaining self-reliance and reduce country's dependence on imports of vital organic chemicals.

1.75 <u>PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE</u>

The government pushed through two crucial agriculture Bills in RajyaSabha, rejecting Opposition demands that they be referred to a Select Committee of RajyaSabha.

About the scrutiny

- Parliament scrutinises legislative proposals (Bills) in two ways.
- The first is by discussing it on the floor of the two Houses.
- The second mechanism is by referring a Bill to a parliamentary committee.
- But referring of Bills to parliamentary committees is not mandatory.

About the committees

- India's Parliament has multiple types of committees.
- They can be differentiated on the basis of their work, their membership and the length of their tenure.
- First are committees that examine bills, budgets and policies of ministries.
- These are called departmentally related Standing Committees.
- There are 24 such committees.
- Departmentally related Standing Committees have tenure of one year, then they are reconstituted and their work continues throughout the term of a LokSabha.

About the Highlights

- Then there are committees constituted for a specific purpose, with MPs from both Houses.
- The specific purpose could be detailed scrutiny of a subject matter or a Bill.

- These are Joint Parliamentary Committees (JPC).
- And finally, there is a Select Committee on a Bill.
- This is formed for examining a particular Bill and its membership is limited to MPs from one House.
- Since both the JPCs and Select Committees are constituted for a specific purpose, they are disbanded after their report.
- Both these types of committees are chaired by MPs from the ruling party.

1.76 FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2020

The Centre is set to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act and has proposed to make Aadhaar a mandatory identification document for all the office-bearers, directors and other key functionaries of an NGO or an association eligible to receive foreign donations.

About the new amendments

- Under the Act, certain persons are prohibited to accept any foreign contribution.
- These include election candidates, editor or publisher of a newspaper, judges, government servants, members of any legislature, and political parties, among others.
- The Bill adds public servants (as defined under the Indian Penal Code) to this list.
- Public servants include any person who is in service or pay of the government or remunerated by the government for the performance of any public duty.
- Under the Act, foreign contribution cannot be transferred to any other person unless such person is also registered to accept foreign contribution (or has obtained prior permission under the Act to obtain foreign contribution).
- The Act states that a person may accept foreign contribution if they have: (i) obtained a certificate of registration from central government, or (ii) not registered, but obtained prior permission from the government to accept foreign contribution.
- Under the Act, a registered person must accept foreign contribution only in a single branch of a scheduled bank specified by them.
- Under the Act, if a person accepting foreign contribution is found guilty of violating any provisions of the Act or the unutilized or unreceived foreign contribution may be utilized or received, only with the prior approval of the central government.
- Under the Act, every person who has been given a certificate of registration must renew the certificate within six months of expiration.
- Under the Act, a person who receives foreign contribution must use it only for the purpose for which the contribution is received.
- The Bill adds a provision allowing the central government to permit a person to surrender their registration certificate.

- Under the Act, the government may suspend the registration of a person for a period not exceeding 180 days.

1.77 POSHAN ABHIYAAN

- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of AYUSH and Ministry of Women and Child Development in New Delhi for controlling Malnutrition as a part of POSHAN Abhiyaan.

- The MoU will see some time-tested and scientifically proven Ayush-based solutions being adopted for controlling malnutrition in the country.

About the POSHAN Abhiyaan

- POSHAN Abhiyaan or National Nutrition Mission is the Government of India's flagship program under the Ministry of Women & Child Development to improve nutritional outcomesfor children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

- The specific areas identified under the MoU for co-operation include:

    - Integration of AYUSH into POSHAN Abhiyaan and

    - Control of malnutrition through the principles and practices of Ayurveda, Yoga and other Ayush systems.

- The Anganwadi worker who is providing the Ayurveda nutrition message to the community at ground level may be designated as 'DHATRI' - Dedicated Health Activist to Replenish the Innutrition.

- The two Ministries have also decided to launch the hashtag #Ayush4Anganwadi for generating awareness about the activities on the digital media.

1.78 A-WEB

The Election Commission of India organized an International Webinar on 21st September 2020, on the Theme ''Issues, Challenges and Protocols for Conducting Elections during COVID-19 : Sharing Country Experiences' on its completion of one year of Chairmanship of the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB).

About A-WEB

- The Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) is largest association of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) worldwide.

- At present A-WEB has 115 EMBs as Members & 16 Regional Associations/Organisations as Associate Members.

- ECI has been very closely associated with the process of formation of A-WEB since 2011.

- ECI hosted the 4th General Assembly of A-WEB on 03 Sep 2019 at Bengaluru and took over as Chair of A-WEB for 2019-2021 term.

- An India A-WEB Centre has been established at New Delhi, for documentation, research and training for sharing the best practices and capacity building of officials of A-WEB members.
- This is the first Webinar being held by the India A-WEB Centre.

1.79 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

- The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers is being observed today.
- The objective is to pay tribute to the invaluable contribution by the uniformed and civilian personnel and to honour more than 3,800 peacekeepers who have lost their lives while rendering peacekeeping services.

About the Background

- Since then, more than one million men and women have served in 72 UN peacekeeping operations, directly impacting the lives of millions of people, protecting the world's most vulnerable and saving countless lives.
- India is the 4th largest troop contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions.
- UN peacekeeping has helped countries move from war to peace.
- At present, India contributes about 6,400 peacekeepers to various missions across the world.
- The country has the largest percentage of women in the police force, at around 32 per cent, contribution to the future of peacekeeping.

About the key Highlights

- The theme this year is "Protecting Civilians, Protecting Peace".
- In a message on the occasion, UN Secretary-General AntónioGuterres said peacekeeping is a necessity and a hope for millions in conflict-affected situations around the world.
- He called on UN member States to work together to make peacekeeping more effective in protecting people and advancing peace.
- Over the past 20 years, protection of civilians has increasingly been at the heart of UN peacekeeping.
- The first UN peacekeeping mission was established on 29th May 1948, when the Security Council authorized the deployment of a small number of UN military observers to the Middle East.

1.80 INDIA'S BIGGEST FILM CITY (PROPOSED)

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday announced that his government will establish the country's 'biggest' film city in GautamBuddh Nagar.
- With several films and web series now being shot in the state, the dedicated film city is likely to bring employment while providing a haven for filmmakers.

About the Background

- Though a proposal for the film city is yet to be prepared, Yamuna Expressway Industrial Authority (YEIDA) is in the process of looking for appropriate land for the ambitious project.

- The proposal will also include suggestions of members of the film industry to make it the most conducive environment for filmmaking.

Highlights

- As per the UP Film Policy, 2018, the state government will "support the establishment of film cities by providing land at industrial rates" and also assist in developing the right infrastructure for it.
- The film city will also include its police station and a separate wing will be formed under the police department to look into film security, as per the policy.
- Fire stations, roads and other physical paraphernalia required for the film city will also be taken care of by the state government, the policy said.
- Film Bandhu, a nodal agency of the state government, overlooks the implementation of the Film Policy.
- In 2019, the government announced an incentive of Rs 50 lakh to any Indian or overseas filmmaker if the movie was shot in English or any regional language except a regional language of UP.
- Recently, AnuragKashyap's movie on female shooters of Baghpat – Saand Ki Aankh – was declared tax free by the state government.

1.81 EPIDEMIC DISEASES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020

- The Union government is in the process of formulating a National Public Health Act, Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said on Saturday while responding to issues raised by Opposition members on expanding the scope of Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020.
- The Bill was tabled and passed unanimously in RajyaSabha.

Salient Features

- The bill amends the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 to include protections for health care service personnel combating epidemic diseases and expands the powers of the Central Government to prevent the spread of such diseases.
- The bill repeals the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance that was promulgated in April this year.
- The legislation makes harm, injury, hurt or danger to the life of health care service personnel as a cognizable and non-bailable offence.
- It has provisions of imprisonment from three months to five years and a fine between 50 thousand rupees to two lakh rupees.
- Persons convicted of offences under the bill will also be liable to pay compensation to the health care service personnel whom they have hurt.

1.82 8 RAJYA SABHA MPs SUSPENDED

Eight RajyaSabha MPs were suspended on Monday (September 21) for unruly behaviour in the House the previous day (September 20). The motion was passed by a voice vote.

- The government moved a motion seeking the suspension of Derek O'Brien (TMC), Sanjay Singh (AAP), Rajeev Satav (Congress), K KRagesh (CPM), Syed NazirHussain (Congress), Ripun Boren (Congress), DolaSen (TMC) and Elamaram Kareem (CPM)

About the Background

- The general principle is that it is the role and duty of the Presiding Officer — Speaker of LokSabha and Chairman of RajyaSabha — to maintain order so that the House can function smoothly.
- The suspension of the eight members comes a day after the Upper House witnessed massive unruly scenes by protesting Opposition members during the passage of two farm Bills.
- In order to ensure that proceedings are conducted in the proper manner, the Speaker/Chairman is empowered to force a Member to withdraw from the House.

Highlights

- Rule Number 373 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business says: "The Speaker, if is of the opinion that the conduct of any Member is grossly disorderly, may direct such Member to withdraw immediately from the House, and any Member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall remain absent during the remainder of the day's sitting."
- To deal with more recalcitrant Members, the Speaker make take recourse to Rules 374 and 374A.

1.83 SOCIAL SECURITY CODE, 2020

- LokSabha passed the Social Security Code, 2020.
- Efforts have been made to provide right to health security under ESIC to maximum possible workers.

Highlights

- The facility of ESIC would now be provided in all 740 districts. At present, this facility is being given in 566 districts only.
- Establishments working in hazardous sectors would mandatorily be linked with ESIC, even if there is only one worker working in it.
- Provision for making scheme for linking unorganised sector and Gig workers with ESIC.
- Option to link workers working in Plantations is being given to Plantation owners.
- Option for becoming member of ESIC is also being given to establishments with less than 10 workers.
- EPFO's coverage would be applicable on all establishments having 20 workers. At present, it was applicable only on establishments included in the Schedule.
- Option to join EPFO is also being given to establishments having less than 20 workers.
- Schemes would be formulated for bringing workers coming under the category of 'Self-employed' or falling under any other category under the aegis of EPFO.

- Provision has been made to formulate various schemes for providing comprehensive social security to workers in unorganised sector. A "Social Security Fund" will be created on the financial side in order to implement these schemes.

- Work to bring newer forms of employment created with the changing technology like "platform worker or gig worker" into the ambit of social security has been done in the Social Security Code.

- Provision for Gratuity has been made for Fixed Term Employee and there would not be any condition for minimum service period for this.

1.84 MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICES

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by the Prime Minister ShriNarendraModi has approved the increase in the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for all mandated Rabi crops for marketing season 2021-22.

- This increase in MSP is in line with the recommendations of Swaminathan Commission.

Background

- In view of nutritional requirements and changing dietary pattern and to achieve self-sufficiency in pulses and oilseeds production, the Government has fixed relatively higher MSP for these crops.

- The highest increase in MSP has been announced for lentil (Rs. 300 per quintal) followed by gram and rapeseed & mustard (Rs. 225 per quintal each) and safflower (Rs. 112 per quintal).

- For barley and wheat, an increase of Rs. 75 per quintal and Rs 50 per quintal respectively has been announced.

- The differential remuneration is aimed at encouraging crop diversification.

Highlights

- The increase in MSP for Rabi Crops for marketing season 2021-22 is in line with the principle of fixing the MSPs at a level of at least 1.5 times of the All-India weighted average Cost of Production as announced in Union Budget 2018-19.

- The expected returns to farmers over their cost of production are estimated to be highest in case of Wheat (106%) followed by rapeseed & mustard (93%), gram and lentil (78%). For barley, return to farmers over their cost of production is estimated at 65% and for safflower, it is 50%.

- Support is in the form of MSP as well as procurement.

- In the case of cereals, Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other designated State Agencies would continue to provide price support to the farmers. Government has set up a buffer stock of pulses and domestic procurement of pulses is also being done under Price Stabilization Fund (PSF).

- The Umbrella Scheme "PradhanMantriAnnadataAaySanraksHanAbhiyan" (PM-AASHA), comprising Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS), and pilot Scheme of Private Procurement and Stockist Scheme (PPSS) will aid in the procurement of pulses and oilseeds.

1.85 IIIT LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020

- The government has passed the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) bill in the RajyaSabha.
- The bill will confer the status of National Importance to five Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) — Surat, Bhopal, Bhagalpur, Agartala and Raichur.

Objective

- The institutes will now be able to use the nomenclature of Bachelor of Technology (BTech) or Master of Technology (MTech) or PhD degree.
- The Bill will also enable the Institutes to attract enough students required to develop a strong #research base in the country in the field of Information Technology.

Salient features

- The Bill seeks to declare five IIITs set up under the PPP mode in Surat, Bhopal, Bhagalpur, Agartala, and Raichur as institutions of national importance.
- Currently, these institutes are registered as Societies under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and do not have the power to grant degrees or diplomas.
- On being declared institutions of national importance, the five institutes will be granted the power to grant degrees.
- The Bill seeks amendment to the Indian Institutes of Information Technology Act, 2014 and the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (Public-private Partnership) Act, 2017.
- The central government will contribute fifty percent towards the expenses of institutes functioning under the PPP mode.
- 35 per cent will be borne by the states and fifteen per cent by the industries.
- As a special impetus to north eastern states, central government will bear over fifty seven per cent of the expenses whereas industries will contribute around seven percent to the Institutes there.

1.86 THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY, HEALTH AND WORKING CONDITIONS CODE, 2020

- LokSabha passed the Code on Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions Code, 2020.
- The 2019 Bill permitted the appropriate government to exempt any establishment or class of establishment from any provisions of the Code.
- The 2020 Bill empowers the state government to exempt any new factory from the provisions of the Code in order to create more economic activity and employment.

Highlights

- The 2019 Bill defined a factory as any premises where manufacturing process is carried out and it employs more than: (i) 10 workers, if the process is carried out using power, or (ii) 20 workers, if it is

carried out without using power. This was same as the Factories Act, 1948, which is being subsumed by the Bill.

- The 2019 Bill defines an establishment as a place where any business, trade, or occupation is carried out with 10 or more workers. The 2020 Bill includes all establishments where any hazardous activity is carried out regardless of the number of workers.

- The 2019 Bill applied to establishments or contractors employing 20 or more contract workers (on any day in the last one year).

- The 2019 Bill empowered the government to prohibit employment of contract labour in some cases including where: (i) the work is of a perennial nature, or (ii) the work performed by contract workers is necessary for the business carried out by the establishment, or (iii) the same work is carried out by regular workmen in the establishment.

- The appropriate government will decide whether an activity of the establishment is a core activity or not.

- The Bill allows the appropriate government to exempt contractors from the provisions of the Bill in case of an emergency, subject to such conditions as may be notified.

- The 2019 Bill provided that it will not be applicable to the offices of the central and state governments.

- Under the 2019 Bill, construction works employing 10 or more workers were considered as building or other construction works. The 2020 Bill removes this condition.

1.87 NSS AWARDS FOR 2018-19

- President Ram NathKovind conferred the National Service Scheme Awards for the year 2018-19 through virtual mode.

- The NSS Award for the year 2018-19 was presented to 42 awardees in three different categories like University, NSS Units and their Programme Officers and NSS Volunteers.

About NSS

- NSS is a Central Sector Scheme which was launched in the year 1969 with the primary objective of developing the personality and character of the student youth through voluntary community service.

- The ideological orientation of the NSS is inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi.

- The NSS volunteers work on issues of social relevance, which keep evolving in response to the needs of the community, through regular and special camping activities.

- Such issues include literacy and education, health, family welfare and nutrition, environment conservation, social service programmes, rescue and relief during calamities.

1.88 THE NATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCES UNIVERSITY BILL, 2020

- Parliament has passed the National Forensic Sciences University Bill 2020 with the RajyaSabha clearing it.

- The LokSabha has already approved the Bill.

About the Objectives

- The objectives of the University include:

i) promoting academic learning in the field of forensic science in conjunction with applied behavioural science studies, law and other allied areas to strengthen the criminal justice institutions in India,

ii) fostering research and applied applications in forensic science, applied behavioural science studies, and law,

iii) coordinating with the central and state governments to improve investigations, crime detection and prevention through research, and

iv) assisting the central government in creating and maintaining a national forensic database for criminal investigation, including DNA and fingerprints.

Highlights

- The Bill establishes the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar (established under the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University Act, 2008) and the LokNayakJayaprakash Narayan National Institute of Criminology and Forensic Sciences, New Delhi, as a University called the National Forensic Sciences University at Gujarat.

- The Bill declares the University to be an institution of national importance.

- The Board of Governors will be responsible for all administrative affairs of the University. The members include: (i) the Vice-Chancellor (appointed by the central government), (ii) the Financial Adviser, Ministry of Home Affairs, *ex officio* and (iii) five persons of eminence from fields such as forensic science and criminology. Nominated members will hold office for three years.

- The University will maintain a Fund which will be applied towards its expenses.

- The following amounts will be credited to the Fund: (i) contributions by the central or state government, (ii) grants, gifts, and donations, (iii) income from fees, and (iv) amounts received from any other source.

- These amounts will be invested based on the recommendations of the Finance Committee.

1.89 THE RASHTRIYA RAKSHA UNIVERSITY BILL, 2020

- Parliament has passed the RashtriyaRaksha University Bill 2020.

- The RajyaSabha cleared this Bill on September 22, while the LokSabha had passed it earlier.

Objectives

The key objectives of the University include:

i) providing dynamic and high standards of learning and research,

ii) providing a working environment dedicated to advancing research, education and training in the domain of policing, and

iii) promoting and providing public safety.

About the features

- The Bill establishes the Raksha Shakti University, Gujarat (established under the Raksha Shakti University Act, 2009) as a University called the RashtriyaRaksha University in Gujarat.

- The Bill declares the University to be an institution of national importance.

- The Bill also repeals the 2009 Act.

- The Bill provides for several authorities under the University.

- These include: (i) the Governing Body, to frame the broad policies and programmes of the University, (ii) the Executive Council, which will be the principal executive body, and (iii) the Academic Council, which will specify the academic policies of the University.

- The functions of the University include: (i) providing instructions and research in police sciences, including coastal policing and cyber security, (ii) establishing and maintaining colleges, and (iii) prescribing courses, holding exams, and granting degrees and other distinctions.

- The Governing Body will be responsible for all administrative affairs of the University.

- It will consist of up to 15 members.

- The members will include: (i) the Vice-Chancellor (appointed by the central government), (ii) one representative of Ministry of Home Affairs nominated by the central government, not below the rank Joint Secretary, (iii) one representative of State Police Universities by rotation, and (iii) three persons having expertise in defence, policing, internal security and allied fields. Nominated members will hold office for three years.

1.90 ABHYAS

- India successfully conducted the flight test of ABHYAS - High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT) vehicles from a test range in Odisha, defence sources said.

- The trial, carried out by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur near here, was tracked by various radars and electro-optic systems, the sources said.

About ABHYAS

- ABHYAS has been designed and developed by the Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) of the DRDO.

- The air vehicle is launched using twin underslung boosters.

- It is powered by a small gas turbine engine and has an Inertial Navigation System (INS) along with a Flight Control Computer (FCC) for guidance and control.

- The vehicle has been programmed for fully autonomous flight.

- The check out of the vehicle is done using laptop- based Ground Control Station (GCS), a defence statement said.
- During the test campaign, the user requirement of 5 km flying altitude, vehicle speed of 0.5 mach, endurance of 30 minutes and 2g turn capability of the test vehicle were successfully achieved, it said.

1.91 MAJOR PORT AUTHORITIES BILL, 2020

- LokSabha passed the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020.
- The Bill seeks to provide for regulation, operation and planning of major ports in the country and provide greater autonomy to these ports.

Highlights

- It seeks to replace the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.
- The legislation provides for the creation of a Board of Major Port Authority for each major port.
- These Boards will replace the existing Port Trusts.
- The bill will help the ports develop world class infrastructure and will also enhance transparency in their functioning.

1.92 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SIGN LANGUAGES

- Sign language is a way of communication using hand gestures, which are visually read by people unable to hear or speak.
- Sign languages are unique and independent of spoken languages.

Background

- International Day of Sign Languages is observed every year on September 23, to celebrate the diversity of people and make sure no one is left behind because of hearing or speaking challenges.
- The International Day of Sign Languages is a United Nations-designated day.
- According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, "sign language is inseparable from deaf people's human rights.
- Without sign language, deaf people are not equal".

About the day

- The International Day of Sign Languages was first observed in 2018 as part of the International Week of the Deaf.
- It also commemorates the day the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) was established in 1951.
- The WFD works towards ensuring the human rights of deaf people worldwide.
- According to the WFD, there are around 72 million people worldwide who use sign language.
- This year the WFD is issuing a Global Leaders Challenge, which aims to "promote the use of sign languages by local, national, and global leaders in partnership with national associations of deaf people in each country, as well as other deaf-led organisations".

1.93 WORLD MARITIME DAY

- Every year on September 24, World Maritime Day is observed to understand the importance of the marine environment, the impact of industries on the oceans and marine life and the well-being of seafarers who spend months away from home.

- This year due the coronavirus pandemic, it's even more difficult for the seafarers as their stay on the ship have been extended, in many cases, due to lockdown rules globally.

- Shipping industries across the world with the support of the International Maritime Organisation are working towards a regulatory framework for a sustainable future and well being of sailors and all stakeholders.

Highlights

- The theme for this year is "sustainable shipping for a sustainable planet" - in line with the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs of the United Nations.

- World Maritime Day is a great opportunity to disseminate information and spread awareness about proper management of the oceans and saving the water bodies from pollution, which destroys the fragile marine environment.

- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and its Member States are working towards achieving the SDG targets.

- This year the roles of seafarers are in the forefront amid the COVID-19 pandemic as they sail from shore to shore with cargo and other humanitarian work.

1.94 LASER-GUIDED ANTI-TANK MISSILE

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), successfully tested the laser-guided anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) from MBT Arjun at KK Ranges, Armoured Corps Centre and School (ACC&S), in Ahmednagar.

- The ATGM successfully defeated a target located at three km.

About the missile

- Laser-guided ATGMs lock and track the targets with the help of laser designation to ensure precision hit accuracy.

- The missile employs a tandem HEAT warhead to defeat explosive reactive armour protected armoured vehicles.

- It has been developed with multiple-platform launch capability and is currently undergoing technical evaluation trials from gun of MBT Arjun.

- The missile was developed by the Armament Research and Development Establishment, Pune, in association with High Energy Materials Research Laboratory, Pune, and Instruments Research and Development Establishment, Dehradun.

1.95 INDIA, AUSTRALIA TWO-DAY NAVAL EXERCISE IN INDIAN OCEAN CONCLUDES

- Royal Australian Navy and Indian Navy warships completed two-day Passage Exercise (PASSEX) in the east Indian Ocean region.
- The exercise aimed at enhancing interoperability, improving understanding, and imbibing best practices from each other.
- It involved advanced surface and anti-air exercises including weapon firing, seamanship exercises, naval manoeuvres and Cross Deck Flying Operations.

Background

"Royal Australian Navy and Indian Navy warships completed 2 day Passage Exercise (PASSEX). Seamanship evolutions, weapon drills and cross deck flying undertaken. High degree of interoperability and jointness were further reinforced," informed Indian Navy in a press statement.

About the exercise

- PASSEXs are regularly conducted by the Indian Navy with units of friendly foreign navies, whilst visiting each other's ports or during a rendezvous at sea.
- This exercise being conducted in the east Indian Ocean region, reflects the growing strength of Indo-Australian bilateral relations as comprehensive strategic partners, particularly in defence cooperation in the maritime domain.

1.96 RAILWAYS PLAN TO COMPLETE 100% ELECTRIFICATION OF BROAD GAUGE ROUTES BY 2023

- The Ministry of Railways said it has planned for 100% electrification of its Broad Gauge (BG) routes by December 2023.
- Out of total 63,631 km of route, 39,866 km are already electrified while work on 23,76 km is yet to be completed.

Highlights

- This information was given by the Minister of Railways PiyushGoyal in a written reply to a question in RajyaSabha.
- "To expedite electrification of railway lines in the country, various steps have been taken including award of large size Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) contracts, better project monitoring mechanism, assured/committed funds through 'Extra Budgetary Resource (Institutional Finance), decentralization of powers to field units, utilisation of technology etc," the reply said.

1.97 <u>SHINKUN LA TUNNEL</u>

- To augment border infrastructure, the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) has expedited making detailed project report for the world's longest high-altitude Shinkun La Tunnel.

- The tunnel is proposed to be built on the border between Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.

- Once it is complete, the Manali - Kargil highway will remain open throughout the year.

Background

- "NHIDCL under Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways (MoRTH) has speeded up the detailed project report work on the World's Longest High-Altitude Shinkun La Tunnel (13.5 Km long) along with its approach roads in UT of Ladakh and Lahaul-Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh," MoRTH said in a statement.

- The statement said the government is giving priority to build infrastructure in border areas of union territory (UT) of Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.

Highlights

- The tunnel (13.5 Km long) is proposed to be built on the border between Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.

- Once it is complete, the Manali-Kargil highway will remain open throughout the year.

- The tunnel will provide all-weather road connectivity between Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir in Zanskar valley.

- With the construction of the tunnel, inhabitants of around 15-odd villages of Zanskar Valley in Jammu and Kashmir will be relieved since the valley remains cut off due to heavy snowfall during the winter.

1.98 <u>NEW MEDICAL EDUCATION REGULATOR NMC COMES INTO FORCE</u>

- The National Medical Commission (NMC) replaced the Medical Council of India (MCI) as the apex regulator for medical education in India, according to a gazette notification issued by the government.

- The board of governors (BoG), which superseded the scam-tainted MCI, has also been dissolved.

- The 64-year-old Indian Medical Council Act, too, has been abolished.

About the Highlights

- The NMC Act, 2019, which received the assent of the President on 8 August last year, was touted as one of the biggest reforms in medical education in India.

- The commission will be responsible for approving and assessing medical colleges, conducting common MBBS entrance and exit examinations, and regulating course fees.

- NMC aims to improve access to quality and affordable medical education, and ensure availability of adequate and high quality professionals across the country.

- The Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 (102 of 1956) is hereby repealed with effect from September 25.

- The BoG appointed under section 3A of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 (102 of 1956) in supersession of the MCI constituted under sub-section (1) of section 3 of the said Act shall stand dissolved.
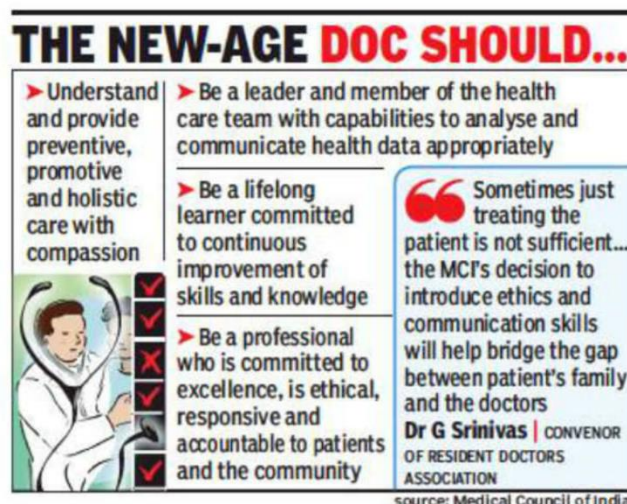
1.99 CENTRE FOR DISABILITY SPORTS

- The foundation stone of 'Centre for Disability Sports at Gwalior,Madhya Pradesh' will be laid at a function organized by DEPwD, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment through video conferencing on 26 September, 2020.

- Setting up of a Centre for Disability Sports at Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh was approved by the Cabinet on 28 February, 2019.

- Total estimated cost to set up the Centre is Rs.170.99 crore.

Background

- The Centre will be registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

- For overall superintendence and supervision of the Centre, Governing Body under the Chairpersonship of Secretary, DEPwD has been constituted.

- For monitoring the implementation of the project, a Project Monitoring Committee under the Chairpersonship of Secretary, DEPwD has been formed.

About the centre

- At present no training facilities are available in the country for sports person with disabilities.

- The proposed Centre will make available the specialized training facilities for Persons with Disabilities.

- The setting up of this Centre will develop a sense of belonging in Divangjan to facilitate their integration in the society.

- The Centre will provide facilities of international standards to sportspersons with disabilities to compete at international level and bring laurels for the country.

- It will have an Outdoor Athletic Stadium, Indoor Sports Complex, Basement Parking Facility; Aquatic Centre having 2 Swimming Pools, one covered Pool and an Outdoor Pool; High Performance Centre with classrooms; medical facilities; Sports Science Centre; hostel facilities for athletes, support facilities including accessible lockers, dining, recreational amenities and Administrative Block.

- The Centre will have provision for training, selection, sports academics and research, medical support, spectator galleries and suitable for holding national/international events.Sports identified for training are Badminton, Basketball, Table Tennis, Volleyball, Judo, Taekwondo, Fencing and Rugby Boccia, Goalball, Football 5 a side, Para Dance Sport and Para Power Lifting, Athletics, Archery, Football 7 a side and Tennis and Swimming.

1.100 PRITILATA WADDEDAR

- The government of Bangladesh is financing a film on the life of revolutionary freedom fighter PritilataWaddedar.

- Addressing the 'Muhurat' of the film in Dhaka, Information Minister Dr.Hasan Mahmud said that the film 'BhalobashaPritilata' will be based on the first woman Bengali revolutionary nationalist of the Indian subcontinent against the British regime.

- The film is based on the novel by SelinaHossain.

About Pritilata

- Pritilata was born in Dhalghat village of Chittagong in Bangladesh on 5 May 1911.

- She had her education in Chattogram, Dhaka and then at Bethune College, Kolkata for graduation.

- She joined the freedom movement and worked with revolutionaries like Surya Sen and Nirmal Sen.

- She was involved in several revolutionary acts like the famous Chittagong armoury raid and attack on the Pahartali European club at Chittagong in 1932 where she received bullet injury.

- However, she consumed cyanide before the British police could capture her.

1.101 55th JNANPITH AWARD

- Malayalam literature witnessed a golden moment when the Jnanpith Award was handed over to poet AkkithamAchuthanNamboothiri at a special function held at his house at Kumaranallur in the district.

- The man who introduced "meaningful modernism" several decades ago in Malayalam poetry, Akkitham is the only living poet being called Mahakavi (great poet) in Malayalam.

About Akkitham

- Akkitham has contributed seminal works such as Pathalathinte Muzhakkam, Irupatham Noottandinte Ithihasam, and Balidarshanam. He has nearly four dozen works to his credit.
- Among them are anthologies of poems, stories, dramas and essays.
- He had worked for nearly three decades with Akashvani as script writer and editor.
- Akkitham had close associations with Communist ideology E.M.S. Namboodiripad in his early years of career.

About the award

- Jnanpith Award is given by BharatiyaJnanpith, a literary and research organization based in Delhi.
- It is given annually to an author for their "outstanding contribution towards literature".
- It is bestowed only on Indian writers writing in Indian languages included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India and English.
- There is no posthumous conferral.
- Also only works published during the preceding twenty years is considered for the award.
- The award consists of cash prize is ₹11 lakh and a Bronze replica of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge and wisdom.

1.102 HAGUE COURT BACKS VODAFONE, GOVERNMENT EYES LEGAL OPTIONS

In A relief for Vodafone Group Plc, the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague ruled Friday that India's retrospective demand of Rs 22,100 crore as capital gains and withholding tax imposed on the telco for a 2007 deal was "in breach of the guarantee of fair and equitable treatment" that the company was entitled for its investments in the country's mobile telephone business.

THE NEW-AGE DOC SHOULD...

- Understand and provide preventive, promotive and holistic care with compassion
- Be a leader and member of the health care team with capabilities to analyse and communicate health data appropriately
- Be a lifelong learner committed to continuous improvement of skills and knowledge
- Be a professional who is committed to excellence, is ethical, responsive and accountable to patients and the community

"Sometimes just treating the patient is not sufficient... the MCI's decision to introduce ethics and communication skills will help bridge the gap between patient's family and the doctors
Dr G Srinivas | CONVENOR OF RESIDENT DOCTORS ASSOCIATION

source: Medical Council of India

Background

- "The respondent's (India's) conduct in respect of the imposition on the claimant (Vodafone Group) of an asserted liability to tax notwithstanding the Supreme Court judgment is in breach of the guarantee of fair and equitable treatment," the court said in its judgment.
- It also ruled that the Indian government must reimburse 4.3 million pounds to Vodafone Group for costs incurred on legal representation and assistance as well as for fees paid by the company to the arbitration court.

About the ruling

- Following the ruling, Vodafone Group said that "the tribunal held that any attempt by India to enforce the tax demand would be a violation of India's international law obligations".

- The Finance Ministry said it would study the order "and all its aspects carefully in consultation" with its counsel.

- "After such consultations, the government will consider all options and take a decision on further course of action including legal remedies before appropriate fora," it said in a statement.

- However, Ministry sources said that since Vodafone had not paid the initial tax demand of Rs 7,900 crore and interest and penalty on it, the question of India paying back Rs 22,100 crore did not arise.

- Further, they said, the tribunal has not accepted the claim of Vodafone for award of damages.

- In such a scenario, sources said, the Centre's liability — if it decides not to approach the Singapore International Arbitration Centre to appeal against Friday's ruling — is estimated to be about Rs 85 crore.

- This includes Rs 45 crore towards the tax collected so far and Rs 40 crore towards costs charged by the tribunal, they said.

- In its ruling, The Hague court said that since it was now established that India had breached the terms of the agreement, it must now stop efforts to recover the said taxes from Vodafone.

- Failure to comply with directions of the court would mean that India would "engage its international responsibility", the court said.

1.103 SWACHH VIDYALAYA ABHIYAN

- Public sector units claimed to have constructed 1.4 lakh toilets in government schools as part of a Right to Education project, but almost 40% of those surveyed by the Comptroller and Auditor-General were found to be non-existent, partially constructed, or unused.

- In an audit report presented in Parliament, the CAG said over 70% did not have running water facilities in the toilets, while 75% were not being maintained hygienically.

 Highlights

- The SwachhVidyalayaAbhiyan was launched by the Human Resource Development Ministry in September 2014 to meet the Right to Education Act's mandate that all schools must have separate toilets for boys and girls.

- Lack of dedicated funds, poor maintenance and poor water availability in toilets were identified as major challenges, and central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) were roped in to bridge the gap over a one-year period.

- Out of that sample, CPSEs identified but did not construct 83.

- Another 200 toilets were reported to be constructed, but were non-existent, while 86 toilets were only partially constructed.

- Out of the 1,967 coeducational schools surveyed, 99 schools had no functional toilets while 436 had only one functional toilet, meaning that the objective of providing separate toilets for boys and girls was not fulfilled in 27% of the schools, said the CAG.

1.104 MAINTENANCE OF VEHICLE DOCUMENTS

- The government said maintenance of vehicular documents, including driving licences and e-challans, will be done through an information technology portal from October 1, 2020.
- Vehicular documents found validated through electronic means shall not be demanded in physical forms for inspection, it said and added that details of driving licences disqualified or revoked by the licensing authority will be recorded and updated chronologically in the portal.

Background

"Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) has recently issued notifications regarding various amendments in Central Motor Vehicle Rules 1989 requiring implementation of enforcement, Maintenance of Vehicular Documents and E-Challans through portal w.e.f 1.10.2020 for better monitoring and enforcement of MV Rules," MoRTH said in a statement.

Highlights

- Use of IT services and electronic monitoring will result in better enforcement of traffic rules in the country and will lead to removing harassment of drivers and would facilitate the citizens.
- This was required after the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019 was passed and was published on 9th August, 2019, the government said.
- The amendment inter-alia provides for the definition for Challan, Portal inserted as requirement for providing the services through IT and further the enforcement of electronic monitoring and enforcement.
- Details of driving licences disqualified or revoked by the licensing authority shall be recorded chronologically in the portal and such record shall be reflected on a regular basis on the portal has been provided for, the government said and added, thus the record shall be maintained electronically and further the driver behaviour would be monitored.
- Provisions have been made for the procedure for Production and Obtaining Certificates in physical as well as electronic form, the validity, issuance of such documents and further the date and time stamping of inspection and identity of the Officer will be recorded, the statement said.

1.105 RULES RELAXED FOR DIVORCED DAUGHTERS TO RECEIVE FAMILY PENSION

Rules have been relaxed for divorced daughters to receive Family Pension and now a daughter will be entitled to receive the Family Pension even if the divorce had not finally taken place but the divorce petition had been filed by her during the lifetime of her deceased parent employee/pensioner.

Background

- The earlier Rule provided for payment of Family Pension to a divorced daughter only if the divorce had taken place during the lifetime of deceased parent pensioner or his spouse.
- The new circular will not only bring ease in the life of pension receiving individuals but also ensure respectable and equitable rights for the divorced daughters in the society.

Highlights

- Orders have also been issued for grant of Family Pension to a Divyang child or sibling even if the Disability Certificate is produced after the death of the pensioner parent but the disability had occurred before the death of the parents.
- Similarly, to bring ease of living for the Divyang pensioners, the Attendant Allowance for the helper has been increased from Rs. 4,500 per month to Rs..6,700 per month.
- One f the most noteworthy initiatives taken by the Pension Department is with regard to the Digital Life Certificate.
- Keeping in view the difficulty faced by the senior citizens who have gone and settled abroad with their children after retirement, circular has been brought out on Consolidated Instructions on Life Certificate and commencement of Family Pension for those living abroad vide which the concerned Bank Branch abroad and the Indian Embassy/ Consulate/High Commission have been instructed to provide Life Certificate and commencement of Family Pension there itself.

1.106 HEALTH SPENDING TO BE RAISED SUBSTANTIALLY IN NEXT 5 YEARS

- India aims to increase the public healthcare spending by 345% over the current share in next five years considering the covid-19 pandemic.
- The government is committed to increasing the public healthcare spending as a percentage of GDP from the existing 1.15 % to 2.5 % by 2025.

Health expenditure per person
Among the BRICS and other newly industrialised nations, India spends the least on health per capita.

Brazil $947
Russia $893
South Africa $570
Turkey $568
Malaysia $456
China $420
Indonesia $99
India $75

Out-of-pocket expenses cover most of the healthcare expenditures in India.

Public Spending 30%
Private Spending 70%

Source: World Health Organization

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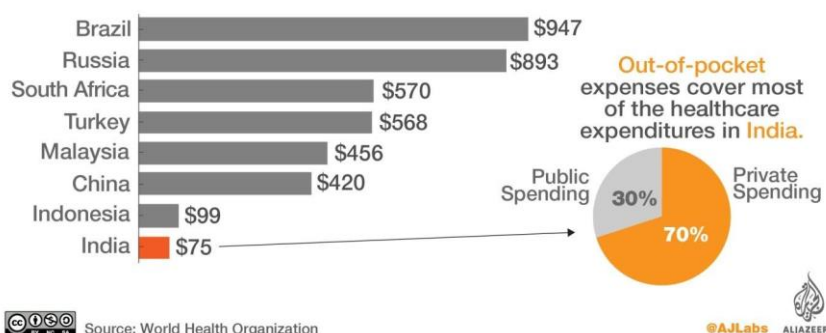
Background

- This will mean an actual increase of 345% over the current share in this short period of time.
- The 15th Finance Commission's high-level group on health has concurred that healthcare spending must be raised substantially in the next five years in view of the present pandemic.

Highlights

- On the disparity of setting up All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in different regions and only one for the entire North East, Harsh Vardhan said that the Central Scheme

PradhanMantriSwasthyaSurakshaYojana (PMSSY) is aimed at correcting the regional imbalances in healthcare.

- Other than setting up new AIIMS, the scheme also aims to upgrade the existing medical infrastructure in the entire country in a phased manner.

- Under different phases of the Scheme, the central government will establish new medical colleges attached with existing district and referral hospitals in Dhubri, Nagaon, North Lakhimpur, Diphu, Kokrajhar Districts in Assam, Churachandrapur in Manipur West Garo Hills District in Meghalaya, Falkawan District in Mizoram, &Kohima and Mon in Nagaland .

- Establishment of New Medical Colleges, strengthening and upgrading existing Government Medical Colleges, relaxing the norms for setting up of new Medical Colleges, enhancing the maximum intake capacity at MBBS level from 150 to 250 and enhancing the age limit for appointment and extension of teachers, deans, principals, and directors of Medical Colleges will help improving the doctor ratio in the country.

1.107 HEALTH IN INDIA REPORT

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has released the report of a survey titled 'Health in India', whose main objective was to gather basic quantitative information on India's health sector.

- The report details aspects of the role played by government and private sector facilities, and also contain health information for separate religious communities, including estimates of their susceptibility to ailments.

Religion	Male	Female	Person
Hindu	65	79	72
Muslim	70	93	81
Christian	89	122	105
Sikh	94	127	110
Jain	109	115	112
Buddhist	45	113	80
Zoroastrian	257	359	311
Others	83	54	69
All	67	83	75

Number per 1,000 persons reporting ailments (PAP) during the last 15 days by religion (Source: Survey report)

About the findings

- The Zoroastrian community remains the most susceptible to ailments, the report says.

- Results from the National Sample Survey (NSS)'s 75th Round released in July show that 31.1 per cent of Zoroastrians reported that they were suffering from an ailment at the time the survey was conducted.

- This number for other communities is: Jains, 11.2 per cent; Sikhs 11 per cent; Christians 10.5 per cent; Muslims 8.1 per cent; Buddhists 8 per cent; and Hindus 7.2 per cent.

- The report is based on information collected through NSS Schedule 25.0 (Household Social Consumption: Health) spread over the entire Indian Union. Data were collected through a sample survey of 1.13 lakh households covering 5.55 lakh persons.

Highlights

- The survey defines ailment as any deviation from a person's state of physical and mental well-being.

- The 'Proportion of Persons who Responded as Ailing', or PPRA, in a 15-day period when they were approached by the surveyors, were registered as those suffering from ailments.

- The survey shows that women remain more susceptible to suffering from ailments than men.

- In rural India 6.1 per cent of males said that they were suffering from ailments, while 7.6 per cent of rural women said the same.

- While 8.2 per cent of urban males said that they were sick, 10 per cent urban females said the same.

- Around 7.5 percent of Indians reported that they were suffering from ailments, as per the survey.

- The difference in people suffering from ailments in rural and urban India was stark.

- While in rural India only 6.8 per cent said that they were suffering from an ailment, this number in urban India was 9.1 per cent.

2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1 PM NarendraModi's address at 75th UN General Assembly: Get Full Statement here

- Prime Minister NarendraModi addressed the 75th United Nations General Assembly session on September 26, 2020 through a pre-recorded video statement, which was broadcasted at the UN General Assembly hall in New York.

- The Indian Prime Minister began his statement by congratulating each and every member country on the 75th anniversary of the United Nations on behalf of 1.3 billion people of India. He stated that India is proud of the fact that it is one of the founding members of the United Nations.

- India is proud of the fact that it is one of the Founding Members of the United Nations. On this historic occasion, I have come to this global platform to share the sentiments of 1.3 billion people of India.

- The theme of the 75th UN General Assembly session is - "The Future we want, the United Nations we need, reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism - confronting the COVID-19 through effective multilateral action. " The UN General Assembly was conducted virtually this year due to COVID-19 pandemic.

On urgent need for UN Reforms

- PM Modi highlighted that world of 1945 was significantly different from today's world and the current global situation. He stated that the form and composition of the United Nations, which was established with the aim of global welfare, were in accordance with the prevailing situation of those times. But today, he stated that we are in a completely different era and in the 21st century, the requirements and challenges of our present as well as our future are vastly different from those of the past.

- Therefore, he said that the international community today is faced with a very important question: Whether the character of the institution, constituted in the prevailing circumstances of 1945, is relevant even today? PM Modi pointed out that if century changes and we don't, then strength to bring changes becomes weak.

- While acknowledging that there have been several achievements in the last 75 years of the United Nations, PM Modi highlighted that there have also been several instances that call for serious introspection for the United Nations. He stated that while one could say that we have successfully avoided a third world war, we cannot deny that there have been several wars and many civil wars. He highlighted how several terrorist attacks shook the world and there have been bloodsheds.

- PM Modi pointed out that the people who lost their lives in these wars and attacks were human beings and thousands of children, who would have otherwise enriched this world, left us prematurely. Besides this, so many people lost their life savings and became homeless refugees.

- He questioned saying that were the efforts of the United Nations sufficient during those times or are these efforts adequate even today? PM Modi further noted that the whole world has been fighting the global pandemic of Corona for the last 8-9 months. However, he questioned The Role of United Nations in this joint fight against the pandemic? And whether the response was effective.

- Reform in the responses, in the processes, and in the very character of the UN is the need of the hour. It is a fact that the faith & respect that the UN enjoys among the 1.3 billion people in India is unparalleled.

- That reform in the responses, in the processes, in the character of the United Nations is the need of the hour. He stated that the faith and respect that the United Nations enjoys in India is unparalleled but it is also true that the people of India have been waiting for a long time for the completion of the reforms of the United Nations and today, the same people are concerned whether this reform-process will ever reach its logical conclusion?

On India's role expansion in UN decision-making

- PM Modi further questioned the decision of keeping India out of the decision-making structures of the United Nations. He argued saying that India is the largest democracy of the world, a country with more than 18% of the world population, a country with hundreds of languages, hundreds of dialects, many sects and ideologies and a country that was a leading global economy for centuries and also one that has seen hundreds of years of foreign rule.

- Today, people of India are concerned whether this reform-process will ever reach its logical conclusion. For how long will India be kept out of the decision-making structures of the United Nations?

- PM Modi stated that when India was strong, we did not trouble the world and when we were weak, we did not become a burden on the world. He further stated how long would a country have to wait particularly when the changes happening in that country affect a large part of the world.

India's contributions to UN

- The Prime Minister highlighted that India has always given priority to the welfare of the whole world. He stated that India is the country which sent its brave soldiers to about 50 UN peacekeeping missions. He also highlighted that India is the country that has lost maximum number of its brave soldiers in the course of establishing peace and today each Indian while seeing India's contribution to the United Nations, aspires for India's expanded role in the United Nations.

- PM Modi further emphasised that it was India that initiated the 'International Day of Non-Violence' on October 2nd and 'International Day of Yoga' on June 21. Similarly, it was due to India's efforts that the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Solar Alliance came into being. The Prime Minister stated that India has always thought about the interests of the whole humankind and not about its own vested interests and this has been the driving force of India's policies.

India's commitment global partnership

- PM Modi further stated that glimpses of India's efforts to work for the interest of the entire world can be seen in India's Neighbourhood First Policy, its Act East Policy as well as in its approach towards the Indo Pacific region and in its Policy of Security and Growth for all in the Region.

- He stated that India's partnerships are also guided by this very principle, as gesture of friendship by India towards one country is not against someone else. He highlighted that when India strengthens its development partnership, it is not with any malafide intent of making the partner country dependent or hapless. He further stated that India has never hesitated from sharing experiences of our development.

India's role as pharmacy to the world

- The Prime Minister further highlighted that even during these very difficult times of a raging pandemic, India's pharma industry has sent essential medicines to more than 150 Countries. PM Modi assured that as the largest vaccine producing country of the world, India's vaccine production and delivery capacity will be used to help all humanity in fighting this crisis. He stated that India is moving ahead with phase 3 clinical trials of COVID vaccine candidates. He assured that India will help all the countries in enhancing their cold chain and storage capacities for the delivery of the vaccines when they are ready.

India's non-permanent membership of UNSC

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his gratitude to all fellow countries who reposed their trust In India, paving way for its non-permanent membership in the UN Security Country from January 2021. PM Modi stated that India will use the prestige and experience of the largest democracy for the

benefit of the whole world. He stated that India's path goes from human welfare to the welfare of the entire world.

- He further reiterated that India will always speak in support of peace, security and prosperity and will not hesitate in raising its voice against the enemies of humanity, human race and human values such as terrorism, smuggling of illegal weapons, drugs and money-laundering.

- He stated that India's cultural heritage, tradition, thousands of years of experience will always stand in good stead for the developing countries and India's experiences, it developmental journey with its ups and downs will strengthen the way towards world welfare.

- India will not hesitate in raising its voice against the enemies of humanity, human race and human values – these include terrorism, smuggling of illegal weapons, drugs and money-laundering.

India's achievements in Past Years

- The Prime Minister highlighted that India has made great efforts to bring about transformation in the lives of millions of its citizens following the mantra of Reform-Perform-Transform in the past couple of years.

- He stated that these experiences are as useful for many countries of the world as they are for us. He further highlighted how India managed to connect almost 400 million people to banking system in just 4-5 years under its push for digital India.

- The Prime Minister also highlighted how India managed to free 600 million people from Open Defecation in 4-5 years and provide access to free health care services to more than 500 million people within 2-3 years.

- He further noted that India is one of the leaders in Digital Transactions and today, it is ensuring empowerment and transparency by providing Digital Access to its millions of citizens.

- He stated that India is also implementing a huge campaign to make the nation tuberculosis-free by 2025.

- He further highlighted that India is implementing a programme for providing piped drinking water to 150 million rural households and recently, India initiated a huge project to connect almost 6 Lakh villages with broadband optical fibre.

- He also highlighted how India is moving forward with the vision of creating a "Self-reliant India" in the changed circumstances of the post Pandemic era. He reiterated that a self-reliant India will be a Force Multiplier for the Global Economy.

- In the changed circumstances of the post-pandemic era, we are moving forward with the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. A self-reliant India will also be a force multiplier for the global economy.

- He also highlighted that today the nation is also ensuring that there is no discrimination in extending the benefits of all the schemes to every citizen of the country.

- He stated that large scale efforts are being made in India to promote Women Enterprise and Leadership and the Indian women, today, are the biggest beneficiaries of the largest Micro Financing Scheme of the world.

- He also highlighted that India is one of those countries where women are provided paid maternity leave of 26 weeks.

- He also stated that the rights of Transgenders are also being secured through necessary Legal reforms.

- In India, the rights of transgenders are also being secured through necessary legal reforms.

Closing Remarks

- While closing his address, PM NarendraModi stated that in its journey towards progress, India wants to learn from the world as well as share its own experiences. He stated that he is confident that on the occasion of its 75th anniversary, the United Nations and its member countries will endeavour with a strong commitment to maintain the relevance of this great institution. PM Modi emphasised that stability in the United Nations and empowerment of the United Nations is essential for the welfare of the world. He urged that on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, let us once again pledge to dedicate ourselves for the welfare of the world.

2.2 United States Judge halts Donald Trump's ban on TikTok downloads

- The United States federal judge on September 27, 2020, suspended Donald Trump's ban on new TikTok downloads, hours before it was to go into effect.

- The District Judge issued a temporary injunction at the request of TikTok, which earlier the White House had called national security threat claiming that its Chinese parent firm is tied to the Beijing government.

- However, the judge declined to grant an injunction on a separate set of prohibitions scheduled for November 12, 2020, that have been designed to further curb TikTok's use in the United States.

2.3 US govt issued ban on TikTok:

- The hold on the ban was requested by TikTok's owner, ByteDance Ltd. after President Donald Trump had ordered the app out of the American stores unless the company sold a stake in its US operations to a domestic buyer.

- This ban would have removed TikTok from the stores run by Google's Android and Apple Inc., the most widely used market places for apps.

- BREAKING: Federal judge temporarily suspends President Trump's order that would have banned popular app TikTok from app stores on Sunday.

What would have been the outcome of this ban?

- If the ban on new TikTok downloads would not have been put on hold by the US federal judge, people who don't yet have the TikTok app would not have been able to download it and those who already have it would not have the access to updates that are needed to ensure its safe and smooth operations.

- Reportedly, TikTok has been downloaded by more than 100 million Americans.

- The company in a statement mentioned that they are pleased that the court has agreed with our legal arguments and issued an injunction that prevents the implementation of the TikTok app ban.

- It further states that the company will continue to defend their rights for the benefits of their community and employees. They will also be maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the US government to turn their proposal, which the President had given his preliminary approval, into an agreement.

- The US Judge has further denied TikTok's request to suspend the November 12, 2020 ban on the app, which as per the Trump's executive order will further curb the app's use in the US.

Reason behind the ban on Chinese apps in the United States:

- The bans on Chinese apps in the US are a part of the increasingly political hard line that Trump has taken on Beijing as the US elections approaches.

- According to the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, TikTok and other applications such as WeChat have been feeding US data directly to China's national security apparatus.

Background:

- The United States President Donald Trump had earlier issued an executive order following the ban of Chinese video app TikTok. The President had also announced that Walmart and Oracle will need to have total control over the video-sharing app in order for the United States to approve a deal between the company and its two partners in the United States.

- On August 6, 2020, Trump had again signed an executive order, banning any form of US transactions with ByteDance, set to take effect in 45 days.

- Later on August 14, 2020, the President issued another executive order, requiring ByteDance to divest its interest in TikTok's operations in the United States within 90 days.

2.4 Pakistan to give Gilgit-Baltistan status of full-fledged province? What is India's response?
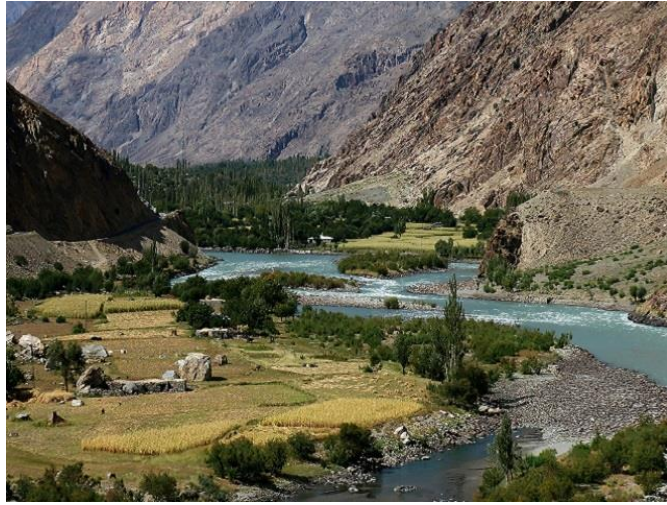
- Pakistan has decided to elevate the status of GilgitBaltistan to a full-fledged province. This was reported by Pakistani media on September 17, 2020.

- Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan is expected to visit the region soon and make the formal announcement to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan to the status of a full-fledged province with all constitutional rights.

- Following the elevation in status, Gilgit-Baltistan would be given adequate representation on all constitutional bodies, including the National Assembly and the Senate.

India's response

- India had earlier clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire region of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh Union Territory including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan form an integral part of India by virtue of its legal and irrevocable accession.

- India had also conveyed that the Pakistan government and its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it.

- The Union External Affairs Ministry had stated in May 2020 that India completely rejects such continued attempts by Pakistani government to bring material changes in Pakistan occupied areas of the Indian territory. The Ministry stated that instead, Pakistan should immediately vacate all areas it has occupied illegally.

- India has also protested to China over the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

What is CPEC?

- The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a construction project launched in 2013, aims to connect Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province. The corridor is a flagship project of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- The project, originally valued at USD 46 billion, is currently worth over USD 60 billion as of 2017. The work on the Moqpondass Special Economic Zone is expected to begin soon under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Background

- India on October 31, 2019 had released a new political map after two new UTs of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh came into being. The new map shows three Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) districts- Mirpur, Poonch and Muzaffarabad as a part of J&K and Gilgit-Baltistan as a part of Ladakh UT.

2.5 Brucellosis outbreak in China, thousands infected after leak at biopharmaceutical factory

- Thousands of people in northwest China tested positive for a bacterial disease called Brucellosis after a leak at a biopharmaceutical company in 2019. This was informed by authorities on September 15, 2020.
- The Health Commission of Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu province, confirmed that 3,245 people have contracted the disease. The bacterial disease is generally caused by contact with livestock carrying the bacteria called Brucella.
- Another 1,401 people have also tested as preliminarily positive. No fatalities have been reported as of now, as per the city's Health Commission. Overall, the authorities had tested about 21,847 people out of the city's 2.9 million population.

What is Brucellosis disease?

- The Brucellosis, also known as Mediterranean fever or Malta fever can result in symptoms such as fever, fatigue, headaches and muscle pain. While some of the symptoms go away quickly, some of the chronic ones never go away like arthritis or swelling in certain organs, according to the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- The human-to-human transmission of the bacterial disease is extremely rare as per CDC.

- People generally contract Brucellosis by eating contaminated food or breathing in the bacteria.
- In Lanzhou, as per researchers, the bacterial infection has been spread due to the leak in the biopharmaceutical company. People reportedly were infected by breathing in the bacteria.

How did Brucellosis outbreak happen?

- The Brucellosis outbreak in Lanzhou is being traced to a leak at the Zhongmu Lanzhou biological pharmaceutical factory, which occurred between late July and late August 2019. The factory used expired disinfectants and sanitizers while producing Brucella vaccines for animal use. This means that not all bacteria were eradicated in the waste gas.
- The contaminated waste gas formed aerosols, which contained the bacteria and were leaked into the air, carried by the wind down to the Lanzhou Veterinary Research Institute, where the outbreak first hit.
- The first report of the infections came in November from the people at the institute and it later accelerated quickly. By December end, at least 181 people at the institute were infected with brucellosis. The other infected include students and faculty members at Lanzhou University.
- The Brucellosis outbreak also spread to Heilongjiang province, the northeastern tip of the country, where 13 positive cases were reported in the veterinarian institute in August.
- The officials have now launched an investigation into the leak at the factory. The authorities had revoked vaccine production licenses for the plant by January 2020 and withdrew product approval numbers for its two Brucellosis vaccines.
- The factory had issued a public apology in February 2020 and said it had "severely punished" eight people who were deemed responsible for the incident. The factory also stated that it would cooperate with local authorities in the response and cleanup efforts and contribute to a compensation program for those affected.

Background

- Brucellosis was a common disease in China in the 1980s. However, it showed a decline later with the emergence of vaccines and better disease prevention and control. There have been few other scattered instances of Brucellosis outbreak in the world including one in Bosnia that infected about 1,000 people in 2008, prompting the culling of sheep and other infected livestock.

2.6 India joins Djibouti Code of Conduct as Observer
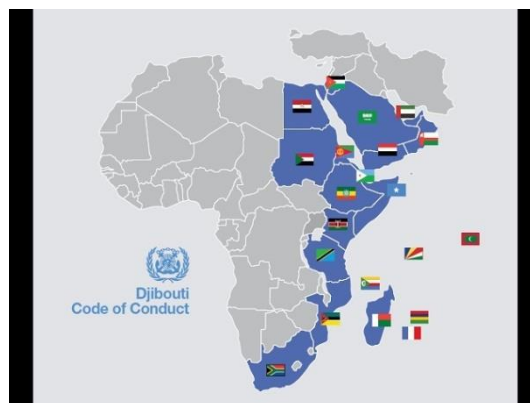
- India has joined the Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment as Observer following the high-level virtual meeting of the Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment (DCOC/JA) on August 26, 2020. This was informed by the Ministry of External Affairs.

- The External Affairs Ministry stated that India looks forward to working together with DCOC/JA member states towards coordinating and contributing to enhanced maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.

- India looks forward to working together with DCOC/JA member states towards coordinating and contributing to enhanced maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.

- The DCOC/JA is a grouping on maritime matters comprising 19 member states adjoining the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, the East Coast of Africa and Island countries in the Indian Ocean Region. India has joined Japan, Norway, the UK and the US as Observers to the DCOC/JA.

> **DCOC/JA Member Nations**
>
> The DCOC/JA Member Nations include Ethiopia, Eritrea, Egypt, Jordan, Comoros, Djibouti, Kenya, Maldives, Madagascar, Mozambique, Mauritius, Oman, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Somalia, Seychelles, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen.

What is Djibouti Code of Conduct?

- The Djibouti Code of Conduct is a regional maritime security cooperation agreement establised by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in 2008.

Objective

- The Djibouti Code of Conduct was initially focused on piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Western Indian Ocean Region, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. It was later extended to cover environmental issues as well in 2017.

- Under the code of conduct, the signatory nations agreed to co-operate to the fullest possible extent in the repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships.

In particular, the signatories to the Code agreed to co-operate in:

- The investigation, arrest and prosecution of persons reasonably suspected of having committed acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships, including those inciting or intentionally facilitating such acts.

- The interception and seizure of suspect ships and property aboard such ships.

- The rescue of persons, ships and property subjected to piracy and armed robbery. Facilitation of proper care, treatment and repatriation of the fishermen, seafarers and other personnel and passengers aboard the ship subject to such acts.

- The conduct of shared operations among signatory States as well as and with the naval forces of countries outside the region – such as nominating law enforcement or other authorized officials to embark on patrol ships/aircraft of another signatory.

What is the Jeddah Amendment?

- In a high-level meeting of the signatories countries of the Djibouti Code of Conduct in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in January 2017, all signatory nations agreed to adopt a revised code of conduct- Jeddah Amendment. The revised code of conduct is referred to as Jeddah Amendment to DCOC 2017.

- Under the revised Code of Conduct, the participant nations agreed to work together with the support of IMO and other stakeholders, to build national and regional capacity to address wider maritime security issues to enable the sustainable development of the maritime sector.

Role of Blue Economy

- The Jeddah Amendment emphasises on the important role of "blue economy" in supporting sustainable economic growth, employment, food security, prosperity and stability. Blue includes shipping, seafaring, fisheries and tourism.

- Under the revised code, the participants agreed to develop and implement a national strategy for the development of the maritime sector and a sustainable "blue economy", which enables generation of stability, employment and revenue.

- The Jeddah Amendment builds on the earlier Code adopted in 2009 and calls on the signatory States to cooperate to the fullest possible extent to repress transnational organized crime maritime domains such as illegal and unregulated fishing, maritime terrorism and other illegal activities at sea.

Under the Jeddah Amendment, the signatory states agreed to cooperate in the following aspects:

- Information sharing

- Interdicting ships or aircraft suspected of engaging in such crimes

- Ensuring persons committing or intending to commit such illicit activity are apprehended and prosecuted

- Facilitating proper care, treatment, and repatriation of maritime crime victims.

What is transnational organized crime?

- The transnational organized crime referred to in the Jeddah Amendment includes arms trafficking, trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances, human trafficking and smuggling, illegal trade in wildlife; crude oil theft and illegal dumping of toxic waste.

2.7 India storms out of SCO meeting after Pakistan projects controversial map

- India's **National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval** stormed out of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's virtual meeting of national security advisors on September 16, 2020 after Pakistan displayed its controversial map, which India calls "**fictitious**", violating the agenda of the gathering.

- The Indian delegation led by NSA AjitDoval strongly objected to Pakistan's attempt to project the illegal map showing Indian territory as its own. The chair of the meeting, Russia tried very hard to persuade Pakistan not to display the map and expressed hope this provocative act will not affect India's participation in SCO.

- Moeed Yusuf, the Pakistani representative at SCO meet, deliberately projected the **new fictitious political map of Pakistan** that the Pakistani PM Imran Khan had released on August 4, 2020. The Pakistani map **claims all of the entire erstwhile state of J&K**, which is now organised into 2 separate union territories, and **some parts of Gujarat** as a part of Pakistani territory. The map was used as the background image for the meeting by Pakistan. Moeed Yusuf is a special assistant to Pakistan PM on national security.

Is it a violation of SCO norms?

- Yes. Russia had said ahead of the SCO foreign ministers meeting last week that the SCO Charter doesn't allow any country to raise bilateral disputes even as it provides them a platform to build mutual trust.

- In an official response to the provocative move by Pakistan, MEA spokesperson AnuragSrivastava said that this was in blatant disregard to the advisory by the host against it and in violation of the norms of the meeting. Srivastava added that the Indian side left the meeting in protest after consultation with the host.

- Nikolai Patrushev, the Secretary of the National Security Council of the Russian Federation, conveyed to the Indian authorities that he was personally very grateful to NSA for attending the SCO Summit, according to sources.

- According to Indian government sources, Nikolai Patrushev stated that " Russia does not support what Pakistan did", and hoped that its "provocative act will not affect India's participation in SCO and not cast any shadow on his warm personal relationship with NSA for whom he has the highest regard."

Background

- India has continued to take part in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, an influential Eurasian group focused on security and political issues, despite the presence of Pakistan and China.

- India and Pakistan both had become full-time members of the SCO in 2017. India is also the host of this year's SCO heads of government meeting. It has already said it will invite the Pakistan PM "as per established practice and procedure" of SCO.

- While Russia wants the two countries to use SCO to find some "common ground", it's unlikely that will happen anytime soon with India unwilling to settle for anything less than zero tolerance to terrorism and Pakistan focused on acquiring Kashmir.

2.8 Israel, UAE, Bahrain sign historic US-brokered peace deals

Source: Ivanka Trump/ Twitter

- In a landmark moment, **Israel, UAE and Bahrain signed Abraham Accords** in a signing ceremony presided over by United States President Donald Trump at the White House on September 15, 2020. The signing of Abraham Accords aims to establish foundation of peace agreements between Israel and the two Arab nations- the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

- Following the signing, the White House tweeted announcing that "Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain will establish embassies, exchange ambassadors, and begin to work together as partners. They are friends."

- Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain will establish embassies, exchange ambassadors, and begin to work together as partners.

- US President Donald Trump tweeted stating, "after decades of division and conflict, we mark the dawn of a new Middle East. Congratulations to the people of Israel, the people of the United Arab Emirates, and the people of the Kingdom of Bahrain. God Bless You All!"

- After decades of division and conflict, we mark the dawn of a new Middle East. Congratulations to the people of Israel, the people of the United Arab Emirates, and the people of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Abraham Accord

- The historic **Abraham Accord** was signed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Bahrain's foreign minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani and Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and US President Donald Trump.

- The three copies of the Abraham Accord were signed by each representative in English, Arabic and Hebrew. Under the peace accord, the countries committed to the exchange of embassies and ambassadors, and to begin cooperation across a broad range of fields including education, healthcare, trade, and security.

- The peace accord makes **UAE and Bahrain,** the **third and fourth Arab states** respectively to take such steps **to establish full relations with Israel** after Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994. The two gulf nations have now joined Egypt and Jordan as the only Arab nations to recognise and normalise ties with Israel.

- Ivanka Trump, Advisor to US President Donald Trump, tweeted saying that the historic signing proves that the nations of the Middle East are breaking free from the failed approaches of the past.

- The Abraham Accords are signed!
  Today's historic signing proves that the nations of the Middle East are breaking free from the failed approaches of the past.
  After decades of division and conflict, we mark the dawn of a new Middle East.

- Following the signing ceremony, Bahrain's foreign minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed of the UAE and US President Trump called on other Arab and Muslim nations to follow the UAE's lead.

- According to US President Donald Trump, the deal is only the beginning of normalised relations between Israel and its neighbours, with many more likely to come. He stated that the deal will allow much greater access to Muslims from throughout the world to visit the many historical sites in Israel and to peacefully pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

- US President Trump said that the people of the Middle East will no longer allow hatred of Israel to be fomented as an excuse for radicalism or extremism. He stated that ***"Now that the ice has been broken, I expect more Arab and Muslim countries will follow the United Arab Emirates' lead."***

- Trump revealed that the US is holding discussions on the same with other Arab nations, with very powerful, very good nations and people that want to see peace in the Middle East. UAE has become the first Arab nation to normalise ties with Israel in more than 25 years.

- US President Donald Trump called the signing of the Middle East peace agreement between Israel and two Gulf nations as a foundation for a broader alignment against Iran that would fundamentally change the geopolitical dynamic in the region. The Abraham Accords aims to normalise relations between Israel and the Arab nations and further isolate Iran.

What about Palestine?

- The new peace accord between Israel and the Gulf nations also leaves out the Palestinians, who have not engaged with the Trump administration and its peace efforts since the US recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital. However, both the Arab nations claim that the deals are in no way meant to isolate Palestine but in fact to jointly achieve a just, comprehensive and enduring solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- The Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, however, denounced the peace deal, calling it a **"betrayal of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa and the Palestinian cause."**

Background

- Under the peace deal, Israel agreed to suspend declaring sovereignty over areas outlined in the US President's vision for peace and focus on expanding its ties with other Arab countries. The US, the UAE and Israel agreed to work together to achieve more of such diplomatic breakthroughs.

2.9 <u>Yoshihide Suga announced as Japan's new Prime Minister</u>

- Yoshihide Suga, who won the leadership vote of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has been elected as Japan's new Prime Minister by the powerful House of Representatives on September 16, 2020.

- The new Prime Minister of Japan has pledged to push forward with the former PM Shinzo Abe policies such as 'Abenomics', it is a mixture of measures which is aimed at spurring growth in the world's third-largest economy and at beating deflation.

- On September 14, 2020, Suga had secured 377 votes to become the new leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan. He replaced long-serving Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who resigned unexpectedly in August 2020 due to health problems.

Yoshihide Suga: New PM of Japan

- Yoshihide Suga has been serving as the Chief Cabinet Secretary in the current administration and he was widely expected to win the elections.

- The New Prime Minister's immediate focus will be on reviving the battered economy while keeping the effect of COVID-19 under control.

- Yoshihide Suga will be the oldest Prime Minister to take office since Kiichi Miyazawa in 1991.

- Suga is considered a close ally of Mr. Abe and is expected to continue his predecessor's policies.

- He had won the vote for the presidency of the Conservative-Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) by a large margin, taking 377 of a total of 534 votes from lawmakers and regional representatives.

- Taking over mid-term, Mr.Yoshihide Suga is expected to stay in post until elections due in September 2021.

- Katsunobu Kato, the Health Minister of Japan has been expected to succeed Suga as the Chief Cabinet Secretary.

Shinzo Abe resignation from the position:

- According to Shinzo Abe, he did not want his illness to get in the way of decision making and also apologized to the people for failing to complete his term in office.

- The 65- years old has suffered from Ulcerative Colitis for many years. He informed that his condition has worsened recently. In 2019, he became Japan's longest-serving Prime Minister and his current year in office began in 2012.

About Yoshihide Suga:

- Mr.YoshihideSuga is a veteran politician and is expected to provide continuity heading an interim government until the 2021 elections. One of the most prominent appearances of Mr.Suga recently was during the transition from Emperor Akihito, who abdicated, to his son Naruhito in 2019.

- It fell to Mr.YoshihideSuga to unveil the name of the new Reiwa era to the Japanese and Global public. While not considered to be a very passionate or energetic politician, he does have a reputation of being very efficient and practical.

2.10 Germany drifts away from China, adopts new India-Pacific strategy

- Germany, a major diplomatic partner of China, has decided to shift its focus to building **stronger partnerships with democratic countries** in the **Indo-Pacific region** to promote the rule of law. The move will serve a major blow to China.

- Germany's shift towards the new India-Pacific strategy comes as Europe expressed concerns over China's track record on human rights and Germany's economic dependence on the Asian country.

- German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said on September 2 that they want to help shape a global order that is based on rules and international cooperation and not on the law of the strong. To advance the same, Maas said that Germany has intensified cooperation with those countries that share its democratic and liberal values.

Germany's new India-Pacific strategy

- Germany's new guidelines pertaining to its India-Pacific strategy lay importance on promoting the rule of law and open markets in the region. The India-Pacific strategy of the nation has been endorsed by other nations including ASEAN members, India, Japan and Australia.

- Germany's new India-Pacific approach takes a tough stand on China and includes criticism of the huge debt burden of countries participating in Beijing's Belt and Road initiative (BRI).

- The nation will now work with France regarding EU-wide strategy on India-Pacific and it will look to strengthen its influence on this issue by having the EU bloc on its side.

- So far, China had been Germany's diplomatic focal point in Asia, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel visiting the nation once almost every year. China also accounts for 50 percent of Germany's trade with the India-Pacific region.

- However, economic growth failed to liberalise the Chinese market and the German companies operating in China were forced to hand over technology by the Chinese government.

- Further, the talks between the European Union and China over an investment treaty to resolve such issues were stalled.

- China has also been facing global criticism over its draconian national security law for Hong Kong and its treatment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

- These issues fueled increasing resistance to Germany's pro-China policies and its increasing economic dependence on Beijing.

- Besides this, German firms also expressed concerns about doing business and protecting their intellectual property in China, especially after Chinese appliance maker Midea Group bought German robot maker Kuka in late 2016.

Background

- In recent time, Europe has been re-evaluating its diplomatic relations with China. The European Union had termed China as a 'strategic competitor' in 2019, focusing its trade and technological rivalry with Beijing.

- The United Kingdom and France have already begun freezing Chinese telecom giant Huawei out of their 5G network partnerships. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had recently undertaken a five-nation official tour in Europe, but the visit led to a growing rift between the two sides.

2.11 India becomes member of UN's Commission on Status of Women, beats China in election of UN body

- TS Tirumurti, permanent representative of India to the United Nations announced on September 15, 2020, that India has been elected as a member of the United Nation's Commission on Status of Women, a body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

- India will remain a member of the prestigious body for four years from 2021 to 2025. As per TS Tirumurti, it is a ringing endorsement of India's commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in all the endeavors.

- Along with India, China and Afghanistan had also contested elections to the Commission on Status of Women. While India and Afghanistan had won the ballot among the 54 members, China failed to even cross the half-way mark.

- India elected Member of Commission on Status of Women. It's a ringing endorsement of our commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all our endeavours.

What is the role of the UN's Commission on Status of Women?

- United Nation's Commission on Status of Women is the principal global intergovernmental body. It is exclusively dedicated to the promotion of women empowerment and gender equality.

- The UN body promotes women's rights while highlighting the reality of women's lives throughout the world. It also helps in shaping the global standards on gender equality and women empowerment.

- CSW is the functional commission of ECOSOC. It was established by ECOSOC resolution 11 (II) of June 21, 1946.

Elections for UN CSW: Key Highlights

- The 54 member ECOSOC while holding the first plenary meeting of its 2021 session in UN General Assembly Hall, held elections for 2 seats in the Asia-Pacific States category with India, Afghanistan, and China in the fray.

- Afghanistan led by Ambassador Adela Raza at the United Nations, won 39 votes while India got 38 votes of the 54 ballots cast.

- China which is a permanent member of the UN got only 27 votes and failed to get the required majority of 28 votes.

- Afghanistan and India will be joining Austria, Argentina, Israel, Dominican Republic, Latvia, Turkey, Nigeria, and Zambia. These were elected by acclamation to CSW for the four- year term beginning from 2021-2025.

- 45 member states of the UN serve as the members of the commission at any one time.

How the winning of CSW elections is significant for India?

- India's Permanent Mission to the UN has been working tirelessly for the hard-fought elections by reaching out and sensitizing with all the member states.

- India's win at the election is highly significant as it comes on the eve of India gearing up to sit at the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member for the two-year term which is beginning on January 21, 2021.

- It is highly notable that China lost the elections to the UN's principal inter-governmental body which is exclusively dedicated to the women empowerment and the promotion of gender equality, especially in the year when the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing in 1995, is being commemorated around the world.

- China losing the election of the UN's Commission on Status of Women can be seen as a strong signal about China's own record of women's equality and empowerment.

3. INDIAN ECONOMY

3.1 India ranks 116 in World Bank's annual Human Capital Index

- In the latest edition of the World Bank's annual Human Capital Index, India has been ranked at 116th position. The index benchmarks the key components of human capital across countries.

- However, as per the released Human Capital index Report, India's score has increased to 0.49 from 0.44 in 2018. The 2020 Human Capital Index Update has included education and health data for 174 countries- up to March 2020.

What analysis does Index show for the pre-pandemic period?

- The analysis done by the World Bank has shown that pre-pandemic, most of the countries had made steady progress in building the human capital of children, with the biggest strides made in low-income countries.

- However, according to the World Bank, despite the progress and even before the effects of the pandemic, a child born in a typical country can expect to achieve just 56% of their potential human capital, relative to a benchmark of full health and complete education.

How the pandemic has impacted Human Capital?

- As per World Bank Group President, David Malpass, the pandemic has put at risk the decades progress in building Human Capital, including survival rates, improvements in health, and school enrollment.

- The economic impact of the pandemic has been particularly deep for most of the disadvantaged families and women, leaving many vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity.

- Due to the pandemic's impact, more than 1 billion children have been out of school. They could lose out half a year of schooling, adjusted for learning, translating into the monetary loss. Data has also shown significant disruptions to essential health services for children and women, where many children have been missing out on crucial vaccinations.

- The pandemic has also deepened inequality globally, in addition to increased distress and poverty. Its impact on developing countries has particularly been hard as there is a collapse of the formal and informal market. The World Bank has estimated a 12 percent drop in employment.

India's position in the Human Capital Index:

- In 2019, India had raised serious reservations over the Human Capital Index, wherein it was ranked 115 out of 157 countries. In 2020, India finds itself at 116th among 174 countries.

- World Bank's Chief Economist for Human Development, Roberta Gatti commented on the objections and mentioned that their team has worked with countries to improve the quality of data for making it a better index for everyone.

- Gatti further commented that the team has worked directly with some of the client countries to use the index as a way to improve measurement and India was exactly one of these cases.

- As per the bank, the Human Capital Index provides a basis on which the Indian Government can prioritize and a dimension to support the human capital.

- Given the progress that is been made in recent times, it seems significant for now due to COVID-19. The Bank has already been working with Indian authorities on supporting the livelihoods for the poor, which is very important.

3.2 India's economy to shrink by 9 per cent in 2020: Asian Development Bank

GDP Growth Forecast Update

Developing Asia

2.2% -0.7% 6.2% 6.8%

2020   2021

Annual GDP growth forecasts

Find out more in ADB's Asian Development Outlook 2020 Update.
www.adb.org/adou2020

ADO 2020 forecast   ADO 2020 Update forecast
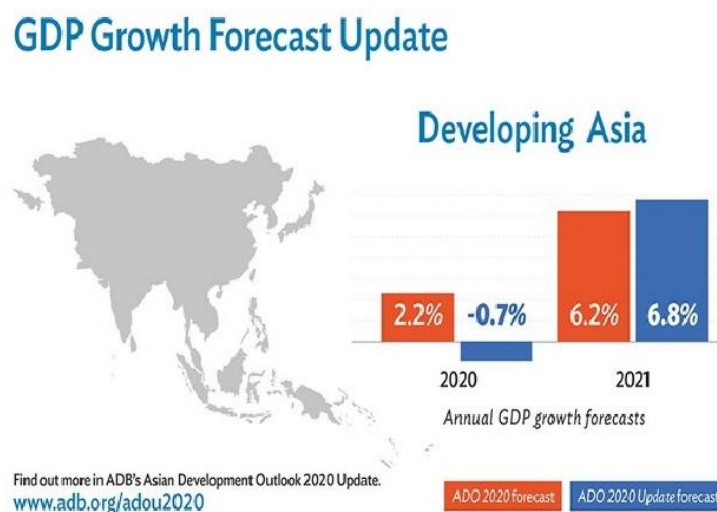
- The Asian Development Bank announced on September 15, 2020, that India's economy is expected to contract by 9% in 2020-worse than the 4% contraction which the bank had forecasted three months ago.

- In the first quarter of the Current Fiscal Year, India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had contracted by a record 23.9% as the COVID-19 lockdown stalled business and consumer spending.

- However, ADB expects India to bounce back with an 8% growth in 2021 as the country begins to emerge from the economic devastation which has been caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Highlights:

- The Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2020 Update for elsewhere forecasts minus 0.7% GDP growth for the developing Asia in 2020, which marks its first negative economic growth since the early 1960s.
- The growth will rally to 6.8% in 2021, in part because it will be measured relative to a weak 2020, leaving next year's output below pre-COVID-19 projections.
- About three-quarters of the region's economies have been expected to post negative growth in 2020.
- As per ADB Chief Economist, Yasuyuki Sawada, most of the economies in Asia and the Pacific Region can expect a difficult growth path for the rest of 2020.
- The economic threat by the pandemic remains potent as the extended first waves or the recurring outbreaks can prompt further containment measures.

ADB on COVID-19 affecting Asia's economy:

- As per ADB, a prolonged pandemic remains the biggest downside risk to the region's growth in 2020 and 2021.
- Other downside risks arising from the geopolitical tensions, which include an escalation of technology and trade conflict between China and the United States.
- China is also one of the few economies in the region that have been bucking the downturn. It is expected to grow by 1.8% in 2020 and 7.7% in 2021 along with successful public health measures providing a platform for growth.
- Sub-regions of developing Asia have been expected to post negative growth in 2020 except for East Asia, which is forecasted to expand by 1.3% and recover strongly to 7% in 2021.
- Some economies that rely heavily on trade and tourism, particularly in South Asia and the Pacific face double-digit contractions in 2020.
- As per the ADB forecasts, most of developing Asia will recover in 2021, except for some of the economies in the Pacific.
- The inflation forecast for the developing Asian region is revised towards to 2.9% in 2020 from 3.2% forecast in April due to the continued oil prices and weak demand. Inflation for 2021 has been expected to ease further to 2.3%.

Policies to mitigate the risk:

- In order to mitigate the risk caused by COVID-19, the governments in the region have been delivering wide-ranging policies responses including the policy support packages which amounts to 3.6 trillion dollars or equivalent to about 15% of the regional GDP.
- The coordinated and consistent steps to address the pandemic along with the policy priorities focusing on livelihoods of people and protecting lives who are most vulnerable as well as ensuring the safe

return to work and restart of the business activities will continue to be crucial to ensure that the region's eventual recovery is inclusive and sustainable.

3.3 Government to infuse Rs 20,000 crore in Public Sector Banks

- The Union Government on September 14, 2020 sought Parliament's approval for infusing Rs 20,000 crore in public sector banks in the current financial year to meet regulatory requirements. The proposal is a part of the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2020-21 moved by Finance Minister NirmalaSitharaman in the LokSabha earlier today.

- The document tabled by the Finance Minister read that the government has asked for the Parliament's authorisation of Rs 20,000 crore for meeting expenditure towards recapitalisation of Public Sector Banks through the issue of Government Securities.

Key Highlights

- The centre has overall sought Parliament's approval for additional spending worth Rs 2.35 lakh crore, which includes a cash outflow of Rs 1.66 lakh crore to meet expenses for combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The government has also sought subsidy worth Rs 1,232 crore for Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) on interest subvention of 2 percent on prompt repayment of Shishu Loans extended under PradhanMantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY).

- The Finance Minister also sought the Parliament's approval for Rs 4,000 crore to meet the additional expenditure towards Grants-in-Aid General to National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) for the Guarantee Emergency Credit Line (GECL) facility to eligible MSME borrowers.

- The central government had refrained from committing any capital infusion for the PSBs in its Budget 2020-21 with the hopes that the lenders would raise funds from the market depending on the requirements

Government's capital infusions in PSBs in FY 2019-20

- In the fiscal year 2019-20, the government had proposed to make Rs 70,000 crore capital infusion into the Public Sector Banks (PSBs) to boost credit for a strong impetus to the economy.

- Hence, in the last fiscal, Punjab National Bank got Rs 16,091 crore, Union Bank of India received Rs 11,768 crore, Canara Bank got Rs 6,571 crore and the Indian Bank got Rs 2,534 crore.

- Among other banks, Allahabad Bank received Rs 2,153 crore, United Bank of India got 1,666 crore and Andhra Bank received Rs 200 crore. The three lenders have now been merged with various PSBs.

- The Bank of Baroda also got a capital infusion of Rs 7,000 crore, while Indian Overseas Bank and UCO Bank received Rs 4,360 crore and Rs 2,142 crore respectively.

- Further, Punjab & Sind Bank had received a capital infusion of Rs 787 crore and the Central Bank of India received Rs 3,353 crore.

- The IDBI Bank also received additional capital of Rs 4,557 crore through the supplementary demands for grants.

Background

- In April 2020, the centre had assured the state banks that it is ready to provide capital support as the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to a surge in bad loans as economic growth slows. The government has already pumped in Rs 3.5 lakh crore in the last five years to rescue its banks.

3.4 Supreme Court directs to not declare loan to be NPA till the new order

- As per the Supreme Court's direction, loans that had not been declared non-performing assets (NPA) by August 31, 2020, must continue to remain free of this classification until further orders, extending the relief it had given on September 3.

- The Supreme Court has been hearing petitions related to the six-months loan repayment moratorium that ended on August 31. It was a measure announced by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to help the burrowers hit by the pandemic affecting the economy.

- The three-judge bench led by Ashok Bhushan has given the government time until September 28 to clarify its views on waiving the interest during the six-month period.

Court's directions to the government on waiving interest:

- The court wants the central government to address two issues- whether credit rating agencies can downgrade a business that has been hit by the pandemic during the moratorium period and whether interest can be charged on the interest.

- As per the Supreme Court, specific instructions with regard to charging of compound interest and credit rating/downgrading during the moratorium period shall be obtained, so that an appropriate order can be issued on the next date of the hearing.

- The court's order further added that all the decisions are taken by the government, RBI, or different banks must be placed before the court for the consideration.

- Petitioners had contended that the banks have started to debit the interest as well as the interest on interest for the moratorium period while others argued that the credit ratings were also being downgraded.

Bank's response on charging compound interest:

- Harish Salve, Senior advocate appearing for the Indian Bank's Association stated charging compound interest was key to the viability of the financial industry.

- The Reserve Bank of India had also made a similar representation to the court which was also backed by the government.

- On this, the court directed the finance ministry that it shouldn't go by purely commercial considerations and ignore the plight of borrowers who have been impacted by the pandemic.

- This made the government state that it was aware of the impact of the pandemic on all the sectors and had also issued a separate circular which granted relief to the distressed sectors.

- The court further hinted that if the government fails to clarify its stand by September 28, 2020, it will go ahead and will examine all the issues and grant whatever relief is required.

3.5 ADB, India sign 500 million US dollar loan for Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System Corridor

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Indian government have signed a 500 million US dollar loan for the Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System Corridor.
- The signed loan is a first tranche of the ADB approved one billion- dollar loan facility, to build a high-speed, modern, 82-km Delhi-Meerut RRTS Corridor that will improve the regional connectivity and mobility in India's National capital Region (NCR).
- The loan agreement for Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) investment project was signed between Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Sameer Khare, and Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission, Kenichi Yokoyama.

Key Highlights:

- The first tranche loan will be supporting the construction of the first of three priority rail corridors that are planned under the NCR Regional Plan 2021 to connect Delhi to other cities in the adjoining states.
- The project will aim at providing better connectivity to allow other towns in the NCR to develop as urban economic centres surrounded by the residential areas while also easing the concentration pressure on Delhi.
- The corridor development will also have a huge demonstration effect. It will pave the way for the paradigm shift in the mobility and pattern of urban development within the region.

Significance of Delhi-Meerut RRTS:

- The 82-km Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System Corridor, with a design speed of 180 km per hour and high-frequency operations of every 5 to 10 minutes, will connect Sarai Kale Khan in Delhi to Modipuram in Meerut in UP. It is expected to reduce the journey time to about 1 hour from the present 3 to 4 hours.
- The RRTS will also have multimodal hubs to ensure the smooth interchange with the other transport modes.

ADB approved $1 billion package: Background

- The officials of NCR Transport authority had confirmed on August 18, 2020, that ADB has approved a loan of $1 billion for the construction of the high speed, Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS).
- As per the rail project report, about 8 lakh passengers will be boarding the high-speed RRTS trains for the short and long-distance commuting every day.

3.6 RBI releases new loan recast plan, relief for 26 sectors

- The Reserve Bank of India on September 7, 2020 released guidelines for banks for resolution of COVID-19-related stressed assets in 26 sectors including aviation, tourism and auto components.

- The apex bank specified five financial ratios and sector-specific thresholds in a circular issued for resolution of the stressed assets. The resolution plan is based on the recommendations of the KV Kamath Committee, which submitted its report on September 4, 2020.

- RBI has identified 25 sectors that require urgent resolution of the stressed assets including automobiles, tourism, real estate, logistics, shipping, power, gems and jewellery, mining, chemicals, cement and manufacturing.

According to RBI, the five financial metrics that have to be taken into account while deciding on a recast plan include:

1. Total outstanding liabilities/ adjusted tangible net worth
2. Total debt/Ebitda
3. Current ratio
4. Debt service coverage ratio
5. Average debt service coverage ratio

Key Highlights

- The Reserve Bank stated that each of these specified financial ratios are intended to be floors or ceilings, as the case may be.

- RBI has said the current ratio and debt service coverage ratio in all cases shall be 1.0 and above and adjusted SCR shall be 1.2 and above.

- The lenders are expected to ensure that the ratio of the total outside liabilities to the adjusted tangible net worth (TOL/ATNW) is complied with when the recast is implemented.

- The RBI also stressed that the ratio will need to be maintained, in all cases, as per the plan by March 31, 2022, and on an ongoing basis thereafter.

- However, in cases where there is equity infusion, the ratio may be suitably phased-in over the period.

- All other key ratios shall have to be maintained as per the resolution plan by March 31, 2022 and on an ongoing basis thereafter.

Other Details

- The bank stated that the resolution plans must take into account the pre-COVID-19 operating and financial performance of the borrower and impact of COVID-19 on its operating and financial performance at the time of finalizing the resolution plan, to assess the cash flows in subsequent years, while stipulating appropriate ratios in each case.

- The RBI further, while recognising the differential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on various sectors/entities, said that the lending institutions may, at their discretion, adopt a graded approach depending on the severity of the impact of the outbreak and subsequent lockdown on the borrowers, while preparing or implementing the resolution plan.

Background

- The KV Kamath Committee has set 180 days to implement the loan recast plan and has made an inter-creditor agreement (ICA) mandatory. According to the panel, the tenure of a loan may be extended by a maximum of two years, with or without a moratorium.

- Overall, the loan resolution process shall be treated as invoked once lenders representing 75 percent by value and 60 percent by number agree to invoke the same.

3.7 India's GDP contracts 23.9% in Q1 of 2020-21, worst GDP growth contraction in decades

- **India's GDP** collapsed by 23.9% in April-June Quarter of FY 2020-21, as per the data of the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. Indian economy posted its worst ever contraction in last four decades due to the COVID-induced slowdown that has hit majorly all the businesses and companies across the world.

- Indian economy grew at 3.1% in January-March quarter of 2019-20 due to the decline in consumer spending, investments and contraction in exports. And the strict nationwide lockdown, imposed soon after the outbreak of novel Coronavirus in India in March, had stalled economic activities across the country and led to job losses and decline in income.

What does GDP Contraction in Q1 of FY 2020-21 imply?

- The GDP Contraction of 23.9% in 2020-21 implies that the total value of goods and services generated in April-May-June Quarter of 2020-21 is 23.9% less than the total value of goods & services produced in these three months of 2019-20.

- With the worst-ever collapse in GDP in Q1 this year, it is most likely that GDP growth of this full fiscal could also contract. Going by this contraction, it could be estimated that the GDP may witness decline of 7% for this fiscal.

Contraction of Major Indicators of Growth

- Almost all the indicators of growth show deep contraction such as production of cement, consumption of steel, total telephone subscriptions, sale of commercial vehicles and others. Have a look at the percentage change in the major indicators that are used for GDP growth rate estimation:

S. No.	Indicators	Q1 2019-20	Q1 2020-21
1	Production of Coal	2.6	-15.0
2	Production of Crude Oil	-6.8	-6.5
3	Production of Cement	1.0	-38.3
4	Consumption of Steel	5.0	-56.8
5	Total Telephone Subscribers	1.5	-2.0
6	Sales of Commercial Vehicles	-9.5	-84.8
7	Cargo Handled at Major Sea Ports	1.7	-19.8
8	Cargo Handled at Airports	-6.5	-57.2
9	Passengers Handled at Airports	-0.6	-94.1

What factors lead to GDP Contraction?

- The GDP or the total demand of goods and services in an economy is generated from these four factors:
  - ➢ Consumption Demand from individuals
  - ➢ Demand generated by Private Sector
  - ➢ Demand by Government for Goods and Services
  - ➢ Net Demand on GDP after subtracting Imports from Exports

Estimates of Gross Value Added (GVA) of Q1 FY 2020-21

- The estimates of Gross Value Added (GVA) by various sectors in Q1 show that only Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing witnessed increase in income with GVA at 3.4% and rest all other sectors saw fall in income

3.8 Supreme Court grants 10 years to telecom companies to pay AGR dues

- The Supreme Court on September 1, 2020, granted the telecom companies, including Vodafone Idea and AirtelBharti, a time period of 10 years to clear their pending Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) dues to the Indian government.

- The three-judge bench which was headed by Justice Arun Mishra passed the order through the video conference. During the hearing, the telecom companies had also sought a period of 15-20 years for the repayment of AGR dues.

- The court had on July 20, 2020, reserved its order on the time period for the repayment of AGR dues by the Telecom companies, as they requested a period of 15-20 years for the repayment.

Key Highlights:

- In its judgment, the apex court has directed the telecom companies to pay up to 10% of their dues by March 31, 2021.

- The Balance of Payments will also need to be made annually thereafter by February 7 of every year, in equal installments.

- As per the bench led by Justice Arun Mishra, default on the payment installments will invite penalty, interest, and contempt of the court.

- The Solicitor general of India, Tushar Mehta, and Telecom Operators had sought more time to repay the dues because of the financial stress and its impact on the economy.

- The telecom companies had demanded the timeline for the repayment to be 15-20 years while the government had suggested the time of 20 years.

Judgement on the repayment of AGR dues:

- The three-Judge bench via video conference asked the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) to decide on the spectrum trading as part of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

- The bench was hearing the petition which was filed by the Central Government through the Telecommunication Department seeking the approval of the formula allowing the telecom service

providers to make the annual installments of unpaid or the remaining AGR dues in the next 20 years or more.

- The plea also added that if the telecom companies face proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, it will face adverse impacts on the service and competition in the telecom sector.

- However, in its final decision, the court gave a period of 10 years, as the request for 15-20 by the telecom companies for the repayment of AGR dues in a staggered manner seemed unreasonable.

Earlier payment of AGR dues:

- Earlier on February 14, the Supreme Court had directed the Telecom companies to pay their AGR related liabilities to the central government by March 17. Thereafter, as per the direction, the telecom companies had partly or fully paid their self-assessed AGR dues to the government.

3.9 Govt launches national GIS-enabled land bank system to provide the information on industrial land

- The Commerce and Industry Minister, PiyushGoyal on August 27, 2020 e-launched the national GIS-enabled land bank system. It will help investors in getting real-time information about the availability of industrial land and resources.

- The system has been developed by the Integration of Industrial Information System (IIS) with state GIS (Geographic Information System). The project has been launched for six states. During the launch, the union minister showed confidence that other states and UTs will be on board by the end of 2020.

- Mr.Goyal also informed that it is a prototype only and it will be developed further with inputs from other states, to make it a more efficient and transparent mechanism of land identification and mechanism.

GIS-enabled land bank system: Key Highlights

- The newly launched IIS portal is a GIS-enabled database of industrial clusters/areas across the states.

- On the system, more than 3,300 industrial parks across 31 states/UTs covering about 4,75,000 hectares of land have also been mapped out on the system.

- The information available on the system will include drainage, forest; raw material heat maps (horticulture, agricultural, mineral layers); multilayer of connectivity.

- IIS has adopted a committed approach towards industrial upgrading, resource optimization, and sustainability.

- The initiative has been supported by the National e-Governance Division (NeGD), National center of Geo-Informatics (NCoG), Invest India, Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geo-Informatics (BISAG), and Ministry of Electronics and Informational Technology.

PiyushGoyal's virtual meet to promote industrial manufacturing:

- The Union Minister PiyushGoyal also held a virtual meeting with the UT administrators, industry ministers of the state, senior officers of the central and state government. In the meeting, issues of pushing industrial manufacturing in India, pushing the approach of 'One District One Product', attracting investments, and promoting a National Movement Towards 'AtmaNirbhar Bharat' were discussed.

- In the meet, he mentioned that India has to achieve the target of USD 5 trillion economy in 5 years and for that, manufacturing will have to play an essential role, which can provide value addition and employment.

- He also talked about developing a single-window system, a one-stop digital platform to obtain all requisite state and central clearances and approvals, which are required to start business operations in the country.

4. ENVIRONMENT

4.1 MASER REJUVENATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- The Minister of State in PMO reviewed the Comprehensive Manser Rejuvenation and Development Plan for initiating the process for development, rejuvenation and beautification of Mansar Wetlands.

- The plan aims at increasing tourist footfall and boosting the social-economic development of Jammu region.

Background

- The Plan includes up-gradation of existing facilities and development of new projects with an aim to increase the annual tourist footfall to twenty lakhs.

- Mansar Lake has situated 62 km from Jammu.

- It is a lake fringed by forest-covered hills, over a mile in length.

About the lakes

- Mansar, as a tourist destination, had immense potential for adventure sports, Eco-tourism, sightseeing, wildlife preservation and recreational activities.

- Surinsar-Mansar Lakes were designated as Ramsar Convention in November 2005.

- Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

- It is named after the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the Caspian Sea, where the treaty was signed on 2 February 1971.

- The treaty is officially known as 'the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat' (or, more recently, just 'the Convention on Wetlands'), it came into force in 1975.

4.2 LAKSHADWEEP ADMINISTRATION IMPLEMENTS PROJECT BARN OWLS TO FIGHT RODENT MENACE

Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, aid that the Union Territory of Lakshadweep Administration successfully implemented the Project Barn Owls with the support of the Kerala Forest Department to manage the menace of the rodents effectively.

About the programme

- "To manage the menace of the rodents effectively, the Union Territory of Lakshadweep Administration successfully implemented the Project Barn Owls with the support of the Kerala Forest Department," the MoEFCC said in a tweet.

- In another tweet, the Ministry said, "The Lakshadweep Administration had embarked on the 'Pilot project on Biological Control of Rodents (Rats) by Using Barn Owls (Tyto alba) in Kavaratti Island' after studies revealed the shocking extent of damage caused by rats to the island's coconut yield and economy."

About Barn Owls

- The barn owl is the most widely distributed species of owl in the world and one of the most widespread of all species of birds.
- It is also known as the common barn Owl, to distinguish it from the other species in its family, Tytonidae, which forms one of the two main lineages of living owls, the other being the typical owls (Strigidae).
- The barn owl is found almost everywhere in the world except for the polar and desert regions, Asia north of the Himalayas, most of Indonesia, and some Pacific islands.

4.3 <u>AAREY FOREST LAND</u>

- Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced that a 600-acre land parcel in the Aarey Milk Colony near Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) would be reserved as a forest.
- The area of the reserved forest excludes the land on which the controversial car shed for the 33.5-km-long underground Colaba-Bandra-Seepz Metro Line 1 corridor is to come up.

Background

- Thackeray, who chaired a meeting on Aarey land, said that the government had decided to invoke Section 4 of the Indian Forest Act in respect of 600 acres in the over 3,000-acre Aarey Milk Colony.
- Section 4 of IFA means the government intends to declare the land as reserve forest by appointing a forest settlement officer (FSO).
- The officer will inquire into and determine the existence, nature and extent of any rights of any person on the said land after seeking suggestions and objections from residents.
- Suggestions and objections also have to be invited from people, giving 45 days' time for such responses after initiating the process.

About Aarey Milk Colony

- The proposed Aarey land to be reserved as a forest is an open land without any construction on it.
- Spread over 3,000 acres, which were once on the edge of the city, Aarey Milk Colony is now a part of the sprawling western suburb known as Goregaon.
- Established in 1949, Aarey has 27 tribal padas, or hamlets, with an adivasi population of over 10,000.
- It is also home to more than 290 wild species of flora and fauna.
- The sprawling green area has over the last 70 years been steadily eaten away at its edges.
- Aarey Milk Colony at Goregaon (East) was established in 1949 and in 1951 the dairy at Aarey was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

4.4 NEAR SURFACE OZONE

- Researchers have found that the concentration of near surface ozone in Brahmaputra River Valley (BRV) region in the North-East corner of India is low compared to the other urban locations in India.

- Tropospheric, or ground-level ozone, is created by chemical reactions between oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOC).

Background

It usually increases when pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, industrial boilers, refineries, chemical plants, and other sources chemically react in the presence of sunlight, impacting human health.

Highlights

- Scientists at the Aryabhatta Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), Nainital have evaluated the near surface ozone in the Brahmaputra River Valley (BRV) and found relatively low concentration of Ozone over Guwahati compared to the other urban locations in India.

- The examination of nitric oxide, nitrogen dioxide, and ozone concentrations in this study suggested that this site is well influenced by local sources such as adjacent major national highway.

- During the daylight hours, the site is in or nearly in a photo-stationary state, indicating a low impact of organic species on the ozone concentrations.

4.5 PROJECT DOLPHIN

- The National Ganga Council (NGC) headed by Prime Minister NarendraModi met for the first time recently with the proposal to save and enhance the population of the Gangetic Dolphin.

- The National Ganga Council, also known as the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection, and Management of River Ganga was set up in 2016.

- It replaced the National River Ganga Basin Authority (NRGBA).

About National Ganga Council

- The National Ganga Council is formed under the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986.

- The council consists of chief ministers from five states along the Ganga — Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Bihar and Jharkhand along with nine Union ministers and NITI Aayog vice-

PROJECT DOLPHIN
PRESERVING OUR UNDERWATER FRIENDS

10-YEAR PROJECT TO FOCUS ON BOTH RIVER AND SEA DOLPHINS

AIM TO STRENGTHEN BIODIVERSITY, CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND ATTRACT TOURISM

KILLING, HABITAT FRAGMENTATION BY DAMS AND BARRAGES AND INDISCRIMINATE FISHING HAS REDUCED THE GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN POPULATION FROM TENS OF THOUSANDS TO AROUND 3,700 OVER THE LAST CENTURY

GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN, A SPECIES OF FRESHWATER DOLPHINS, IS PRIMARILY FOUND IN GANGA AND BRAHMAPUTRA RIVERS, AND THEIR TRIBUTARIES IN INDIA, BANGLADESH AND NEPAL

IN INDIA, THESE DOLPHINS ARE SIGHTED IN DEEP RIVERS IN ASSAM, BIHAR, JHARKHAND, MADHYA PRADESH, RAJASTHAN, UTTAR PRADESH AND WEST BENGAL

GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN, OFFICIALLY DISCOVERED IN 1801, CAN LIVE ONLY IN FRESHWATER

chairman.

- The central objective of the council is to work on the "protection, prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in River Ganga and its rejuvenation to its natural and pristine condition and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water".

- The council is supposed to meet every year, but since its inception in 2016, no meeting has taken place.National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) acts as an implementation arm of the National Ganga Council.

- NMCG which was established in the year 2011 as a registered society has a two-tier management structure and comprises of Governing Council and Executive Committee.

 About Gangetic Dolphin

- According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF),theGangetic river dolphins were officially discovered in 1801 and are one of the oldest creatures in the world along with some species of turtles, crocodiles and sharks.

- The Ganges river dolphin is found in parts of the Ganges-Meghna-Brahmaputra and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

- The Gangetic river dolphin is India's National Aquatic Animal and is popularly known as 'Susu'.

- The Gangetic river dolphins can only live in freshwater, are blind and catch their prey in a unique manner, using ultrasonic sound waves.

- These dolphins prefer deep waters and, as per WWF, they are distributed across seven states in India: Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.Itis among the four freshwater dolphins in the world.

4.6 HIMALAYAN DAY

- Recently, a national-level webinar was organised to mark the Himalayan Day on September 9th.

- It was first observed in Uttarakhand in 2010 as an initiative of a group of noted environmentalists to provide solutions for sustainable development and ecological stability for the Himalayas.

Background

- This year's Himalaya Divas was celebrated at the national level on September 9.

- The theme for this year is "The Himalaya and Nature".

About the Himalayas

- The word Himalaya comes from two Sanskrit words: Him (snow) and Aalay (abode).

- The Himalayas are home to the world's largest mountains, including the highest peak – Mount Everest, standing at an incredible 8,848m tall.

- This incredible mountain range is a result of tectonic plate movement that collided India into Tibet and stretches for 2,400km in length between the Indus and the Brahmaputra river systems.

- The Himalayas, passing through India, Pakistan, Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal.

- There are the Outer Himalayas, the Lower Himalayas, the Tibetan Himalayas, the Trans-Himalayas and the Great Himalayas.

- The beauty of the Himalaya, which are one of the youngest chains of mountains in the world harbouring a diverse ecosystem, lies in its intriguing complexity.

- The region is among the 36 world biodiversity hotspots.

- They are home to the highest mountains, deepest gorges and the greatest biodiversity on the planet including the majestic snow leopard.

- The Himalaya is characterized by a complex geologic structure, snowcapped peaks, large valley glaciers, deep river gorges and rich vegetation.

4.7 LIVING PLANET REPORT 2020

- The WWF's Living Planet Report 2020, released, has found that there has been a reduction of 68 per cent in the global wildlife population between 1970 and 2016.

- The report also found that 75 per cent of the the Earth's ice-free land surface has already been significantly altered, most of the oceans are polluted, and more than 85% of the area of wetlands has been lost during this period.

Background

- The most important direct driver of biodiversity loss in the last several decades has been land-use change, primarily the conversion of pristine habitats into agricultural systems, while much of the oceans have been overfished.

- The highest biodiversity loss due to land use change globally has been found in Europe and Central Asia at 57.9 per cent, then in North America at 52.5 per cent, Latin America and Caribbean at 51.2 per cent, Africa at 45.9 per cent and then Asia at 43 per cent.

- Other factors leading to biodiversity loss include species overexploitation (like overfishing), invasive species and diseases, as well as pollution and climate change.

About the report

- The largest wildlife population loss, according to the Living Planet Index, has been in Latin America at an alarming 94 per cent.

- The report also finds that one of the most threatened biodiversity globally has been freshwater biodiversity, which has been declining faster than that in oceans or forests.

- Almost 90 per cent of global wetlands have been lost since 1700 and global mapping has recently revealed the extent to which humans have altered millions of kilometres of rivers.

- India, a "megadiverse country" with over 45,000 species of plants in only 2.4 per cent of the world's land area, has already lost six plant species to extinction, according to the IUCN Red List.

- The report further finds that India has lost nearly one-third of its natural wetlands to urbanisation, agricultural expansion and pollution over the last four decades and WWF India's report on Water Stewardship for Industries revealed that 14 out of 20 river basins in India are already water stressed and will be moving to extreme water scarcity by 2050.

4.8 CLIMATE SMART CITIES ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (CSCAF) 2.0; STREETS FOR PEOPLE CHALLENGE

- Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched the Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework, CSCAF 2.0, along with the 'Streets for People Challenge' in a virtual event.

- The objective of CSCAF is to provide a clear roadmap for cities towards combating Climate Change while planning and implementing their actions, including investments.

- CSCAF initiative intends to inculcate a climate-sensitive approach to urban planning and development in India.

Highlights

- The Streets for People Challenge is the response to the need for making the cities more walkable and pedestrian friendly.

- The Challenge builds on the advisory issued by the Ministry for the holistic planning for pedestrian-friendly market spaces, earlier this year.

- The Challenge will support cities across the country to develop a unified vision of streets for people in consultation with stakeholders and citizens.

- Secretary Housing and Urban Affairs DurgaShanker Mishra, senior officials of Ministries of Housing and Urban Affairs and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Principal Secretaries Urban Development of States and UTs, State Mission Directors of Smart Cities Mission, Municipal Commissioners and CEOs of Smart Cities, representatives of partner agencies and other key stakeholders attended the virtual event.

4.9 GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO REDUCE LAND DEGRADATION AND CORAL REEF PROGRAM LAUNCHED

The Environment Ministerial Meeting (EMM) of the G20 countries took place recently through video conferencing under the Presidency of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to launch the Global Initiative to reduce Land Degradation and Coral Reef program.

About the Highlights

- The Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation aims to strengthen the implementation of existing frameworks to prevent, halt, and reverse land degradation within G20 member states and globally, taking into account possible implications on the achievement of other SDGs and adhering to the principle of doing no harm.

- The Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform is an innovative action-oriented initiative aimed at creating a global research and development (R&D) program to advance research, innovation and capacity building in all facets of coral reef conservation, restoration, and adaptation, and strengthen ongoing efforts and commitments made to enhance coral reefs conservation and their further degradation.

4.10 "BLUE FLAG" INTERNATIONAL ECO-LABEL

- On the eve of International Coastal Clean-Up Day which is celebrated across 100 countries since 1986, Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) announced at a virtual event that for the first time eight beaches of India are recommended for the coveted International eco-label, the Blue flag certification.
- The recommendations are done by an independent National Jury composed of eminent environmentalists & scientists.

Background

- Blue Flag beaches are considered the cleanest beaches of the world.
- The eight beaches are Shivrajpur in Gujarat, Ghoghla in Daman&Diu, Kasarkod and Padubidri beach in Karnataka, Kappad in Kerala, Rushikondain Andhra Pradesh, Golden beach of Odisha and Radhanagar beach in Andaman and Nicobar.

Highlights

- The concept of ICZM was introduced in 1992 during the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro and most of the coastal countries in the World have been adopting ICZM principles for managing their coastal zones.
- Thus, adoption of ICZM principles for managing and sustainably developing our coastal regions is helping India in keeping with its commitments to international agreements on ICZM.
- The objective of BEAMS program is to abate pollution in coastal waters, promote sustainable development of beach facilities, protect & conserve coastal ecosystems & natural resources, and seriously challenge local authorities & stakeholders to strive and maintain high standards of cleanliness, hygiene & safety for beachgoers in accordance with coastal environment & regulations.
- This program promotes beach recreation in absolute harmony with nature.
- International Coastal Cleanup Day got its start in 1986 when Linda Maraniss met Kathy O'Hara while working for Ocean Conservancy. O'Hara had just completed a report called Plastics in the Ocean: More Than a Litter Problem.
- The two of them reached out to other ocean-lovers and organized a Cleanup for Ocean Conservancy.

- The first Cleanup consisted of 2,800 volunteers. Since that time, the Cleanup has grown into an international event in more than 100 countries.

4.11 PMO LED PANEL INITIATIVES ACTION IN ADVANCE FOR MANAGEMENT OF AIR POLLUTION IN NCR REGION

- Principal Secretary to Prime Minister chaired the meeting of the High Level Taskforce constituted to improve the air quality in National Capital Region of Delhi.
- Chief Secretaries of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, Secretaries of different departments/ministries of the central government including M/o of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Agriculture, Road, Petroleum and Central Pollution Control Board were present in the meeting.

Background

- A review of the main sources of air pollution, measures taken and the progress made by the State Governments and various Ministries was carried out.
- It was noted that the incidence of stubble burning has reduced by more than 50% in last two years and the number of Good AQI days have gone up.

About the Highlights

- The efforts and plan made by the State of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh for control of crop residue burning were examined in detail, including ground level deployment and availability of machinery for in-situ management of crop residue.
- It was observed that after recent inclusion of residue based power /fuel plants under priority sector lending by Reserve Bank of India, both State and Central Governments should jointly work out action plans for rapid deployment of such units.
- Measures related to diversification of crop and strengthening of supply chains were also discussed.
- Principal Secretary highlighted the importance of effective implementation of the existing in-situ management of crop residue scheme of Ministry of Agriculture by the States, and emphasized that State Governments should ensure that the new machinery to be deployed in the current year should reach the farmers before the start of the harvesting season.
- Ministry of Agriculture was directed to provide all necessary support in this regard.
- To control stubble burning, it was stressed that adequate number of teams should be deployed at ground level and they should ensure that no stubble burning takes place especially in the State of Punjab, Haryana and UP.
- These States need to put extra efforts and appropriate incentives especially in the relevant districts.

4.12 SPECIAL REPORT ON SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY

- Against the backdrop of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the International Energy Agency (IEA), in collaboration with NITI Aayog, presented a 'Special Report on Sustainable Recovery' on 18 September 2020.
- Part of IEA's flagship World Energy Outlook series, the report proposes a number of actions that could be taken over the next three years to revitalize economies and boost employment while making energy systems cleaner and more resilient.

Background

- The report was virtually launched by IEA Executive Director Dr FatihBirol and NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, in the presence of Minister of Railways and Minister of Commerce and Industry PiyushGoyal.
- IEA Chief Energy Modeller Laura Cozzi presented the key findings, and Chief Economic Adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian was also present during the launch.

Highlights

- The current crisis should be used as an opportunity to make energy transitions smoother, faster, more resilient and affordable.
- As governments around the world respond to Covid-19, the IEA's report, prepared in cooperation with IMF, details energy-focused policies and investments that could help boost economic growth, create jobs and put emissions into structural decline while making energy systems lower-cost, secure and resilient.
- Given that need, IEA's Sustainable Recovery Plan has a very useful role in guiding governments, businesses, technologists and other key decision-makers. NITI Aayog has been championing sustainable initiatives since its inception.
- The SDG indices, Electric Mobility Mission, ACC battery scheme and our leadership in methanol economy initiatives, stand testament to NITI Aayog's commitment to the sustainable causes.
- The report mentions key sectors for creating jobs: electricity, transportation, buildings, industry and sustainable biofuels and innovations.
- A combination of policy actions and targeted investments will offer huge benefits to the economy and generate jobs.
- However, the measures highlighted in the report remains the sovereign choice of the country.

4.13 ONE HORNED RHINO

Union Minister PrakashJavadekar said India is home to the largest number of Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros in the world with a population in the range of 3000 animals in Assam, West Bengal and UP.

Background

- In his message on the occasion of World Rhino Day, Mr Javadekar said Environment Ministry has launched a National Conservation Strategy for Indian One-Horned Rhino.
- He added that the conservation initiatives for rhino has also enriched the grassland management which help in reducing the negative impacts of climate change through carbon sequestration.

Highlights

- The National Rhino Conservation Strategy for India was launched last year to conserve the greater one-horned rhinoceros.
- This is a first of its kind for the species in India which aims to work for the conservation of the species under five objectives.
- The objectives include strengthening protection, expanding the distribution range, research and monitoring, and adequate and sustained funding.
- One horned rhino was close to extinction with a population of less than 200 in the beginning of the 20th century.
- It is the only large mammal species in Asia to be down-listed from endangered too vulnerable in the International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN Red list in 2008.

4.14 MAGAWA RAT

- A rat called Magawa was awarded the PDSA Gold Medal for his "life-saving" work in Cambodia.
- Magawa who is an African Giant Pouched Rat and is just under eight years old, is the first rat to win this medal and was given the award by PDSA's Director-General in a virtual presentation.

Background

- PDSA was founded in 1917 by animal welfare pioneer Maria Dickin and is one of the UK's leading veterinary charities.
- It operates through 48 pet hospitals across the UK and provides low cost and free veterinary care to sick and injured pets.

Highlights

- The PDSA Gold Medal was initiated in 2002 and rewards civilian acts of animal bravery and "devotion to duty".
- It is the highest honour recognising extraordinary bravery of animals.
- According to PDSA, Magawa has been at work in Cambodia – which has the highest number of mine amputees per capita in the world at over 40,000 people– since over seven years and can search an area the size of a tennis court in about 30 minutes, something that would take a human with a metal detector over four days.
- If the rats detect a landmine underneath because of the chemicals used, it signals to their handler, after which it is safely disposed of.

- Till now, Magawa has discovered over 39 landmines and 28 items of unexploded ordnance to date and has cleared over 141,000 sq. meters of land (equivalent to the size of two football pitches), which makes him the charity's most successful HeroRAT.

4.15 FAME SCHEME

In a big push towards electric mobility the Government has sanctioned 670 Electric buses in the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat and Chandigarh and 241 Charging Stations in Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujarat and Port Blair under Phase-II of FAME India Scheme.

Background

- Announcing this in a series of tweet messages,Union Heavy Industries minister,Shri PrakashJavadekar said that the decision reflects government's commitment to reduce dependence on fossil fuel and to address issues of vehicular emissions.
- Shri Javadekar said that the decision is in line with Prime Minister Shri NarendraModi's vision for eco-friendly public transportation.

Highlights

- The Department of Heavy Industries (DHI) under the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, is administering the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) Scheme since April 2015 to promote the adoption of electric/ hybrid vehicles (xEVs) in India.
- In the First Phase of the Scheme upto 31st March 2019, about 2,80,987 hybrid and electric vehicles were supported by way of demand incentive, amounting to about Rs 359 crore. Further, DHI sanctioned 425 electric and hybrid buses to various cities in the country with total cost of about Rs. 280 Crores.
- The Department of Heavy Industry had also sanctioned 520 Charging Stations for Rs. 43 Crore (approx.) in cities like Bangalore, Chandigarh, Jaipur and NCR of Delhi under Phase-I of FAME-India Scheme.
- At present, Phase-II of FAME India Scheme is being implemented for a period of 3 years w.e.f. 01st April, 2019 with a total budgetary support of Rs. 10,000 crore.
- This phase focuses on supporting electrification of public & shared transportation and aims to support, through subsidies, approximately 7000 e-Buses, 5 lakh e-3 Wheelers, 55000 e-4 Wheeler Passenger Cars and 10 lakh e-2 Wheelers.
- In addition, creation of charging infrastructure is also supported to address the anxiety among users of electric vehicles.

4.16 CYANOBACTERIA

Toxins in water produced by cyanobacteria killed more than 300 elephants in Botswana this year, officials said while announcing the result of an investigation into the deaths which had baffled conservationists.

Highlights

- Cyanobacteria are microscopic organisms common in water and sometimes found in soil.
- Cyanobacteria are a group of photosynthetic bacteria, some of which are nitrogen-fixing, that live either freely or in a symbiotic relationship with plants or lichen-forming fungi.
- Not all produce toxins but scientists say toxic ones are occurring more frequently as climate change drives up global temperatures.
- Some cyanobacterial blooms can harm people and animals and scientists are concerned about their potential impact as climate change leads to warmer water temperatures, which many cyanobacteria prefer.
- The number of dead elephants had risen to 330, from 281 reported in July.

4.17 SANDALWOOD SPIKE DISEASE

- India's sandalwood trees, the country's pride — particularly of Karnataka — are facing a serious threat with the return of the destructive Sandalwood Spike Disease (SSD).
- The infection has resurfaced in the aromatic tree's natural habitats in Karnataka and Kerala.

Background

- The natural population of sandalwood in Marayoor of Kerala and various reserve forests in Karnataka, including MM Hills, are heavily infected with SSD for which there is no cure as of now.
- Presently, there is no option but to cut down and remove the infected tree to prevent the spread of the disease, caused by phytoplasma — bacterial parasites of plant tissues — which are transmitted by insect vectors.

Highlights

- With between 1 and 5% of sandalwood trees lost every year due to the disease, scientists warn that it could wipe out the entire natural population if measures are not taken to prevent its spread.
- SSD has been one of the major causes for the decline in sandalwood production in the country for over a century. The disease was first reported in Kodagu in 1899.
- The devastating impact in natural habitats resulted in sandalwood being classified as "vulnerable" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 1998.

5. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

5.1 CENTRE LAUNCHES CHUNAUTI – NEXT GENERATION STARTUP CHALLENGE FOCUSSING ON TIER-II TOWNS

- In order to further boost startups and software products with special focus on Tier-II towns of the country, the Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ravi Shankar Prasad launched "Chunauti"- Next Generation Startup Challenge Contest.

- While launching the ambitious programme of the government, Prasad elaborated that a budget of Rs. 95.03 Crore have been earmarked over a period of three years for this programme aimed at identifying around 300 startups working in selected areas and provide them seed fund of uptoRs. 25 Lakh and other facilities.

About the Highlights

Under this challenge he said that the Ministry of Electronics and IT will invite startups in Edu-Tech, Agri-Tech and Fin-Tech Solutions for masses, Supply Chain, Logistics and Transportation Management, Infrastructure and Remote monitoring, Medical Healthcare, Diagnostic, Preventive and Psychological Care and Jobs and Skilling, Linguistic tools and technologies.

5.2 ULCERATIVE COLITIS

Ulcerative colitis, the gastrointestinal affliction that has debilitated Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan so badly that he is resigning, is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease, which is suffered by millions and can flare up unpredictably.

Background

- It irritates and inflames the innermost lining of the large intestine and rectum, causing ulcers or sores.

- Symptoms can include uncontrolled diarrhea, rectal bleeding, weight loss, diminished appetite, abdominal pain and frequent need to use the bathroom.

About the disease

- The disease can strike at a young age and worsen over time, as appeared to happen to Mr. Abe, 65.

- Doctors say they have also seen it develop in people in their 50s and older who had not suffered symptoms at a young age.
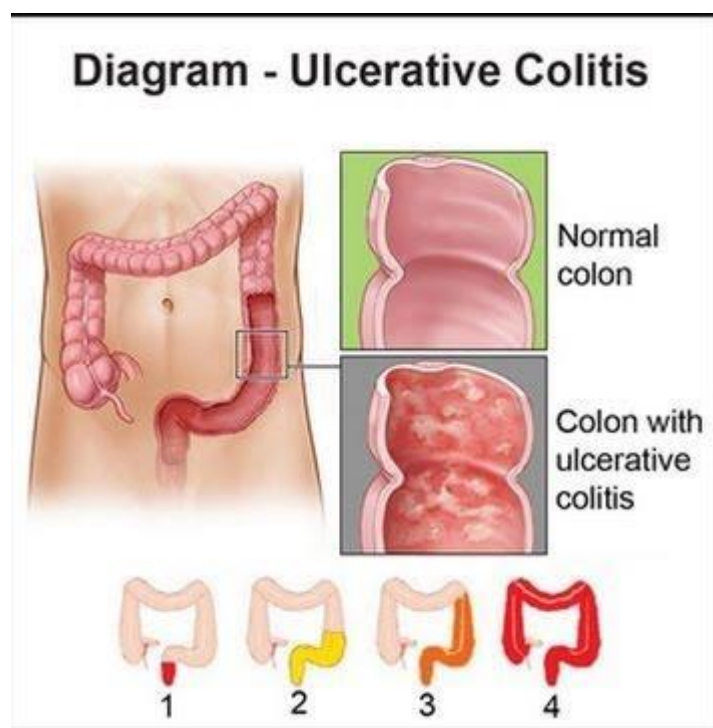
- Inflammatory bowel disease also includes Crohn's disease, which can disrupt the entire gastrointestinal tract.
- Removal of the large intestine can be considered a cure for ulcerative colitis, but not without complications.
- In some cases, surgeons create an artificial opening in the abdominal wall for the discharge of bodily waste from the small intestine, an operation known as an ileostomy.

5.3 COAL GASIFICATION AND LIQUEFACTION

- India aims for 100 million tonnes (MT) coal gasification by 2030 with investments worth over Rs. 4 lakh crores, said Shri Pralhad Joshi, Union Minister of Coal and Mines.
- Addressing a webinar on Coal Gasification and Liquefaction, Shri Joshi said that Coal Gasification and Liquefaction is no more an aspiration, but a requirement.

Background

- He added that for encouraging use of clean sources of fuel, the government has provided for a concession of 20% on revenue share of coal used for gasification.
- He emphasized that this will boost production of synthetic natural gas, energy fuel, urea for fertilisers and production of other chemicals.
- The webinar was organised by the Ministry of Coal (MoC) in New Delhi for discussing the road map for achieving the target.
- The webinar was attended by around 700 delegates from the Government of India, CIL and the coal sector.

About the Highlights

- India aims for 100 million tonnes (MT) coal gasification by 2030 with investments worth over Rs. 4 lakh crores, said Pralhad Joshi, Union Minister of Coal and Mines.
- For encouraging use of clean sources of fuel, government has provided for a concession of 20% on revenue share of coal used for gasification. This will boost production of synthetic natural gas, energy fuel, urea for fertilisers and production of other chemicals.
- For development of Surface Coal Gasification in India, a Steering Committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of Dr. V.K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog comprising of members from the Ministry of Coal.
- CIL has also planned to set up at least 3 gasification plants (besides Dankuni) on BOO basis through global tendering and has signed an MOU with GAIL for marketing synthetic natural gas.

5.4 WORLD'S LARGEST SOLAR TREE

- CSIR-CMERI has developed the World's Largest Solar Tree, which is installed at CSIR-CMERI Residential Colony, Durgapur.

- Prof.(Dr.) Harish Hirani, Director, CSIR-CMERI, while elaborating about the technology stated that, "The installed capacity of the Solar Tree is above 11.5 kWp. It has the annual capacity to generate 12,000-14,000 units of Clean and Green Power".

Background

- The Solar Tree has been designed in a manner to ensure maximum exposure of each Solar PV Panel to Sunlight and also creation of the least amount of shadow area beneath.
- There are a total of 35 Solar PV Panels in each tree with a capacity of 330 wp each.
- The inclination of the arms holding the Solar PV Panels are flexible and can be adjusted as per requirement, this feature is not available in Roof-Mounted Solar facilities.
- The energy generation data can be monitored either real-time or on daily basis.

About the tree

- The CSIR-CMERI developed Solar Tree besides being the World's Largest Solar Tree also has certain customizable features for application at diverse sites.
- The Solar Trees were designed in a manner to ensure minimum Shadow Area, thus potentially making these Solar Trees available for widespread usage in Agricultural activities such as High Capacity Pumps, e-Tractors and e-Power Tillers.
- These Solar Trees can be aligned with Agriculture for substituting price-volatile fossil fuels.
- Each Solar Tree has the potential to save 10-12 tons of CO_2 emissions being released into the atmosphere as Greenhouse Gases when compared with fossil fuel fired energy generation.
- Besides, the surplus generated power can be fed into an Energy Grid.
- This Agricultural Model can provide a consistent economic return and help the farmers counter the effects of the uncertain variations in Agriculture related activities, thus, making farming an Economic and Energy Sustainable practice.
- Each Solar Tree will cost Rs 7.5 lakhs and the interested MSMEs can align their Business Model with the PradhanMantri Kisan UrjaSuraksha evem Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM KUSUM) Scheme for farmers, for developing a Renewable Energy based Energy Grid.
- The solar tree has the capability to incorporate IOT based features, i.e. round-the-clock CCTV surveillance in agricultural fields, real-time humidity, wind speed, rainfall prediction and soil analytics sensors.
- The CSIR-CMERI developed solar powered e-Suvidha Kiosks may also be connected to the Solar Trees for real-time access to the vast majority of agricultural database as well as to the eNAM i.e. National Agricultural Market Place for instant and real-time access to an unified online market.
- This Solar Tree is a Quantum Leap towards making an Energy Reliant and Carbon Negative India.

5.5 **QUANTUM STATE INTERFEROGRAPHY**

- Scientists experimenting with new ways to manipulate quantum states so that they can be harnessed for computing, communication, and metrology, has found a novel way to characterise and estimate such states.
- This method of characterisation called Quantum State Interferography, can help make such manipulations simpler so that several crucial operations in quantum technologies become less cumbersome.

Background

- Scientists from Raman Research Institute, an autonomous institute under the Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India, have found a new way of inferring the state of a system (both two-dimensional qubits, the simplest quantum system as well as higher-dimensional "qubits") from an interference pattern, which they term 'Quantum State Interferography'.
- This work, partially supported by the QuEST network programme of the DST, has been accepted for publication in the journal Physical Review Letters.

About the Highlights

- The determination of an unknown quantum state is usually done by a method known as Quantum State Tomography (QST).
- This involves measuring projection of the quantum state on various directions in state space and reconstructing the quantum state from the information obtained.
- However, in particular, scenarios where the dimensions are large, the operations needed to perform tomography increase quadratically.
- The experimental settings often need to be changed many times, thus making the process very cumbersome.
- The RRI team showed that without changing any settings in the experimental setup, it is possible to infer the unknown quantum state of a higher dimensional system.
- The setup requires only two interferometers from which many interferograms can be obtained to reconstruct the state.
- This provides a 'black box' approach to quantum state estimation -- between the incidence of the photon and extraction of state information, conditions within the set-up are not changed, thus providing a true single-shot estimation of the quantum state.

About Qubit

- A qubit is a 2-dimensional quantum system and requires usually 2 complex numbers to be determined towards state estimation.

- However, various constraints and physical assumptions leave only two real numbers, finally to be determined.
- Instead of finding these two real numbers from various projections, in this work, they were determined from the intensity and phase shift of the interference pattern.
- Also, when many such quantum states are incoherently mixed, the amount of mixedness can be determined from the visibility of the interference pattern.
- This can be used to characterize the state of a two-particle system, which in turn can be used to quantify entanglement, also in a single-shot method.
- This idea can be further extended to find parameters describing higher-dimensional quantum states from a set of interference patterns.

5.6 CHANDRAYAAN-3

- Chandrayaan-3 is likely to be launched in early 2021 instead of the second half of 2020 as suggested by the government.
- Union Minister Jitendra Singh made the announcement while adding that India's mission to Moon will include a rover and a lander but not an orbiter like its predecessor.

Background

- Following the hard landing of Chandrayaan-2 in September of last year, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) had mentioned its plans of launching another mission to the moon by the end of 2020.
- However, the novel coronavirus pandemic has led to a delay in the launch of Chandrayaan-3.

About the mission

- Aimed at the Moon's South Pole, Chandrayaan-2 was launched on July 22, 2019.
- The Vikram hard-landed on the lunar surface on September 7.
- Officials have confirmed that despite the setback, the orbiter is in working condition and is able to transmit data back to earth.
- Chandrayaan-1 which was ISRO's maiden mission to the Moon has transmitted images suggesting Moon may be rusting along the poles.
- The sign of this finding is that even though the surface of the Moon is known to have iron-rich rocks, it is not known for the presence of water and oxygen, which are the two elements needed to interact with iron to create rust.
- This could also be a sign that the Earth's atmosphere is sheltering the moon as well, scientists at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) said.
- At the same time, India is also gearing up for its first-ever Human Space mission Gaganyaan for which training processes and other procedures are currently underway.

5.7 MT NEW DIAMOND

- Indian Navy said that a re-ignition of the fire was observed on the starboard side of the oil tanker MT New Diamond.

- Taking to micro-blogging site Twitter, the Indian Navy said that fire-fighting and boundary cooling efforts were intensified to bring the fire under control.

Background

"Re-ignition of fire observed on Starboard (Right) side of MT New Diamond. Fire-fighting & boundary cooling efforts intensified to bring fire under control. Salvage Team has arrived at the scene. Additional assets, salvage personnel & FF equipment also enroute," the Indian Navy said in a tweet.

About the Highlights

- The fire onboard oil tanker MT New Diamond off Sri Lanka coast has been doused, the Indian Coast Guard had said on September 6, adding that cooling of the ship was in progress.

- The ICG had been engaged in fire fighting and pollution response operation for MT New Diamond since September 3.

- Motor Tanker (MT) New Diamond caught fire after a major explosion in its engine room on September 3 when it was transiting in Sri Lankan exclusive economic zone.

- The large 333-metre long crude carrier is carrying over three lakh metric tons of crude oil for the Indian Oil Corporation from Kuwait to Paradip.

- No oil spill has been so far reported and the fire is localised.

- Response ship Samudra Paheredar was also at the scene of the incident and joined the fire fighting operation.

- The ship is equipped with Ocean Boom, 4 Oil Skimmers and Oil Spill Dispersant to handle pollution response in event of an oil slick.

5.8 UNICEF TO LEAD GLOBAL PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY OF CORONAVIRUS VACCINES

In what could possibly be the world's largest and fastest ever operation of its kind, UNICEF has announced that it will be leading the procurement and supply of coronavirus vaccines to ensure that all countries have safe, fast and equitable access to initial doses when they are available.

Background

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the world's largest single vaccine buyer, procuring more than 2 billion doses of various vaccines annually for routine immunisation and outbreak response on behalf of nearly 100 countries.

About the Highlights

- With several vaccine candidates showing promise, the UN agency, in collaboration with the Revolving Fund of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), will lead efforts to procure and supply doses of COVID-19 vaccines on behalf of the COVAX Global Vaccines Facility for 92 low and lower middle-income countries, whose vaccine purchases will be supported by the mechanism.

- UNICEF is the world's largest single buyer of vaccines for diseases like measles and polio, procuring over 2 billion doses on behalf of nearly 100 countries each year.

- UNICEF will undertake these efforts in close collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), PAHO, the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and other partners.

- The COVAX Facility is open to all countries to ensure that no Country is left without access to a future COVID-19 vaccine.

5.9 CENSORSHIP BEFORE A SHOW: THE LAW, RULINGS

- Different courts recently gave conflicting rulings involving the broadcast of two shows — a programme on Sudarshan TV and the Netflix documentary Bad Boy Billionaires.

- In each case, one court restricted the broadcast and another refused to interfere.

- These raise questions on the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression, and whether these can be restrained prior to broadcast or publishing.

About the cases

- Sudarshan TV's BindasBol was scheduled for telecast on August 28. A 49-second trailer posted on Twitter claimed the show would contain a "big expose on conspiracy to infiltrate Muslims in government service", referring to JamiaMiliaIslamia University alumni who cleared the civil services exam this year.

- On August 28, the Supreme Court refused to stay the broadcast, while the Delhi High Court Bench of Justice NavinChawla granted an interim injunction restraining the telecast.

- A day later, the same High Court Bench refused to vacate its stay order.

- In the Netflix case, following a plea by Sahara chief Subrata Roy, a court in Bihar's Araria passed an interim order on August 30 staying the release of Bad Boy Billionaires scheduled on September 2.

- Two days before the stay, the Delhi High Court bench of Justice NavinChawla had refused to grant a stay against the release in a plea by Gitanjali Gems promoter MehulChoksi.

- Two rulings by the Supreme Court in 1950, which held that legislation imposing prior restraint on the press were unconstitutional citing that the restricts were too broad, led to the First Amendment of the Constitution that tinkered with the scope of restrictions on free speech under Article 19(2), adding the word "reasonable" before the restrictions.

5.10 VENUS IN FOCUS

- An announcement by an international team of astronomers about the discovery of phosphine gas in the atmosphere of Venus triggered global excitement about the possibility of the presence of lifeforms on the neighboring planet.
- Apart from being produced in industrial processes, phosphine, a colorless but smelly gas, is known to be made only by some species of bacteria that survive in the absence of oxygen.

Background

- In a paper published in Nature Astronomy, a team of scientists has reported traces of phosphine in a concentration of approximately 20 parts per billion, thousands to millions of times more than what could otherwise be expected.
- No one is saying that as of now. What scientists have discovered is the presence of a chemical which is known to be produced only through the biological process, and not through any naturally occurring chemical process.
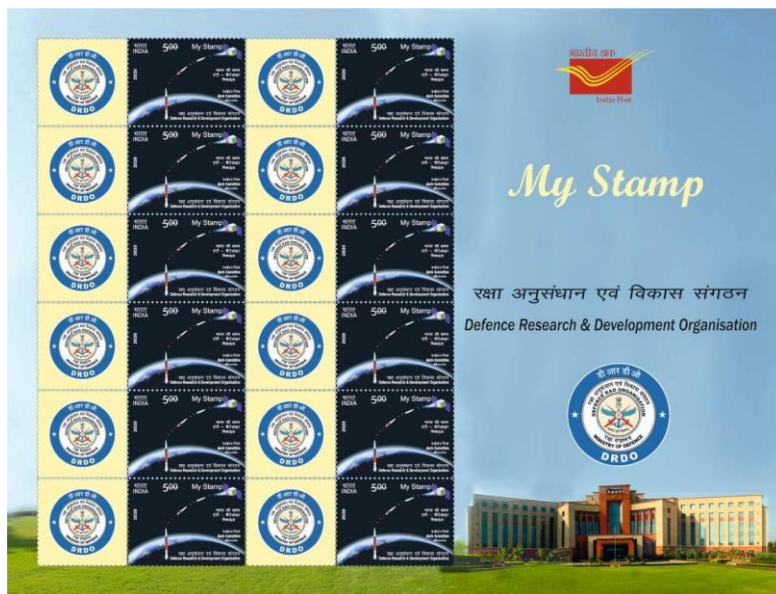
Highlights

- There are some other ways in which this chemical might be produced, for example, in the underbelly of volcanoes or meteorite activity, but that would have shown in much lower concentrations.
- In any case, scientists have ruled out all those kinds of known possibilities which could be attributed for the presence of that gas.
- In fact, this discovery was made in 2017, and the scientists checked and re-checked their data over the last three years before deciding to make it public.
- The abstract to their paper in Nature Astronomy says this presence of phosphine is "unexplained" after an exhaustive study of all the possible other sources and "production routes in Venus's atmosphere, clouds, surface and subsurface, or from lightning, volcanic or meteorite delivery".
- So, the only possible explanation for the origin of this phosphine, based on our current knowledge, could be in the biological processes, the way it is produced on Earth, by some microbes.
- During an announcement, scientists were very careful to emphasise, repeatedly, that this was not a confirmation of the presence of life on Venus.

5.11 POSTAGE STAMP RELEASED ON A-SAT

- A Customized My Stamp on India's First Anti Satellite Missile (A-SAT) launch was released by the Department of Posts on the occasion of Engineers Day in the august presence of Shri AjitDoval, National Security Advisor (NSA).
- On the direction of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri NarendraModi, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted an Anti-Satellite (A-SAT) missile test 'Mission Shakti' from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha on 27th March 2019.

Background

- A DRDO developed A-SAT Missile successfully engaged an Indian orbiting target satellite in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) in a 'Hit to Kill' mode.

- The interceptor missile was a three-stage missile with two solid rocket boosters.

- Tracking data from range sensors had confirmed that the mission met all its objectives.

- The entire effort was indigenous which demonstrated the Nation's capability to develop such complex and critical missions.

- A number of industries also participated in the mission.

- With this success, India became the fourth nation in the world to possess such capability.

About the Highlights

- DRDO has plenty of achievements to be proud of; however, the future is in space-based technologies.

- Satellites are critical and with this capability, India can defend its assets in space.

- The mission was kept secret and complimented the whole DRDO fraternity for doing well in all other fields.

- A-SAT mission enabled the development of many technologies and capabilities for the precision kill at higher altitudes.

5.12 AICTE VISVESVARAYA BEST TEACHER AWARDS

- The AICTE Visvesvaraya Best Teachers Award 2020 was conferred upon 12 faculty members of AICTE approved institutes today in a virtual ceremony.

- The awards, introduced this year, were presented as part of the Engineers Day celebrations by the Minister of Education Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'.

Background

- Mr.Pokhriyal also launched SPICES (Scheme for Promoting Interests, Creativity, and Ethics among Students) to promote healthy co-curricular activity amongst the students for their all-round development during the virtual event.

- Apart from the education minister, several others were also present at the virtual AICTE Visvesvaraya Best Teachers Award 2020. Chairman of AICTE, Professor Anil D Sahasrabudhe; Vice-Chairman of AICTE, Professore MP Poonia; and Member Secretary of AICTE Professor Rajiv Kumar also

complimented the awardees during the event and highlighted the importance of teachers in nation-building.

Highlights

- The Awards has been introduced for the first time to identify extraordinary teachers and recognize their excellence, best practice and innovativeness in field of higher technical education at national level for Degree and Diploma institutions.
- This scheme is aimed to recognize the meritorious faculties on the Engineer's Day every year at National level and, encourage them to update themselves to the ever changing needs of higher education at global level and thereby becoming an effective contributor towards the society.
- The evaluation parameters were predefined with focus on research, 360-degree feedback, contribution to student development and resolution of societal problems.

5.13 INDIAN TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (ITEC) PROGRAMME

- The 56th ITEC day was observed online by the High Commission of India in Dhaka on September 15, 2020.
- The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme was instituted by a decision of the Indian Cabinet in 1964 as a flagship programme of the Government of India to provide development assistance to developing countries across the globe.

Background

- ITEC is administered by the Ministry of External Affairs, India and is fully funded by the Government of India.
- More than 10,000 training slots are offered every year to more than 160 partner countries for training courses in various areas like Accounts, Audit, Management, SME, Rural Development, Parliamentary Affairs etc.

Highlights

- Under ITEC and its sister programme SCAAP (Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme), 161 countries in Asia, Africa, East Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean as well as Pacific and Small Island countries are invited to share in the Indian developmental experience.
- The ITEC/SCAAP Programme has the following components:
    - Training (civilian and defence) in India of nominees from ITEC partner countries;
    - Projects and project related activities such as feasibility studies and consultancy services;
    - Deputation of Indian experts abroad;
    - Study Tours;
    - Gifts/Donations of equipment at the request of ITEC partner countries; and
    - Aid for Disaster Relief.

5.14 I-ATS (AUTOMATIC TRAIN SUPERVISION)

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) launched 'i-ATS', an indigenously-built communication-based train control signalling technology for the metro.

About i-ATS

- The i-ATS (Automatic Train Supervision) is a computer-based system that manages train operation.
- This system is indispensable for high-density operations such as the metro, where services are scheduled every few minutes.
- i-ATS is indigenously-developed technology, which will significantly reduce the dependence of Indian metros on foreign vendors dealing with such technologies.
- It can work with train control and signalling systems of various suppliers.
- Additionally, it is suitable for introduction in Indian Railways, which is now introducing centralised train control on a large scale that uses ATS functions.

5.15 TATA CRISPR

The Tata CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) test, powered by CSIR-IGIB(Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology) FELUDA, received regulatory approvals from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for commercial launch, as per ICMR guidelines, meeting high quality benchmarks with 96% sensitivity and 98% specificity for detecting the novel coronavirus.

Background

- This test uses an indigenously developed, cutting-edge CRISPR technology for the detection of the genomic sequence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- CRISPR is a genome-editing technology to diagnosing diseases.

About the test

- The Tata CRISPR test is the world's first diagnostic test to deploy a specially adapted Cas9 protein to successfully detect the virus causing Covid-19.
- This marks a significant achievement for the Indian scientific community, moving from R&D to a high-accuracy, scalable and reliable test in less than 100 days.
- The Tata CRISPR test achieves accuracy levels of traditional RT-PCR tests, with quicker turnaround time, less expensive equipment, and better ease of use.
- Moreover, CRISPR is a futuristic technology that can also be configured for detection of multiple other pathogens in the future.
- The effort is the result of a fruitful collaboration between the scientific community and industry.

- The Tata Group has worked closely with CSIR-IGIB and ICMR to create a high-quality test that will help the nation ramp up Covid-19 testing quickly and economically, with a 'Made in India' product that is safe, reliable, affordable, and accessible.

5.16 CARGO PLANE CRASH

- In Somalia, a cargo plane crashed at Aden Adde International Airport in capital Mogadishu.
- The Somalia Civil Aviation Authority confirmed the incident after witnesses claimed they saw the crash.

Background

- Markings on the plane indicate that it is operated by Silverstone Air in neighbouring Kenya.
- There was no immediate confirmation of any casualty.
- Photos posted from the scene showed the plane's cockpit crushed against a concrete barrier just step from the sea.
- The heavily fortified airport is home to diplomatic missions and serves as a hub for humanitarian flights in the Horn of Africa nation.

About Aden Adde International Airport

- Aden Adde International Airport formerly known as Mogadishu International Airport is an international airport serving Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia.
- It is named after Aden Abdullah Osman Daar, the first President of Somalia.
- Originally a modest-sized airport, the facility grew considerably in size in the post-independence period after numerous successive renovation projects.
- With the outbreak of the civil war in 1991, Aden Adde International's flight services experienced routine disruptions.
- However, with the security situation in Mogadishu greatly improved in the late 2010–2011 period, large-scale rehabilitation of the grounds' infrastructure and services once again resumed.
- By early 2013, the airport had restored most of its facilities and introduced several new features.

5.17 AI BASED MODULE

NITI Aayog, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) in collaboration with the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) launched an Artificial Intelligence (AI) based Module rolled out for students in Indian schools.

About the mission

- The AI-Base Module has been introduced with an objective for students to leverage the full potential of AIM's Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) and further empowers them to innovate and create valuable solutions benefiting societies at large.

- The module contains activities, videos and experiments that enable students to work through and learn the various concepts of AI.
- Atal Innovation Mission housed at NITI Aayog is the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- At the school level, AIM is establishing Atal Tinkering Lab (ATLs) in all districts across India.

5.18 **KRITAGYA**

- KritagyaAgTechHackathon is launched by National Agricultural Higher Education Project of ICAR.
- Kritagya Ag-Tech-Hackathon to promote innovation in farm mechanization with special emphasis on women-friendly equipment.
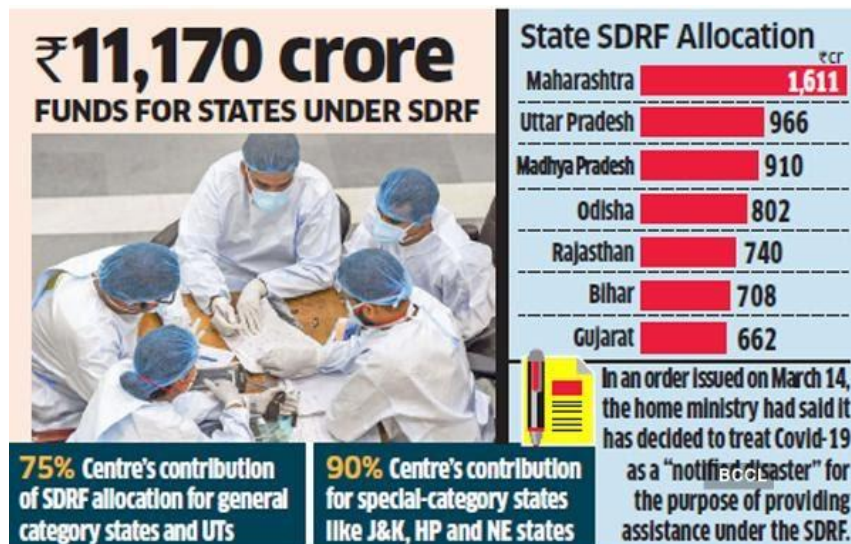
Background

In order to promote potential technology solutions for enhancing farm mechanization a hackathon named "KRITAGYA" has been planned.

About the hackathon

- KRI-TA-GYA explains, KRI for Krishi (Agriculture), TA for Taknik (Technology) and GYA for Gyan (Knowledge).
- This event will give an opportunity to the students/faculties/entrepreneurs/innovators and others.
- The event will showcase innovative approaches & technology solutions to promote farm mechanization (FM) in India.
- Such initiatives under NAHEP along with Agricultural Engineering, Division of ICAR .
- This will also help in enhancing the learning capabilities, innovations and disruptive solutions.
- Hence will also boost employability and entrepreneurial drive in FM sector.
- Students / faculties / innovators from any university / technical institution across the country.
- Participating students can collaborate with local start-ups, students from technology institutes including IITs and NITs, etc.
- The group size must not exceed of 4 members.

5.19 SDRF FUNDS

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced that the limit of using the State Disaster Response Fund for COVID specific infrastructure has been increased from 35 per cent to 50 per cent.

₹11,170 crore
FUNDS FOR STATES UNDER SDRF

75% Centre's contribution of SDRF allocation for general category states and UTs

90% Centre's contribution for special-category states like J&K, HP and NE states

State SDRF Allocation ₹cr

State	Allocation
Maharashtra	1,611
Uttar Pradesh	966
Madhya Pradesh	910
Odisha	802
Rajasthan	740
Bihar	708
Gujarat	662

In an order issued on March 14, the home ministry had said it has decided to treat Covid-19 as a "notified disaster" for the purpose of providing assistance under the SDRF.

- He said, the decision will help States have more finances at their disposal to fight the virus.

Background

- Interacting with Chief Ministers of six states and one Union Territory through video conference, Mr Modi said, there is a need to further strengthen health infrastructure to tackle COVID.

- These States and UTs are Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi.

- He reviewed the status and preparedness of COVID response and management.

- More than 63 per cent of the active cases of the country are concentrated in these six States and a Union Territory.

Highlights

- Prime Minister also stressed on the need to improve the network of tracking and tracing, and ensure better training.

- He said that the country needs to not only keep fighting the virus, but also move ahead boldly on the economic front.

- Mr Modi stressed on the need to increase focus on effective testing, tracing, treatment, surveillance and clear messaging.

- Prime Minister underlined the importance of ensuring smooth movement of goods and services between States.

- He noted the difficulties faced by some States recently in procuring oxygen supply, adding that ensuring availability of medical oxygen is of utmost importance.

- He also talked about facilitating movement to ensure availability of medicines across States.

- The Chief Ministers appreciated the leadership of the Prime Minister during this crisis period.

- They gave feedback to the Prime Minister about the situation on the ground, talked about the challenges being faced by their States in controlling the spread of the virus and the preparation done till now to meet the expanding challenges by ramping up health infrastructure.

5.20 STANDARDS FOR SAFETY EVALUATION OF HYDROGEN FUEL CELLS BASED VEHICLES NOTIFIED

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has notified the Standards for Safety Evaluation of vehicles being propelled by Hydrogen Fuel cells through an amendment to Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989 made vide GSR (E) Dated 23 September.

Notification issued on Standards for Safety Evaluation of vehicles being propelled by Hydrogen Fuel cells

This will promote Hydrogen Fuel Cell-based vehicles in the country which are energy efficient and environment friendly

Objective

- This would facilitate the promotion of Hydrogen Fuel Cell-based vehicles in the country which are energy efficient and environmentally friendly.
- The prospective manufacturer and suppliers of such vehicles have the standards available for the testing of such vehicles.
- These standards are also at par with the available international standards.

Highlights

- The Standards were notified through an amendment to Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989.
- This would facilitate the promotion of Hydrogen Fuel Cell-based vehicles in the country which are energy efficient and environmentally friendly.
- These standards are also at par with the available international standards.
- The motor vehicles of Category M and Category N, running on compressed gaseous hydrogen fuel cell, shall be in accordance with AIS 157:2020, as amended from time to time, till the corresponding Bureau of Indian Standard Act, 2016, specification is notified.
- Also, the hydrogen fuel specification for fuel cell vehicles will be in accordance with ISO 14687.

5.21 REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM (RRTS) TRAINS

- With automatic doors, onboard Wi-FI, and overhead luggage rack among many other modern amenities, the first look of the lightweight RRTS (Regional Rapid Transit System) train was unveiled amid the presence of top brass of Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) and Bombardier India.
- The state-of-the-art RRTS rolling stock will be first of its kind in India with a design speed of 180 kmph.

Background

- The prototype is scheduled to roll off the production line in 2022 and will be put to public use after extensive trials, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) officials said.
- These aerodynamic trains will have a speed of 180 kmph and will be manufactured at the Bombardier plant in Savli, Gujarat.

About the Highlights

- National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), which is a joint venture company of the Centre and states of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, has been mandated to implement the RRTS project across the National Capital Region (NCR).
- NCRTC will procure 30 train sets of six cars each for operating regional rail services on the entire corridor and 10 train sets of three cars each for operating local transit services in Meerut.

- The entire rolling stock for Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS corridor will be manufactured at Bombardier's Savli plant in Gujarat, officials said.
- The RRTS trains will also have business class (one coach per train) with spacious, comfortable and reclining seats which will be accessible through a special lounge at the platform-level.
- A food automatic vending machine will be installed in the business coach.
- One coach in every train will be reserved for women passengers as well.

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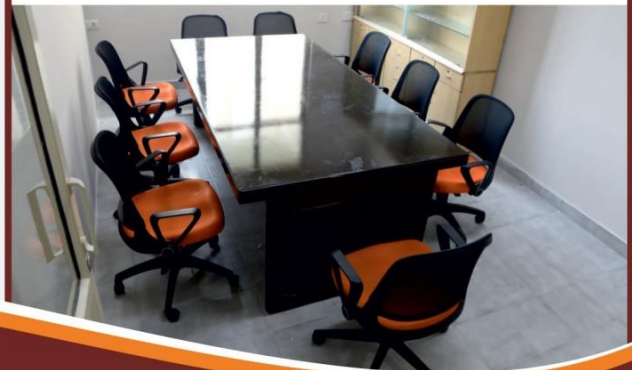
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