

GKTODAY



Current Affairs [PDF] - December 1-15, 2019

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**News Headlines: December 1-15, 2019****Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 1, 2019****India**

- Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi govt. of Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress alliance passes floor test in Maharashtra Assembly
- Two Army soldiers killed in avalanche at Siachen Glacier in Leh
- 10th Indian Organ Donation Day celebrated on November 30
- Conference on 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' being organised by governments of Tamil Nadu and J&K held in Jammu on Nov 30-Dec 1
- Laxminarayan Nayak, freedom fighter and former MP, dies at Niwari (MP) at the age of 101

Agni-III

- First night trial of the nuclear capable Agni-III surface-to-surface ballistic missile was carried out from a mobile launcher
- The test was carried out at the Integrated Test Range at the APJ Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast
- The missile has a strike range of over 3,500 km

India-Japan

- India-Japan Foreign and Defence Ministerial Dialogue (2+2) held in New Delhi on November 30, 2019
- The Indian delegation was led by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar
- Foreign Affairs Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defence Minister Taro Kono led the Japanese side

Pension Week

- Labour Ministry is celebrating Pension Week from November 30 to December 6
- The aim is to boost enrolments under Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan (PM-SYM) and National Pension Scheme for Traders and Self-Employed Persons (NPS-Traders).
- The week was inaugurated by Minister of State(I/C) for Labour and Employment Santosh Gangwar

World

- Suriname: President Desi Bouterse sentenced to 20 years in prison for killing political opponents in 1980s
- Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare observed on November 30; reaffirms commitment of Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for the weapons' elimination

Davis Cup Tennis

- India beat Pakistan 4-0 at Nur-sultan to earn a spot in the 2020 Qualifiers
- India had taken 2-0 lead on first day by winning both singles matches.
- On 2nd day, Leander Paes & Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan beat Mohammed Shoaib & Hufaiza Abdul Rehman 6-1, 6-3 in doubles while Sumit Nagal defeated Yousaf Khalil 6-1, 6-0 in singles.
- Fifth match was not played.

Sports

- Khelo India Youth Games to be held in Guwahati from January 10 to 22
- Tajinder Pal Singh Toor to be flag-bearer of India at South Asian Games opening ceremony in Kathmandu on December 1
- Australia's David Warner scores triple century (335 not out) against Pakistan in Adelaide test match

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 2, 2019**India**

- Armies of India and Sri Lanka begin Exercise Mitra Shakti-VII at Aundh Military Station, Pune
- Maharashtra: Nana Patole of Congress elected Assembly Speaker; BJP's Devendra Fadnavis named



leader of opposition

- Nagaland celebrates its 57th statehood day on December 1, 2019
- 20th edition of Nagaland Hornbill Festival being organised at the Naga Heritage Village at Kisama from December 1 to 10

Economy & Corporate

- ICAS (Indian Civil Accounts Service) Officer Soma Roy Burman takes charge as the new Controller General of Accounts (CGA)
- Indian Ordnance Factories' Service officer (IOFS) Hari Mohan takes charge as new Chairman of the Kolkata-headquartered Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)

World

- World AIDS Day observed on December 1 with its theme as 'Communities Make the Difference'
- MoS, HRD Sanjay Dhotre inaugurates the India Pavilion at International Book fair in Guadalajara, Mexico
- India becomes first country to make entire process for pilgrims going process digital: Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi
- Irving Burgie, songwriter of calypso hit 'Day-O,' dies at 95

Badminton

- 2019 Syed Modi International badminton tournament concluded at the Babu Banarasi Das Indoor Stadium in Lucknow on December 1, 2019. Winners are:
- Men's Singles: Wang Tzu-wei of Chinese Taipei
- Women's Singles: Carolina Marín of Spain
- Men's Doubles: He Jiting & Tan Qiang of China
- Women's Doubles: Baek Ha-na & Jung Kyung-eun of South Korea
- Mixed Doubles: Rodion Alimov & Alina Davletova of Russia

Sports

- 13th South Asian Games inaugurated in Kathmandu by Nepal's President Bidya Devi Bhandari
- Delhi's Shamim Khan wins Kensville Open golf tournament in Ahmedabad

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 3, 2019

- King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden begin their five-day India visit
- EAM S. Jaishankar holds talks with his Swedish counterpart Ann Linde in New Delhi
- Nationwide vaccination drive launched to prevent eight diseases under Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 2.0
- IMI 2.0 covers diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, poliomyelitis, tuberculosis, measles, meningitis and Hepatitis B
- India Rankings Society (IRS) set up to develop system of ranking higher educational institutions in the country: HRD Ministry
- 'The Vault of Vishnu', by author Ashwin Sanghi, to release in January 2020
- 'Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From' by Tony Joseph, wins Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize
- Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Bill, 2019 passed by Parliament
- Lt Gen P. S. Rajeshwar takes over as C-in-C of Andaman & Nicobar Command
- Sub-lieutenant Shivangi becomes 1st woman of Indian Navy; to fly Dornier surveillance aircraft
- BSF's yearly magazine 'Borderman' released by Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai

Taxation Bill

- The Lok Sabha on December 2, 2019 passed a Bill to replace an Ordinance promulgated in September for effecting reduction of corporate tax rates.



- Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019, will amend the Income Tax Act 1961 and the Finance (No 2) Act 2019.
- Base corporate tax for existing companies has been reduced to 22% from 30%, and to 15% from 25% for new manufacturing firms incorporated after October 1, 2019, and starting operations before March 31, 2023.

Economy & Corporate

- Rating agency CRISIL cuts GDP growth forecast for 2019-20 to 5.1% from an earlier estimate of 6.3%
- Govt launches independent directors' databank, to be maintained by Indian Institute for Corporate Affairs (IICA)
- Walmart, HDFC unveil co-branded credit card for 'Best Price' members

World

- Saudi Arabia assumes the G20 presidency under the theme of 'Realising Opportunities of the 21st Century for All'
- G20 leaders' summit will be held in Riyadh on November 21-22, 2020
- UN Climate Change Conference being held in Madrid, Spain from December 2 to 13
- International Day for the Abolition of Slavery observed on December 2
- Israel's occupation has cost the Palestinian economy more than USD 2.5 billion a year for the past two decades: UNCTAD
- 3000-km long pipeline launched to transport natural gas from Siberia in Russia to northeast China
- Astronauts attach new pumps to cosmic ray detector outside International Space Station to prolong its life
- com chooses 'existential' as word of the year
- Pritiviraj Singh Roopun appointed as new President of Mauritius by parliament
- Iraq's Parliament approves resignation of Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi
- 'Will & Grace' actor Shelley Morrison dies at 83 in US

Sports

- Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton wins season ending Formula One Abu Dhabi Grand Prix
- Karnataka beat Tamil Nadu by 1 run in final to win Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy cricket tournament in Surat

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 4, 2019

India

- Parliament passes Bill to merge Union territories Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli
- India test-fires surface-to-surface nuclear-capable Prithvi-II missile of 350-km range off Odisha coast
- 'Bharatiya Poshan Anthem', written by Prasoon Joshi and sung by Shankar Mahadevan, launched to spread the message of making India malnutrition free
- UP wins National Award of Excellence for rehabilitation of persons with disabilities
- India, Sweden join hands to set up Healthcare Innovation Centre in India
- Mumbai Central railway station certified as country's first 'Eat Right Station' by FSSAI for food safety and hygiene

Organ Donation Awards

- Awards were given by the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) of Health & Family Welfare Ministry
- Best State Award in cadaveric organ donation was won by Tamil Nadu
- Best Performing Hospital Award was won by Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH), Chennai

**Economy & Corporate**

- Lok Sabha passes Bill that restricts the use of hazardous materials on ships and regulates their recycling
- Government lowers stockholding limits of onions for retailers to 5 tonnes and wholesalers to 25 tonnes
- Xiaomi launches Mi Credit in India, to offer up to Rs 1 lakh personal loan
- Thomas Cook India to acquire branding rights for India, Sri Lanka & Mauritius

World

- NASA finds debris of Chandrayaan-2's lander Vikram that crashed on Moon on Sept 7, credits India's Shanmuga Subramanian for the discovery
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities observed on December 3 2019; Theme: Promoting the participation of persons with disabilities and their leadership: taking action on the 2030 Development Agenda
- India inaugurates its Gandhi-themed pavilion at the 25th session of Conference of Parties under the UN Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC COP25) in Madrid
- 2 killed as Typhoon Kammuri slams into Philippines
- Hollywood actor Joaquin Phoenix named 2019 PETA Person of the Year
- Chinese students dominate 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by OECD
- 2019 NATO Summit being organised in Watford, UK on December 3-4
- Finland's PM Antti Rinne resigns after losing the support of a coalition partner

Football Awards

- Winners of the 2019 Ballon d'Or awards were announced by France Football magazine in Paris on December 2, 2019.
- Ballon d'Or: Lionel Messi of Argentina and Barcelona FC (6th time)
- Ballon d'Or Féminin: Megan Rapinoe of United States and Regin FC
- Kopa Trophy for the best player in the world under the age of 21: Matthijs de Ligt of Netherlands
- Yashin Trophy for the best goalkeeper in the world: Alisson Becker of Brazil and Liverpool FC

Sports

- New Zealand win Christopher Martin-Jenkins Spirit of Cricket award for 2019

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 5, 2019**India**

- Indian Army's Sudarshan Chakra Corps conducts Exercise Sindhu Sudarshan in Rajasthan from November 28 to December 4
- Navy Day celebrated to mark Indian Navy's attack on Karachi harbour on December 4, 1971
- Parliament passes Bill to provide ownership rights to residents of unauthorised colonies in Delhi
- Cabinet approves SC/STs reservation in Lok Sabha, state assemblies for another 10 years
- Odisha govt. launches smart learning mobile app 'MadhuApp for school children
- Delhi Govt. to set up 11,000 wifi-hotspots in the national capital within the next 6 months: CM Arvind Kejriwal
- SC grants bail to former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram in INX Media money laundering case

Economy & Corporate

- CCEA approves launch of Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) to create an additional source of funding for CPSUs (Central Public Sector Undertakings) CPSEs (Central Public Sector Enterprises), CPFIs (Central Public Financial Institutions) and other Government organizations
- announces transfer of 3.7 acres of land at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi to ITDC and ITPO to set up a



five-star hotel

- Startup India Global Venture Capital Summit being organised in Goa on December 6-7 by DPIIT and Goa Govt.; theme: 'India Opportunity – Investing in tomorrow together'.

World

- PM Modi and President of Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih jointly inaugurate projects in Maldives via video link; India gifts Coast Guard Ship 'Kaamiyaab' to Maldives
- Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria attending conclave of air force chiefs of Indo-Pacific region in Hawaii: Dec 4-6
- Army Chief General Bipin Rawat interacts with General Goro Yuasa, Chief of Staff of Japan Ground Self Defence Force, in Tokyo
- India 5th worst country after China, Malaysia, Pakistan & USA in terms of invasive use of biometric data: Comparitech (UK)
- Netherlands tops UNCTAD's Business-to-Consumer (B2C) E-commerce Index 2019; India 73rd among 153 countries
- US Congress passes Bill calling for an end to the detaining, torture and harassment of the Uyghur communities in China
- Google's CEO Sundar Pichai promoted as CEO of Alphabet, the parent company of Google
- Malta's Prime Minister Joseph Muscat announces resignation after his replacement is chosen in January 2020
- Tennis player Roger Federer becomes the first living person in Switzerland to have a coin minted in his honour

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 6, 2019

India

- Tri-services 'Exercise Indra' between India, Russia to be conducted from Dec 10-19 in Babina (UP), Pune and Goa
- Indian Coast Guard gets more teeth, can now legally search & seize vessels in Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)
- Govt sanctions Rs 100 cr from Nirbhaya Fund to set up Women Help Desks in Police Stations
- King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden inaugurate Sarai Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) in Uttarakhand
- Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal inaugurates Avantee Mega Food Park in Dewas (MP); first in central India

RBI MPC Meeting

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of RBI met on December 5
- Policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) unchanged at 5.15%.
- Consequently, the reverse repo rate under the LAF remains unchanged at 4.90%, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate at 5.40%.
- Consumer price index (CPI) inflation revised upwards to 5.1-4.7% for H2:2019-20 and 4.0-3.8% for H1:2020-21
- Real GDP growth forecast for 2019-20 is revised downwards from 6.1% in the October policy to 5.0%, 4.9-5.5% in H2 of 2019-20 and 5.9-6.3% for H1:2020-21

Rbi Unveils Guidelines On SFBS

- Payments Banks can apply for conversion into SFBs (small finance banks) after five years of operations
- UCBs transiting into SFBs will require of net worth of Rs 100 crore, which will have to be increased to Rs 200 crore within five years from the date of commencement of business.



- SFBs will be given scheduled bank status immediately upon commencement of operations.
- SFBs will have general permission to open banking outlets from the date of commencement of operations

Economy & Corporate

- RBI hikes aggregate lending limit to Rs 50 lakh for P2P (peer to peer) lenders
- Rs 24,396.19 crore collected as fee from toll plazas of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) in 2018-19
- GeM (Government e-Marketplace), CII organising 3rd edition of National Public Procurement Conclave in New Delhi on December 5-6
- Civil Aviation Ministry opens bidding process under UDAN 4.0 (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik 4.0) for NER, Hilly States, J&K, Ladakh, and Islands
- Mumbai court declares Nirav Modi, key accused in the USD 2 billion PNB scam, a 'fugitive economic offender'
- Wipro Limited launches its Cyber Defence Centre (CDC) in Melbourne, Australia
- MG Motor India unveils electric car model ZS

World

- International Volunteer Day observed on December 5 with the theme 'Volunteer for an inclusive future'
- World Soil Day observed by UN's FAO on December 5 with its focus on 'Stop Soil Erosion, Save Our Future'

Sports

- Former England fast bowler Bob Willis (90 Tests, 325 wickets) dies at the age of 70

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 7, 2019

India

- Aberdeen Police Station in Andaman & Nicobar is the country's best police station: Centre
- to set up FM transmitters in Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) premises along the Indo-Nepal border
- SC lifts its earlier interim order imposing a complete ban on construction, industrial activities in Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ)
- Mauritian PM Pravind Jugnauth visits India
- BJP's K. C. Ramamurthy elected to the Rajya Sabha seat from Karnataka
- Assam govt. launches Anti Depredation Squads in forests to avoid human-wildlife conflicts
- 24th International Film Festival of Kerala being held in Thiruvananthapuram from December 6 to 14
- Jharkhand's Mahuamilan station becomes the country's 5500th station to get free wifi facility
- Odisha CM distributes free laptops to Plus Two (+2) meritorious students under the 'Biju Sashaktikaran Yojana'

Citizenship Bill

- Government to introduce the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 in Parliament
- The Bill proposes to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955
- The Bill seeks to grant citizenship to undocumented non-Muslims (Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Parsi, Jain and Sikh) from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan who came to India on or before December 31, 2014.
- Purpose of the Bill is to enable acquisition of Indian citizenship by persons who were forced to seek shelter in India due to persecution on grounds of religion
- The Bill shall not apply to:
 - Tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura as included in the sixth schedule of the Constitution
 - States that are protected by the Inner Line Permit (ILP) – Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and



Nagaland

Economy & Corporate

- Foreign exchange reserves touch a new high of USD 451.08 billion in the week to November 29
- National Stock Exchange appoints Girish Chandra Chaturvedi as its new Chairman
- NEFT (National Electronic Funds Transfer) transactions to be available 24x7 from Dec 16, including holidays
- The Kerala Bank, an amalgamation of district co-operative banks in the state, launched by the state's CM Pinarayi Vijayan
- Hindustan Times Leadership Summit being held in New Delhi on December 6-7; theme: 'Conversations for a Better Tomorrow'
- ONGC's USD 300 million medium-term note (MTN) issue listed on BSE's India International Exchange (India INX)
- Bajaj Auto launches Husqvarna Vitpilen 250 and Husqvarna Svartpilen 250 motorcycles in India

Data Protection Bill

- to introduce Personal Data Protection Bill in Parliament
- It specifies rules on collection, storage, and processing of personal data, the consent of individuals, penalties and compensation, and a code of conduct.
- It was prepared by a high-level expert committee headed by former SC judge Justice B.N. Srikrishna.
- to notify categories of personal data as critical personal data
- Personal data is to be stored in India, but can be processed outside with the consent of the person.

World

- 5th edition of annual 'MED – Mediterranean Dialogues' being held in Rome from December 5 to 7; EAM S. Jaishankar representing India
- International Civil Aviation Day celebrated on December 7
- Priyanka Chopra Jonas honoured for outstanding contribution to cinema at Marrakech Film Festival
- Worth £40,000, Turner Prize is the biggest award in British art; jointly awarded to Oscar Murillo, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Tai Shani and Helen Cammock in Margate (UK)
- Oxford names 'Climate Emergency' as its 2019 Word of the Year

Global Migration Report

- Global Migration Report 2020 released by UN's International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
- Number of international migrants in 2019 estimated at 270 million; US remains top destination at 50.7 million
- At 17.5 million, India was the largest country of origin of international migrants in 2019
- At \$78.6 billion, India was the top receiver of overseas remittances in 2018; US was the top remittance-sending country at \$68 billion

Climate Risk Index

- The Global Climate Risk Index was published by environmental think-tank Germanwatch on December 4, 2019
- Japan was rated as the most-affected country in 2018 followed by the Philippines, Germany, Madagascar and India
- The annual ranking measures the damage done by extreme weather to human life and economies.

Sports

- Anthony Amalraj, Sutirtha Mukherjee win table tennis singles titles in South Asian Games in Kathmandu
- Former India Table tennis head coach Bhawani Mukherji dies at 68; won Dronacharya Award in 2012

**Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 8, 2019****India**

- Jal Shakti Ministry and the Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga) led by IIT-Kanpur organised the fourth India Water Impact Summit in New Delhi from December 5 to 7
- 8th India-China joint training exercise 'HAND-IN-HAND 2019' with 'counter-terrorism' theme being organised in Meghalaya from December 7 to 20
- All India Conference of Director Generals /Inspector Generals of Police being organised in Pune from December 6 to 8
- President inaugurates new building of Rajasthan High Court, at Jodhpur
- Haryana: Gurgaon city's Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) for enabling Smart City applications inaugurated by CM Manohar Lal Khattar
- Armed Forces Flag Day celebrated on December 7
- Vidita Ashok Vaidya of TIFR, Mumbai wins Rs. 3 crore Sree Ramakrishna Paramhansa Research Grant in Vijayawada (AP) for trauma research
- Retired IPS officer K. Vijay Kumar appointed Senior Security Adviser to Home Ministry for J&K and LWE-affected States

Economy & Corporate

- CBIC (Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs) organises GST Stakeholder Feedback Diwas on December 7, 2019 on the new system for filing returns across 125 cities
- Air India subsidiary Alliance Air starts Guwahati-Dimapur-Imphal flight under regional connectivity scheme (RCS) Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN)
- Fashion designer Ritu Beri appointed as chief design consultant for TRIFED to promote tribal Arts and Culture
- TRIFED: Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited

World

- At least 4 killed after Saudi Arabian air force trainee opens fire at US naval base in Pensacola, Florida

Sports

- Indian Oil Corporation, New Delhi wins the 15th Guru Tegh Bahadur (GTB) Gold Cup All India Hockey tournament in Mumbai
- India's R. Praggnanandhaa wins the FIDE Open category of the London Chess Classic

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 9, 2019**India**

- Indian Rafale fighter jets to fly with BS-series tail numbers honouring ex-IAF Chief Birender Singh Dhanoa.
- Chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), B. B. Kumar, passes away
- 43 killed in factory fire in Anaj Mandi on Rani Jhansi Road in Delhi

World

- SAARC Charter Day celebrated on December 8; its signing on Dec 8, 1985 established SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)
- Malaysia records first polio case in 27 years
- DIWALI-POWER OF ONE AWARDS
- Four diplomats honoured with 'The Diwali – Power of One' award in New York in recognition of their work at UN
- The awards were established by the Diwali Foundation USA, Inc in 2017
- Winners: Kairat Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan), Nicholas Emiliou (Cyprus), Frantisek Ruzicka (Slovakia) and Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine)

**Sports**

- Indian captain Virat Kohli (2,563 runs) surpasses Rohit Sharma as the leading run-scorer in the T20I cricket
- Sweden's Henrik Stenson win Hero World Challenge golf tournament in Nassau, Bahamas
- Britain's Anthony Joshua wins world heavyweight boxing title by beating Andy Ruiz of US

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 10, 2019**India**

- Lok Sabha passes Arms (Amendment) Bill; makers of illegal arms will face maximum punishment of life in jail
- BJP wins majority (117/224) in Karnataka Assembly by winning 12 out of 15 seats in by-elections
- Parliament passes Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019; restricts the use of hazardous materials on ships and regulates their recycling
- 3rd India-Australia Secretary-level 2+2 Dialogue held in New Delhi
- Hindi poet Viswanath Prasad Tiwari wins 'Gangadhar National Award' given by Odisha's Sambalpur University

Economy & Corporate

- Govt further caps stock limit on onion retailers to 2 tonnes to check hoarding
- FICCI ARISE Conference 2019 in New Delhi on December 9-10; theme: 'Future Ready Learners And Schools'

World

- India ranked 129th among 189 countries on UNDP's 2019 Human Development Index (HDI)
- HDI ranking based on life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators
- Arms sales rose by 4.6% worldwide in 2018: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)
- International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime observed on December 9
- International Anti-Corruption Day observed on December 9 with its theme as 'united against corruption.'
- 5 killed in eruption of volcano in New Zealand's White Island
- Saudi Arabia abolishes rules requiring restaurants to provide separate entrances for women
- South Africa's Zozibini Tunzi crowned Miss Universe 2019 in Atlanta (US)
- Paul Volcker, former US Federal Reserve chairman, dies at 92 in New York
- 'Sesame Street' puppeteer Carroll Spinney dies at 85 in US

LAFCA

- Korean Director Bong Joon-ho's 'Parasite' named the best film of the year by the Los Angeles Film Critics Association (LAFCA)
- Antonio Banderas won the best actor trophy for 'Pain and Glory' (Spanish) which was also named best foreign language film
- Mary Kay Place was named best actress for her role in 'Diane'

Sports

- World Anti-Doping Agency imposes 4-year ban on Russia from 2020 Tokyo Olympics

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 11, 2019**Constitution (126th) Amendment Bill**

- Lok Sabha passed the Constitution (126th) Amendment Bill to extend reservation to SCs and STs in Lok Sabha and state assemblies by another ten years.
- Given for the past 70 years, the reservation was due to end on January 25, 2020.
- Reservation given to Anglo-Indian community has not been extended in the new bill.

**Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019**

- The Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019 passed by Parliament.
- The bill provides a maximum punishment of life imprisonment for manufacturing and carrying illegal arms
- It also provides that a person can have a maximum of two firearms as against three allowed at present
- It was passed by Rajya Sabha on December 10 and Lok Sabha on December 9

Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019

- The Lok Sabha passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019.
- The Bill seeks to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslim refugees coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan after facing religious persecution there.
- Persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have migrated to India before December 31, 2014 are eligible for grant of Indian Citizenship
- The Bill shall not apply to: 1. Tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura as included in the sixth schedule of the Constitution 2. States that are protected by the Inner Line Permit (ILP) – Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland

DICGC

- Since the inception of deposit insurance, the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) has collected Rs 88,523 crore as premium from banks
- The total payout to depositors of failed commercial banks on account of claims stood at Rs 296 crore
- DICGC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of RBI, provides an insurance coverage of up to Rs 1 lakh to a depositor of a bank.

Economy & Corporate

- Hiroshi Kajiyama, Japan's Minister for Economy, Trade and Investments (MITI), visits India

World

- Human Rights Day observed on December 10, 2019 theme: Youth Standing Up for Human Rights
- Finland: 34-year old Sanna Marin becomes world's youngest Prime Minister
- India ranked ninth on 2019 Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI by Germanwatch, NewClimate Institute and Climate Action Network (CAN)
- WTO members agree to renew a 20-year moratorium on placing tariffs on digital trade for six months
- IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) updates its 'Red List of Threatened Species'; 1,840 new species of plants and animals added
- 2 killed as Cyclone Belna hits Madagascar

Sports

- Actor Suniel Shetty appointed brand ambassador of National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)
- India top medals tally at the 13th South Asian Games in Kathmandu: 312 medals: 174 gold, 93 silver and 45 bronze

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 12, 2019**Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019**

- Parliament passes the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019
- Was passed by Lok Sabha on December 10 and Rajya Sabha on December 11
- The Bill seeks to provide Indian citizenship to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian refugees coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan after facing religious persecution there.
- Those who have migrated to India before December 31, 2014 are eligible.
- The Bill shall not apply to: 1. Tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura 2. States that are protected by the Inner Line Permit (ILP) – Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland

**India**

- ISRO launches PSLV-C48 carrying 628-kg earth observation satellite RISAT-2BR1 along with 9 other customer satellites from Sriharikota (AP)
- Culture Ministry launches portal 'indianculture.gov.in' developed by IIT-Bombay
- Nagaland extends the Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime to Dimapur district; all districts under ILP now
- Manipur would be brought under the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system: Home Minister Amit Shah

Economy & Corporate

- ADB cuts India's GDP growth forecast to 5.1% for FY2019 from 6.5% made in September; forecast for FY2020 cut to 6.5% from 7.2%
- Cabinet clears amendments to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC); objective is to remove difficulties being faced during insolvency resolution process
- Cabinet approves 'Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme' for purchase of high-rated pooled assets from financially sound NBFCs/HFCs by PSBs
- Lok Sabha passes bill to set up a unified regulatory authority for all international financial services centres (IFSCs) in India
- Cabinet authorises NHAI to set up infrastructure investment trust, monetise NH projects having toll collection track record of at least one year
- Cabinet approves hike in authorised capital of India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL) from Rs 6,000 crore to Rs 25,000 crore
- ICAR organising 'International Seminar on Climate Smart Farming Systems' for BIMSTEC countries in Delhi on Dec 11-13
- SBI under-reported its non-performing assets (NPAs) for 2018-19 by Rs 11,932 crore: RBI auditors

World

- 16-year old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg declared TIME's 2019 Person of the Year
- Others honoured by TIME: US Women's Soccer Team: Athlete of the Year, the US Public Servants: Guardians of the Year, singer Lizzo: Entertainer of the Year' and Disney CEO Bob Iger: Business Person of the Year
- International Mountain Day observed on December 11; theme: 'Mountains Matter for Youth'
- At least 250 journalists jailed around the world; highest in China: US-based Committee to Protect Journalists

Sports

- Sports Ministry announces cash awards to South Asian Games medallists; Rs. 1.5 lakh for gold, Rs. 1 lakh for silver and Rs. 50,000 for bronze
- India's Vikram Malhotra wins Life Time Betty Griffin Memorial squash tournament in Boca Raton (US)

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 13, 2019**Constitution (126th) Amendment Bill**

- Parliament has passed the Constitution (126th) Amendment Bill
- The Bill seeks to extend reservation to SCs and STs in Lok Sabha and state assemblies by another ten years
- The Bill was passed by Rajya Sabha on December 12 and Lok Sabha on December 11
- Given for the past 70 years, the reservation was due to end on January 25, 2020
- Reservation given to Anglo-Indian community has not been extended in the new bill
- The bill would now be sent to states for ratification by 50% of the assemblies before it comes into force

Central Sanskrit Universities Bill

- The Lok Sabha passed the Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019.



- The Bill seeks to upgrade three deemed Sanskrit universities into Central universities
- They are: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Bhopal, Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi and Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth Tirupati

India

- The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019 passed by Rajya Sabha; seeks to include certain tribal communities in Karnataka into Scheduled Tribe category
- International Seminar cum Exhibition on Naval Weapon Systems 'NAVARMS - 2019' being held in Delhi on December 12-13
- GRSE (Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd) hands over LCU (Landing Craft Utility) amphibious ship to Indian Navy
- Bangladesh Navy Chief Admiral Aurangzeb Chowdhury visits naval units in Visakhapatnam
- Veteran Telugu actor, writer Gollapudi Maruti Rao dies at 80
- Social worker Minoti Riba, wife of former Arunachal Pradesh CM Tomo Riba, dies in Itanagar at 83

IFSC Bill

- Parliament has passed the International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019
- The Bill seeks to set up a unified authority for regulating all financial activities in international financial services centres (IFSCs) in the country.
- It was passed by Rajya Sabha on December 12 and Lok Sabha on December 11.
- The first IFSC in India has been set up at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) in Gandhinagar

Economy & Corporate

- Industrial production declines by 3.8% in October
- Retail inflation rises to over three-year high of 5.54% in November
- Ujjivan Small Finance Bank lists on stock exchanges after successful IPO
- India Design Council launches initiatives – Chartered Designs of India (CDI) and Design Education Quality Mark (DEQM) – to promote Design Education and Standards
- FSSAI, Nasscom Foundation partner to develop app to prevent food wastage
- Tara Sinha, the founder of advertising agencies Clarion and Tara Sinha Associates, dies at 88
- Amazon's Audible launches an India-first audio service 'Suno'

World

- Indian embassy, NGO INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) to rebuild 11 heritage sites damaged in Nepal earthquake of 2015
- Voters in Bougainville opt for independence from Papua New Guinea in referendum
- World's first fully electric commercial plane, operated by Harbour Air, takes flight in Canada
- International Universal Health Coverage Day celebrated on December 12 with the theme 'Keep the promise'
- International Day of Neutrality observed on December 12

Sports

- Pakistan's Aleem Dar breaks West Indian Steve Bucknor's record of umpiring in most number of Tests in his 129th test at Perth
- Spain's football league LaLiga names cricketer Rohit Sharma as its brand ambassador in India

FICCI India Sports Awards

- The FICCI India Sports Awards 2019 were presented to the winners in New Delhi
- Best National Sports Federation: National Rifle Association of India
- Sports person (female): Rani Rampal (hockey)
- Sports person (male): Saurabh Chaudhary (shooting)
- Para-athlete: Sandeep Chaudhary (javelin).



- Breakthrough sports person: Amit Panghal (boxing)
- Lifetime achievement (administrator): Govindaraj Kempareddy
- Lifetime achievement: Pankaj Advani (cue sport)
- – Best State promoting sports: Odisha
- Best sports journalist: Kamesh Srinivasan

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 14, 2019

India

- Winter Session of Parliament concludes: 14 Bills passed in Lok Sabha; 15 in the Rajya Sabha
- Military Literature Festival being organised in Chandigarh from December 13 to 15
- Japanese movie 'They Say Nothing Stays the Same' wins 'Suvarna Chakoram' (The Golden Crow Pheasant) award at International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) in Thiruvananthapuram
- Speaker of People's Majlis of Maldives Mohamed Nasheed and Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid visit India
- India-Japan annual summit at Guwahati in December, involving PM Modi and Japan's PM Shinzo Abe, postponed
- 6th Indian Ocean Dialogue organised in New Delhi on Dec 13 by MEA and the Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA); theme: 'Indo-Pacific: Re-imagining the Indian Ocean through an Expanded Geography'
- Delhi Dialogue XI being organised in New Delhi on Dec 13-14 by MEA and the Research and Information System (RIS) for Developing Countries; theme: 'Advancing Partnership in Indo-Pacific'

7th Economic Census

- Seventh Economic Census launched in the National Capital Territory of Delhi
- MoSPI (Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation) has tied up with CSC (Common Service Centre) to conduct the Census.
- Delhi is the 26th state where the census has been launched, while the process is already on in 20 states and 5 UTs.

Economy & Corporate

- Bureau of Energy Efficiency celebrating National Energy Conservation Week from Dec 9 to 14; National Energy Conservation Day on Dec 14.
- India's foreign exchange reserves rise to fresh record high of US\$ 453.42 billion in the week ended December 6
- Moody's Investors Service lowers India's 2019 GDP growth forecast to 5.6%; expects growth to pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6% and 6.7% respectively
- World Design Organization (WDO) to launch its World Design Protopolis in Bengaluru
- Porsche launches Cayenne Coupe at Rs 1.32 crore

World

- Conservative Party of PM Boris Johnson wins majority in the 650-member House of Commons in UK general elections
- Former PM Abdelmadjid Tebboune wins Presidential election in Algeria

Crystal Awards

- Winners of Crystal Award announced by the World Economic Forum (WEF).
- Winners: Indian actress Deepika Padukone, China's media personality Jin Xing, Chicago-based artist Theaster Gates and Australian artist Lynette Wallworth

Forbes List

- The Forbes' ranking of 100 most powerful women in the world has been topped by German Chancellor Angela Merkel for the ninth consecutive year.
- Indians in the list are: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (34th), HCL Corporation CEO Roshni



Nadar Malhotra (54th) and Biocon Founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (65th)

Sports

- 'Mind Master: Winning Lessons from a Champion's Life ', book written former world chess champion Viswanathan Anand and Susan Ninan, released

Current Affairs – News Headlines: December 15, 2019

India

- President hosts conference of 46 Heads of Central Universities and Institutes of Higher Learning at Rashtrapati Bhavan

National Ganga Council

- PM chaired the first meeting of the National Ganga Council in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh
- The Council has been given overall responsibility for superintendence of pollution prevention and rejuvenation of River Ganga Basin, including Ganga and its tributaries

Rural Job Scheme Awards

- CM Mamata Banerjee said West Bengal has got the first prize in 100-day work programme for promoting livelihoods.
- State's Bankura and Cooch Behar stood first and second respectively among districts in the country in implementation of the rural job scheme.
- Baburmahal GP (gram panchayat) of Kulpi, South 24 Paraganas also got the best performance award

Economy & Corporate

- Star Labelling Programme for Solar Water Heater was launched by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) on National Energy Conservation Day (December 14)

World

- World Bank to give USD 406 million loan to Pakistan for Khyber Pass Economic Corridor project

Chilean Air Force Plane

- A Chilean Air Force Lockheed C-130 Hercules military transport aircraft found to have crashed on December 12 with no survivors.
- The aircraft went missing on December 9 while on a flight to a military base in Antarctica.

Sports

- Former US athlete Peter Snell, who won gold thrice at Olympic Games (800 m: 1960 Rome, 800 m & 1500 m: 1964 Tokyo), dies at 80.

December 1, 2019

DPIIT invites applications for first ever National Startup Awards 2020

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry has announced institution of first ever National Startup Awards. The award was launched by Piyush Goyal, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry and Railways. The applications for the awards are open till 31 December 2019.

About National Startup Awards

The Awards seek to recognize as well as reward exceptional startups and ecosystem enablers that are building innovative products/ solutions and scalable enterprises demonstrating measurable social impact, with high potential of wealth creation and employment generation.

It will also recognize outstanding startups across many categories that are providing innovative solutions to solve real problems and challenges for India, delivering measurable developmental gains, products and solutions from India to world, developing innovative technologies and building businesses that are scalable, sustainable and responsible.

The National Startup Awards measures success not only as financial gains for investors but also the contribution to the social good. It will also reward exceptional Incubators and Accelerators as key building



blocks of a robust startup ecosystem.

Startups will be awarded in 35 areas, classified into 12 broad sectors. These sectors include enterprise technology, education, agriculture, security, energy, finance, health, food, urban services Industry 4.0, space and tourism. In addition, to these there are three special awards for startups from educational institutions, making impact in rural areas and women entrepreneurs.

Prize: A cash prize of Rs. 5 lakh each will be awarded to winning startup in each area. Moreover, a cash prize of Rs. 15 lakh each will be awarded to 1 winning Incubator and 1 winning Accelerator as well.

Apart from this, the winner and 4 runners-up of National Startup Awards will also be provided opportunities to present their solutions to relevant public authorities and corporates for potential pilot projects and work orders. They will also be given priority for participation in various national as well as international startup events.

December 2, 2019

Mitra Shakti: India Sri Lanka Joint Military Exercise

The seventh Indo-Sri Lanka joint military exercise was held on December 1, 2019 at Aundh military station. The main objective of the exercise is to build and promote positive relations between the countries.

The exercise is scheduled to be conducted at the Foreign Training Node in Pune between December 1 and December 14, 2019.

Highlights

The exercise aims at enhancing the interoperability of the armies when deployed as a part of the United Nations peace keeping force. During the exercise the armies will exchange their skills on counter insurgency, counter terrorism operation in rural and urban environment.

Also, the armies are to be provided with sub unit level training on counter terrorism under United Nations mandate. The exercise also focused on battle drills and field crafts.

Significance

The Mitra Shakti exercise was started in 2013 and is conducted annually as a part of military diplomacy and interaction between the armies of India and Sri Lanka. It is important for India to maintain good relations with its neighbors in political, economic, social ways. This will also help India in implementing its Neighbourhood first Policy. With China increasing its presence in Sri Lanka (Hambantota port), it becomes vital for India to revive and boost historical ties.

1 December: World AIDS Day

World AIDS Day was observed on 1 December 2019, to raise public awareness about Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), a pandemic disease caused due to infection of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which affects the human immune system. The day also provides an opportunity for people to unite in fight against HIV and to show support for those living with HIV. The **theme** for year 2019 is **"Communities Make the Difference."**

World AIDS Day is being celebrated every year since 1988 and is one of the eight official global public health campaigns marked by *World Health Organization (WHO)*.

India & AIDS

As per latest estimate of 2017, there are about 21 lakh 40 thousand people living with HIV in India. The government is implementing **National AIDS Control Programme (NACP)** as a 100% Central Sector Scheme for prevention and control of AIDS. NACP response to HIV epidemic comprise a comprehensive 3-pronged strategy of prevention, testing and treatment. Government has also developed a 7-year **National Strategic Plan from 2017 to 2024** to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

In Uttar Pradesh, various awareness programmes were organised on occasion of World AIDS Day. Uttar



Pradesh State AIDS Control Society (UPSACS) also organised awareness progress at Rumi Gate in Lucknow where various NGO will participate. North Eastern Railway organised awareness programmes at Lucknow and it's various railways stations where passengers were taught awareness is better than cure.

South Asian Games begins in Kathmandu

On December 1, 2019, the President of Nepal Bidya Devi Bhandari opened the South Asian Games in Kathmandu. The event is scheduled to be conducted for 10 days. Around 487 athletes are participating from India.

About South Asian Games

The South Asian Games is a biennial multi-sport event that is held among the South Asian countries. It is being conducted since 1983. Currently there are eight members in the event. It includes India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Maldives.

The governing body of the event is South Asia Olympic Council

South Asia Olympic Council

The Council was formed in 1983 at Islamabad, Pakistan. The country hosting the South Asian games holds the president-ship of the council. The current President of the council is Nepal.

The Council holds South Asian Beach Games and South Asian Winter Games. The Beach Games are usually conducted in the month of September every year and predominantly includes water sports. The South Asian Winter Games includes athletics, skating, swimming, etc.

First India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi

India and Japan held their first ever **Foreign and Defence Ministerial Dialogue (2+2)** in New Delhi. During the meet the two sides discussed about boosting defence and security ties besides other issues of mutual interest. This India-Japan ministerial meeting comes ahead of annual summit of two prime ministers scheduled to be held in Guwahati, Assam in December 2019. India has a similar 'ministerial level 2+2' dialogue with the USA as well.

Highlights: India-Japan 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue

Participants: Indian delegation was led by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Foreign Minister S Jaishankar while Japanese side was led by Japan's Foreign Affairs Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defence Minister Taro Kono.

The 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue is an upgrade of meeting between foreign and defence secretaries of two countries, the first round of which took place in 2010. This upgradation was followed after an agreement was reached between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during **13th India-Japan Annual Summit** held in Japan in October 2018.

Dialogue provided an opportunity for two countries to review the status of as well as exchange further views on strengthening defence and security cooperation between India and Japan so as to provide greater depth to '**India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership**'.

Both sides also exchanged their views on situation regarding Indo-Pacific region as well as their respective efforts under **India's 'Act East Policy'** and **Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision'** for achieving their shared objective of progress, peace prosperity, to realise a better future for people of two countries and region.

2 December: International Day for Abolition of Slavery

Every year 2 December is observed as International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, across the world. The yearly event is organized by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and was first celebrated in 1986.

International Day for Abolition of Slavery

Objective: The day focuses on eradication of contemporary forms of slavery, like trafficking in persons, forced marriage, worst forms of child labour, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict and



sexual exploitation.

Why the date? On 2 December 1949, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) approved the *Convention for Suppression of Traffic in Persons and of Exploitation of Prostitution of Others*.

Other Efforts: On 18 December 2002, UNGA by its resolution 57/195 of 2002 proclaimed 2004 to be '*International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition*'. In November 2016 International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted a new legally binding Protocol designed to strengthen global efforts to eliminate forced labour, which entered into force. Moreover, ILO also launched, **50 for Freedom campaign** which aims to persuade about 50 countries to ratify *Forced Labour Protocol* by end of 2019.

Main Forms of Modern Slavery:

1. Forced labour
2. Child labour
3. Trafficking

India and Sweden to sign Polar Science Cooperation Agreement

India and Sweden are to sign their first maritime cooperation agreement during the Swedish Royal couple visit. The agreement includes cooperation between the countries in both Arctic and Antarctic regions and hence the name Polar Science.

Significance

In the last few years, India has signed series of maritime agreements to exchange military information and to extend the reach of its armed forces in the arctic region. This will help India to learn about resource exploration and keep in pace.

The agreement further aids in India's ambitions in strengthening its defence forces. The agreement will help India get access to Russian bases in the Arctic.

Royal Couple Visit

The Swedish Royal Couple King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden are to visit India for 5 days. This is the third visit of the Swedish Royals to the country. Earlier the visits were in 1993 and 2005.

The bilateral trade between India and Sweden was 3.37 billion USD in 2018. The relations between the countries have been friendly, transparent and by rule of law.

30 November: 10th Indian Organ Donation Day celebrated

The 10th Indian Organ Donation Day was celebrated on 30 November 2019. Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare presided over, Dr. Harsh Vardhan presided over 10th Indian Organ Donation Day at a function held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The celebration was organised by NOTTO (*National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organization*).

Background: Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) had launched *6th World and first ever* Indian Organ Donation Day and Organ Donation Congress in 2010 in New Delhi.

About National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO)

Union government set up National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO) as a mandate of *Transplantation of Human Organs (Amendment) Act 2011*. As specified by the Act, NOTTO is performing the functions of National Human Organs & Tissues Removal and Storage Network.

NOTTO is responsible for putting systems in place for organ donation, carrying out activities for promotion of organ donation from deceased persons, and transplantation and training needed manpower etc.

The procurement and sharing of organs obtained from deceased donors and allocation of procured organs is done by NOTTO, SOTTOs & ROTTOs. NOTTO sets up networking among hospitals and tissue banks at national level, while ROTTO at regional level and SOTTO at State level. The networking of transplant/retrieval hospitals is done to ensure that any organ which is donated does not get wasted.



Organ Donation in India

As per data available on **Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation**, India performs 2nd largest number of transplants in world, next only to USA. However, India has a dismal 0.65 per million population (PMP) Organ Donation Rate and need is to improve this.

2 December: National Pollution Control Day

Every year 2 December is observed as National Pollution Control Day to commemorate the people who lost their lives in the unfortunate incident of **Bhopal Gas Tragedy** that occurred on this day in 1984.

About National Pollution Control Day

Objective: National Pollution Control Day has three major objectives:

- To raise awareness about increasing air pollution and educating people about how to control and manage industrial disasters.
- To make everyone aware of significance of pollution control acts and ways and to reduce the level of pollution
- To control/ prevent industrial pollution that is a result of human negligence.

Significance: The day shows how impactful air pollution is. As per National Health Portal of India (NHPI), every year about 7 million people globally die due to air pollution. NHPI also states that condition is so worse that 9 among 10 people globally do not have access to safe air. Air pollution is responsible for the damage of ozone layer and the pollutants present in air can potentially pass through protective barriers present in the body and can damage your lungs, brain, and heart.

About Bhopal Gas Tragedy

The year 2019 celebrated the 35th anniversary of Bhopal Gas Tragedy that took the life of thousands of people at midnight on 2 December 1984. Bhopal Gas Tragedy occurred after a highly toxic methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas made its way into and around area situated near Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) pesticide plant in Bhopal and is considered as the world's worst industrial disaster. As per official data, the incident claimed lives of 2,259 people immediately after incident, however, the Madhya Pradesh government had confirmed that a total of 3787 people died due to gas release.

NOTE: National Pollution Control Board (NPCB) is national governing body responsible for regulating conducts checks on industries to know whether they are following environmental regulations or not.

20th Nagaland Hornbill Festival

The Nagaland Hornbill Festival began at Naga Heritage Village at Kisama in Nagaland on 1 December 2019. The year 2019 celebrates the 20th edition of Hornbill Festival and the festival this year coincides with *Nagaland Statehood Day*. The much-awaited festival began with a colourful blend of culture and tradition with a modern twist.

About Nagaland Hornbill Festival

Hornbill festival is also known as 'Festival of Festivals' and is named after **hornbill bird**. This festival symbolises 'Respect and 'Folklore' among Nagas.

The festival is an annual tourism promotional event to showcase north eastern state's traditional and rich cultural heritage in all its ethnicity, diversity and grandeur. It is organised by state government of Nagaland. Through the festival Naga people come together and unite through their cultures thereby upholding the enormous richness on their culture and traditions which has been passed down to them by their ancestors.

Nagaland Hornbill Festival 2019

The 10 Days Hornbill Festival began with traditional blessing pronounced by *Mongtei* of Aniashu village while Chief host, Nagaland Governor R N Ravi and Host, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio opened festival by beating traditional gong. This year's annual Hornbill Festival is set to get bigger with a new global partner and a mantra of zero-waste.



Celebrations: The Festival will witness cultural performance of different tribes of Nagaland and Northeastern States, indigenous games, night carnival, city tour, art exhibition, photo-fest among others. The festival included a colourful display of Naga Culture themed as 'Colours of Nagaland'. A display of Sukhoi aircraft flying over Kisama site was also organised in close coordination between state government and Eastern Air Command (IAF) (headquartered in Shillong). Nagaland government has also partnered with Airbnb in hope that deal would boost state's tourism potential.

Nuclear capable Agni-III ballistic missile fails in maiden night trial

The first night trial of long-range nuclear capable Agni-III surface-to-surface Ballistic Missile was carried out at Integrated Test Range (ITR) at APJ Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast. However, the Agni-III missile's maiden night trial ended in 'failure'. It is not the first failure of Agni series missile as in the past, two other variants of missile, Agni-I and Agni-II, have failed during both development and user trials.

Key Highlights

The Agni-III missile's night trial failed as it tumbled into sea after first phase separation. The missile travelled around 115 km into its initial flight trajectory when things went wrong and deviated from flight path forcing mission team to terminate it midway.

The failure is being attributed to manufacturing defect in Agni missile after preliminary investigations, however, the exact technological fault behind 'failure' is yet to be ascertained which could be possibly due to metallurgical defects also.

The trial was conducted as part of user training exercise and was conducted by Indian Army's Strategic Forces Command (SFC) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) provided all logistic support.

The test was considered very crucial as it was to reconfirm technical parameters set for user and its readiness to handle weapon during night hours. The flight trajectory of missile was set for nearly 2,800 km.

About Agni-III Missile

It is developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and has already been inducted in Indian armed forces in 2011. Missile range covers all major cities of Pakistan and China.

Features: The missile is propelled by two-stage solid propellant and is capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads weighing up to 1.5 tonnes. Missile is 17 metres tall and has a diameter of 2-metre, it weighs around 50 tonne.

December 3, 2019

Awards for first ever CMS Vatavaran-2019 presented

The Awards for first-ever **MoEF&CC and CMS VATAVARAN-2019 Short Film Competition and Festival on Environment** was presented in New Delhi. The awards were presented by Ravi Agrawal, Additional Secretary, Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) at culmination of four-day festival where all shortlisted films were showcased.

Key Highlights

The Jury which selected final awardees for competition comprised of Ramesh Sippy, Manju Borah, Rahul Rawail and Agnimitra Paul. The shortlisted films of MoEF&CC-2019 Short Film Competition and Festival on Environment were screened in festival.

The award was presented in three categories: (1) School students, (2) Amateur and College students, (3) Professionals.

Under School Students category: 345 film entry was received and 35 was nominated

Under Amateur and College Students category: 173 film entry was received and 42 was nominated

Under Professionals category: 82 film entry was received and 35 was nominated



About Vatavaran-2019

The four-day long festival was organized by Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in collaboration with Centre for Media Studies (CMS). The MoEF&CC- 2019 Short Film Competition and Festival on Environment were announced by Union Environment Minister on 6 June 2019 during the celebrations of World Environment Day.

The festival was organized, exclusively on *Environment and Wildlife* along with 10th Competitive edition of CMS VATAVARAN. In a first, VATAVARAN-2019 festival was inaugurated at New Delhi by Union Minister Suresh Prabhu, who is also Chair of 2019 Awards Jury of CMS VATAVARAN.

During the festival, a range of workshops, discussions, seminars, interactions were also being organized to churn innovative ideas, paving a path for new talents and creative minds in stream of film making with a sense of responsibility towards Environment.

SURYA KIRAN – XIV: Indo-Nepal joint military Exercise

The 2019 edition of Joint military exercise between India and Nepal called 'SURYA KIRAN – XIV', will be conducted at Salijhandi, Rupendehi district of Nepal from 3 to 16 December 2019. It is an annual event which is conducted alternatively in Nepal and India.

About Exercise SURYA KIRAN – XIV

This year exercise will comprise of 300 soldiers from both Indian and Nepal Army. Both countries would be sharing their experience in conduct of various counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations as also various humanitarian assistance missions by both Armies.

Objective: To conduct a Battalion level combined training between Armies of India and Nepal to increase interoperability in jungle warfare and counter terrorist operations in mountainous terrain, medical and environmental conservation, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief including aviation aspects.

Importance: In series of military training exercises undertaken by India with various countries, 'SURYA KIRAN' exercise with Nepal is an important exercise in terms of security challenges faced by both nations in realm of changing facets of global terrorism. This joint military exercise will enhance level of defence cooperation which will further fostering bilateral relations between two nations.

December 3: International Day of Persons with Disabilities

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is being observed by the United Nations since 1992. The aim of the day is to promote well-being of the persons with disabilities and to increase awareness of their situation in social, political cultural and economic ways.

Theme: Promoting participation of persons with disabilities and leadership

Highlights

The United Nations is organizing a one day event at the UN headquarters. The organization is to launch new initiatives under United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. The initiatives will focus on achieving the SDG 17 that pledges "leave no one behind"

United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

The strategy was launched in June 2019. It provides foundation for transformative and sustainable progress on disability inclusion. The strategy helps to support the implementation of Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

The strategy includes three main key approaches. *Twin Track Approach* aims at considering disability across all the works of the UN and also works under pre-determined targets. The *Intersectionality* includes factors like age, gender and location. *Coordination* strategy aims at coherent approach to accelerate the progress and achieve inclusion.

Soma Roy Burman appointed new Controller General of Accounts

Government has appointed Soma Roy Burman, as 24th Controller General of Accounts (CGA) of India with



effect from 1 December 2019. With this appointment she has now become 7th woman to hold this position.

About Soma Roy Burman

She is a 1986-batch Indian Civil Accounts Service Officer (ICAS). During her 3 decade long career, she held cadre positions at different levels in ministries including Information & Broadcasting, Home Affairs, Finance, Human Resource Development, Shipping, Road Transport & Highways and Industry.

Prior to being appointed CGA, she has served as Additional Controller General of Accounts (ACGA) in office of CGA, handling critical areas of accounting rules, financial reporting, data analytics, policy and reforms, cash and budget management.

About Controller General of Accounts (CGA)

CGA of India is principal advisor to Union Government on accounting matters. It is central accounting and reporting agency for government and is responsible for establishing and managing a sound management accounting system. It is also responsible for preparation and submission of accounts of Union Government and exchequer control and internal audits. It also heads Indian Civil Accounts Organisation (ICAO) under Department of Expenditure, Union Ministry of Finance. CGA is assisted by officers of Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS).

India's first Maritime Museum in Gujarat

The Government of India is planning to establish a National Maritime Heritage Museum at [Lothal](#) in Gujarat. The museum will also act as an independent research center for archaeology of boat building, reconstruction of maritime history and materials traded. It will hold display of salvaged materials from shipwreck sites in Indian Ocean waters.

Underwater Archaeology

The underwater archaeology involves remains of submerged shipwrecks, ports and records of maritime activity from archaeological excavations. The shipwrecks studies in India were initiated in 1989 in the Sunchi Reef, Goa. According to UNESCO, there are around 3 million undiscovered shipwrecks on the world's ocean floor.

Significance

India has vast potential with its rich maritime history. The archaeological evidence from South East Asia and Persian Gulf say that Indian maritime voyagers ventured into eastern and western seas even before 4000 years ago. Studying about sunken ships will help to fill in gaps in India's maritime history and trade links with other countries.

Lothal

Lothal is an ancient city of Indus Valley Civilization. It was discovered in 1954 by the ASI (Archaeological Survey of India). The site is important as the irrigation tank of the city was used as a dock in ancient times. Also the city was a part of a major river system (the five rivers flowing through Punjab) on the trade route. The GoI has requested UNESCO to add Lothal into the lists of UNESCO Heritage sites. The requisition is yet to receive approval.

National Awards for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities 2019

Vice President of India M. Venkiah Naidu conferred 'National Awards for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities 2019' at a function organized by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment to celebrate '**International Day of Persons with Disabilities**' celebrated on 3 December 2019 in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. Vice President was the Chief Guest of the function while Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot presided over the function.

About National Awards for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities 2019

The award was conferred on Institutions, Individuals, Organizations and State/District etc. for their



outstanding achievements and work done every year towards empowerment of Persons with Disabilities or Divyangjan (PwDs).

Till 2017, the Scheme of Award was governed under **National Awards Rules, 2013** which provided 7 categories of disabilities according to **Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995**. However, when Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 came into force w.e.f. 19 April 2017, the number of specified disabilities increased from 7 to 21 under new Law. Accordingly all 21 disabilities were included under National Award Guidelines.

National Selection Committee under Chairpersonship of Union Minister, Social Justice & Empowerment in its meeting held on 6 November 2019 considered recommendation of Screening Committees and approved all 65 awards in 14 categories.

National Awards for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for year 2019, are given under 14 categories:

1. Best Employee/Self-Employed Person with Disabilities;
2. Best Employers and Placement Officers and/or Agencies;
3. Best Individual and Institution, working for the cause of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities;
4. Role Model;
5. Best Applied Research or Innovation or Product, aimed at improving the life of Persons with Disabilities;
6. Outstanding Work in creation of barrier-free environment for Persons with Disabilities;
7. Best District in providing rehabilitation services;
8. Best State Channelizing Agency of the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFD);
9. Outstanding Creative Adult Person with Disabilities;
10. Best Creative Child with Disabilities;
11. Best Braille Press;
12. Best Accessible Website;
13. Best State (i) in promoting Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities; & (ii) for implementation of Accessible India Campaign.
14. Best Sports-person with Disabilities.

Sub-lieutenant Shivangi: India Navy's First Woman Pilot

The Indian Navy got its first woman pilot (a front-line combat role) as 'Sub-Lieutenant Shivangi' completed her operational training in Kochi, Kerala. She received her 'golden wings' from Vice Admiral AK Chawla, and will fly the Naval Dornier surveillance aircraft.

Key Highlights

A batch of 3 trainee officers of 7th Dornier Conversion Course (DOCC) including a lady officer qualified as Dornier pilots and were awarded **Golden 'Wings'** at a ceremony held at INS Garuda. Vice Admiral, the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C), Southern Naval Command was Chief Guest for ceremony who presented 'Wings' to passing out officers, signifying their qualification as naval aviators. Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C), South Rolling Trophy for standing 1st in overall order of merit was awarded to Lieutenant Shivam Pandey.

'Wings Significance': The award of 'Wings' marks culmination of 1 year of flying training at Air Force Academy (AFA), Dundigal and Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 550, INS Garuda in Kochi. From here on, these pilots will join **'Dornier Operational Flying Training'** course at INAS 550 from mid-January 2020. This will be prior to joining an operational Maritime Reconnaissance squadron.

About Sub-lieutenant Shivangi

She has created history as first woman pilot of Indian Navy, on successful graduation from the course. She is a native of Muzaffarpur, Bihar. She was inducted into Indian Navy under Short Service Commission (SSC)-Pilot entry scheme and was commissioned into the Navy in June 2018. She was part of 27th Naval



orientation course (NOC) at Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala. As part of her training, She has flown Pilatus PC 7 MkII, Basic Trainer at Air Force Academy (AFA) as well as completed Dornier Conversion with Indian Navy at Kochi. To become a fully operational pilot on Maritime Reconnaissance (MR) aircraft, she will continue her training at INAS 550, which is the Dornier squadron at INS Garuda.

Report: Kharif crop production to dip by 12%

On December 3, 2019, a private weather monitoring company, Skymet released a report on Kharif Crop outlook. According to the report, barring cotton the Kharif crops are expected to witness a drop-in production by 4.5% to 12% as compared to 2018-19.

Key findings of the report

Several crops such as groundnut, soybean, cotton, tur and urad were adversely affected all over the country and especially in Maharashtra. This was mainly due to excess rainfall in some areas, rainfall deficit in other areas and delayed monsoon in certain other regions. Bottom line, several parts did not receive right amount of usual monsoon rains at the right time. The report also said that rains till the end of September delayed maturity process. Excess moisture content in the soil hindered the growth of the crops.

Kharif Crops

The crops that are grown in the months of south west monsoon are called Kharif crops. It includes rice, jowar, maize, moong, bajra, cotton, groundnut, jute. In India coastal regions bring highest yield of Kharif crops. It includes millets in Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, paddy in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, pulses in Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

Punjab creates land banks to boost industrial production

The Punjab cabinet on December 2, 2019, approved the amendment of Punjab Village Common Land (Regulation) rules, 1964. It aims at creating land banks in rural areas to boost industrial development in the state.

Highlights of the amendment

The amendment has included Rule 12-B that provides special provision to transfer *shamlat land* or common land to the development of industrial projects. According to Gol, Shamlat land is the land that does not come under cultivation and habitation. It is the consolidated land holdings that are held by the state governments for common use.

Under the amendment, the Gram Panchayat can transfer the shamlat land to the industries with prior approval from the state government. Land Banks are to be set up under Gram Panchayat to implement this amendment.

In order to achieve this, as an initial step, 1,000 acres of Panchayat land have been identified and integrated across five different villages. It will be used to develop a Global Manufacturing and Knowledge Park at Rajpura in Patiala District. The park is a part of the [Amristar-Kolkata Industrial Corridor project](#).

The rule allows the transfer of land to industry department or state-owned Punjab Small Industries and Export Corporation (PSIEC).

Significance

The amendment will help in fastening the development of core and infrastructure projects. It will also bring in long-term industrial benefits. Along with land banks, amendments were also made to factories act, industrial disputes act and contract labor act. These amendments aim at promoting ease of doing business.

Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize 2019: Author Tony Joseph book 'Early Indians' wins

English author Tony Joseph has won 12th 'Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize' for his 2018 book, 'Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came'. Tony Joseph, a journalist-author won against four other debut writers and the award was announced Shakti Bhatt Foundation.



About Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize

The award that was instituted in 2008 and carries a trophy and a cash prize of Rs.2 lakh. It seeks to celebrate 'extraordinary new writing in all genres' from South Asian countries. In 2018, the prize was awarded to **Sujatha Gidla** for her '*Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family And The Making Of Modern India*'.

His Book 'Early Indians': Tony, a journalist-author, in his book tells the story of people of South Asia through research in 6 disciplines, including path-breaking new DNA evidence. The book remarkably explores the origins of first humans who occupied Indian subcontinent, brings together a wealth of research from history, biology, archaeology, population genetics, social linguistics as well as other fields that are proving deeply interconnected.

Other Short-Listed Books for 2019's prize included: Bangladeshi writer Numair Atif Choudhury's Babu Bangladeshi, Priyanka Dubey's No Nation for Women, Roshan Ali's Ib's Endless Search for Satisfaction, as well as late Pakistani-American novelist Nadia Akbar's Goodbye Freddie Mercury.

Gol maps Tiger Corridors in the country

On December 2, 2019, the Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change provided the details of tiger corridor mapping in Rajya Sabha. The corridors were mapped by the National Tiger Conservation Authority and Wildlife Institute of India. The institutes have mapped 32 corridors in all.

Tiger Corridors

The Corridors grouped under 4 major categories were listed state-wise. The corridors are located in the Shivalik hills and Gangetic plains, central India and Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats and the North Eastern hills. The corridors are operated under Tiger Conservation Plan. The plan is protected and implemented under section 38V of the Wildlife(Protection) act, 1972.

Shivalik hills and Gangetic Plains

In this region, there are 3 corridors. It includes Rajaji-Corbett in Uttarakhand; Corbett-Dudhwa in Uttarakhand, Nepal and UP; Dudhwa-Kishanpur-Katerniaghat in UP, Nepal.

Central India and Eastern Ghats

There are around 11 corridors in the region. It includes Ranthambhore-Kuno-Madhav in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan; Bandhavgarh-Achanakmar in MP, Chattisgarh; Bandhavgarh-Sanjay Dubri-Guru Ghasidas in MP; Guru Ghasidas-Palamau-Lawalong in Chattisgarh, Jharkhand; Kanha-Achanakmar in MP, Chattisgarh; Kanha-Pench in MP, Maharashtra, Pench-Satpura-Melghat in MP, Maharashtra.

The corridors in Eastern Ghats include Kanha-Navegaon Nagzira-Tadoba-Indravati in MP, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, AP, Indravati-Sunabeda in Chattisgarh, Odisha, Similipal-Satkosia in Odisha and Nagarjunasagar-Sri Venkateshwara National Park in Andhra Pradesh.

Similarly, there are around 8 corridors in Western Ghats and 10 corridors in North Eastern India.

Significance

India is home to 70% of wild tigers in the world. The Central India is currently home to highest genetic diversity of tiger in the world. Tiger Corridors are highly important for their diversity. The tiger corridors are stretch of land that links two different tiger habitats. Without these corridors the habitats will become fragmented and tiger population will become isolated leading to local extinction.

Intensified Mission Indra Dhanush 2.0 begins

Government has launched its flagship scheme 'Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0' to focus on full immunization coverage of 272 districts spread over 27 states and 652 blocks of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar among hard-to-reach and tribal populations. The Mission Indradhanush 2.0 will be carried out between December 2019 and March 2020.



Mission Indradhanush 2.0

Objective: To prevent 8 diseases under mission as well as to escalate efforts to achieve goal of attaining 90% national immunization coverage across India.

Salient features of IMI 2.0:

The Intensified Mission Indradhanush immunization drive/ activity will consist of 4 rounds of immunization over 7 working days, excluding Sundays, RI days and holidays.

It will cover vaccines for *measles, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, Hepatitis B, tuberculosis (Tb), meningitis and poliomyelitis*. In selected areas, vaccines for Japanese encephalitis (JE) and Hemophilus influenza will also be provided. IMI would also ensure that the children under 2 years of age and pregnant women are immunized against 8 vaccine-preventable diseases.

It would include an enhanced immunization session with flexible timing, mobile session and mobilization by other departments. Enhanced focus will also be on left outs, dropouts, and resistant families & hard to reach areas. Also focusing on urban, underserved population and tribal areas.

Ekalavya model residential schools modernised

On December 2, 2019, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs provided financial assistance for the upgradation and modernization of the Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS). Each school is to be provided with a net amount of Rs 5 crores.

Highlights

The sanctioned amount will be used to renovate classrooms, expand existing academic blocks, fulfil the requirement of furniture, sanitation facilities, construction of hostel rooms, etc.

Constitution

The funds are allocated to the scheme under Article 275(1) of the constitution. The article allows Govt to allocate funds annually to different states, schemes or groups to meet their costs. The article also allows to pay the schemes from Consolidated Fund of India.

EMRS

The Ekalavya Model Residential Schools is a scheme under Ministry of Tribal Affairs. It was introduced in the year 1997-98 for better access of quality education to remote tribal children.

Budget 2018-19

In the previous budget, it was announced that every block of the EMRS with more than 50% of ST population and at least 20,000 of tribal population will be provided with an EMRS by the end of 2022.

Under the scheme, government provides 30 lakhs grant for establishment of the schools and thereafter 30 lakhs annually. Until December 2018, 284 EMRS have been sanctioned.

Lok Sabha clears Taxation (Amendment) bill, 2019

On December 2, 2019, Lok Sabha passed the Taxation Laws (Amendment) bill, 2019. The main objective of the bill is to provide an option for the domestic companies to pay taxes at the rate of 22%.

Key Features

The bill replaced the ordinance promulgated by the President in September 2019. The ordinance reduced corporate taxes. The bill aims to amend both Income Tax Act, 1961 and [Finance Act, 2019](#).

The bill provides the domestic companies to pay taxes at the rate of 22%. However, this can be availed only if the companies are not claiming deductions under the Income Tax act. Currently, the companies with annual turn over of Rs 400 crores are paying taxes at the rate of 25% and the companies with annual turn over more than Rs 400 crores are paying taxes at the rate of 30%.

Concessions are provided to those companies that were started after September 30, 2019 and begins manufacturing before April 1, 2023. They can pay taxes at the rate of 15% provided they do not claim deductions from other laws and rules



The companies opting for the new tax rates need not pay Minimum Alternate Taxes (MAT).

Background

The main aim of the bill is to promote growth and investment in domestic manufacturing sector. In order to pull up the economy of the country the Union Government also reduced the corporate tax rates up to 10%. It was the biggest reduction in the last 28 years.

Pritivirajsing Roopun elected as new President of Mauritius by parliament

The National Assembly of Republic of Mauritius has unanimously elected **Prithvirajsing Roopun**, as new President of the island nation, a largely ceremonial post. He was former arts and culture minister of country. The motion for his election as new President was presented by Prime Minister, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity. In Mauritius, Prime Minister is head of government and holds most political power while president is head of state but has no executive role and is considered guardian of constitution.

Key Highlights

The Prime Minister of Mauritius *Pravind Kumar Jugnauth* also presented motion for election of **Marie Cyril Eddy Boissezon**, as new Vice-President of the island nation. The swearing-in ceremony of President and Vice-President of Republic was held at the State House, *Le Réduit*.

Prithvirajsing Roopun, succeeded Ameenah Gurib-Fakim who resigned in March 2018 after being embroiled in a scandal over her use of a credit card to buy luxury personal items, however, he denied wrongdoing. In November 2019, Mauritius held elections in which incumbent Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth won a new five-year term.

Prithvirajsing Roopun (62): He is a lawyer who was first elected to National Assembly in 2000 and has been minister of arts and culture, social integration and regional administration. Since attaining independence from Britain in 1968, Mauritius has become one of most stable democracies in Africa.

Labour Ministry is celebrating Pension Week

The Labor Ministry is celebrating pension week from November 30, 2019 to December 6, 2019 in order to increase enrolments under National Pension Scheme (NPS) for traders and Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM). The aim of the celebration is to enroll 1 crore beneficiaries under PMSYM and 50 lakh beneficiaries under NPS-traders.

Highlights

The observation of the week was inaugurated by the Minister of State for Labour and Employment Shri Santosh Gangwar. As a part of the celebration, awareness campaigns are to be organized among 10 crore Ayushman beneficiaries, 40 lakh Anganwadi workers during the initial days. The campaigns will explain the pension schemes being offered by the Government of India and their benefits and importance. The campaign will also include 2.5 crore Self Help Group members, 4 to 5 crore building and other construction workers and 10 lakh ASHA workers.

Significance

In order increase enrollments the monthly contribution of the scheme has been kept at the lowest level ranging from Rs 55 to 200 per month. When a person joins a pension scheme he enjoys tax deduction up to 10% of basic salary. The schemes are designed in such a way that after retirement the person can fulfil his basic needs with a minimal monthly amount, say Rs 6000.

"India Ranking Society" established to rank educational institutes

On December 2, 2019, the Ministry of Human Resource Development informed Lok Sabha that the "Indian Ranking Society" was approved by the ministry in August 2019. The aim of the society is to develop methodologies and systems to rank higher educational institutions in the country. The proposal was approved in the 127th meeting of the AICTE Executive Council.



NIRF Ranking

At present, the educational institutes of the country are ranked according to the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). It includes 5 broad generic groups of parameters namely teaching, learning and resources; graduation outcomes; perception; outreach and inclusivity; research and professional practice. The next NIRF ranking will be released in April 2020 as scheduled.

Significance

The Indian Ranking, 2019 ranked the higher educational institutes based on the categories Pharmacy, Engineering, management, law, architecture, medicine. However, the new ranking system will help bring improvement in every category. This is because the new system will include professional categories and generic group parameters as well. Also, it will help to form a healthy environment.

December 4, 2019

Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Bill, 2019 passed by Parliament

The *Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage, and Advertisement) Bill, 2019* was passed by Parliament on 3 December 2019. It was introduced in Lok Sabha by Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Harsh Vardhan. The Bill which seeks to prohibit the production, storage, trade, and advertisement of electronic cigarettes, replaces an Ordinance promulgated in September 2019.

Key Features of Bill

Electronic cigarettes: It defines electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes– as electronic devices that heat a substance, which may contain nicotine and other chemicals, to create vapour for inhalation as well as contain different flavours.

Banning of e-cigarettes: It prohibits production/ manufacture/ sale/ transport/ import/ export/ transport/ distribution/ advertisement of e-cigarettes in India. Any person not adhering to this provision will be punishable with imprisonment of up to 1 year, or a fine of up to 1 lakh rupees, or both and for any subsequent offence, the person will be punishable with an imprisonment of up to 3 years, along with a fine of up to 5 lakh rupees.

Storage of e-cigarettes: No person is allowed to use any place for storage of any stock of e-cigarettes and in case, if any person stores any stock of it then the person will be punishable with an imprisonment of up to 6 months, or a fine of up to Rs.50000 (or both).

Authorised Officer: Once the Bill comes into force after presidential assent, then, the owners of existing stocks of e-cigarettes will have to declare and deposit these stocks at nearest office of an authorised officer, who may be, a police officer (at least at the level of a sub-inspector), or any other officer as notified by central/ state government.

Powers of authorised officers: If an authorised officer believes that any provision of the Bill has been contravened, he can search any place where production/ trade/ storage / advertising of e-cigarettes is being undertaken and can also seize any record/ property connected to e-cigarettes found during search. He may also take the person connected with the offence into custody.

India conducts successful trial of indigenously made Prithvi-2 missile

India has successfully conducted another night trial of its indigenously developed nuclear capable Prithvi-2 missile from a mobile launcher of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Odisha coast. The successful test fires were part of a routine user trial for armed forces and met all parameters. Earlier, the flight test of surface-to-surface missile was carried out barely a 15 days after two back-to-back trials of Prithvi-2 were conducted successfully at night from same base on 20 November.

About Prithvi-2 Missile

It is a tactical surface-to-surface short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) with a strike range of 350 kilometres



and is capable of carrying 500-1,000 kilograms of warheads. The state-of-the-art missile is powered by liquid propulsion twin engines and uses an advanced inertial guidance system with manoeuvring trajectory to hit its target.

It has been developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP). It is deployed by Strategic Forces Command (SFC) of the armed forces. The 9-metre-tall, single-stage liquid-fuelled 'Prithvi' is first missile to have been developed by DRDO under IGMDP. The missile has been already inducted into the armoury of defence forces in 2003.

India plans to boost clean energy sector

The Government of India is planning to integrate largest lenders to the power sector in order to help clean energy firms clear their dues. It includes Rural Electrification Corporation (REC), Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA). The integration will help resolve growing crisis in the clean energy sector and also aid India achieve its ambitious targets in renewable energy.

Issue

The discoms are delaying their payments to the generators. This creates difficulties to the banking sector whose repayment is delayed. Eventually further loan processes get delayed. This creates a vicious cycle where the expansion of clean energy sector gets affected ultimately. The current issue hinders India from achieving an ambitious target of 175 GW of renewable energy by 2022.

Measures to increase Solar Energy

Recently Govt launched several steps to achieve the target of 100 GW of solar energy by December 2022. It includes waiver of Inter State Transmission System charges and losses for projects that are commissioned up to December 2022. The Union Government also permitted 100% FDI in the solar energy sector. Apart from these various schemes such as [Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan Yojana \(PM-KUSUM\)](#) and [Solar Roof Top programme](#) were launched.

Measures to increase Wind Energy

In 2016, the Government issued Guidelines for Development of Onshore Wind Power Projects. It included site feasibility, online registry, real time monitoring, compliance of grid regulations and decommissioning plan. In 2017, the Guidelines for tariff based competitive bidding process for wind power projects were issued. Apart from these, the government is also promoting Generation Based Incentives for wind projects.

Bharatiya Poshan Anthem launched by Vice President M Venkaiah

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu launched the 'Bharatiya Poshan Anthem' in New Delhi, which aims towards taking message of making India malnutrition free to all corners of country. While launching, Vice president hoped that the 'poshan anthem' will lead to a nutrition revolution to transform India into a malnutrition-free country by 2022.

The anthem was conceptualised by Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) and has been penned by noted lyricist Prasoon Joshi and sung by Shankar Mahadevan.

About 'Poshan Abhiyan' or 'National Nutrition Mission' (NNM)

It is flagship programme of Union government to improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers. POSHAN stands for '*Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition*'. NNM was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 8 March 2018 on the occasion of the International Women's Day from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan. It aims to make India malnutrition free by 2022 by ensuring holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children.

Malnutrition in India: According to the **Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey 2016-18**, about 34.7% of Indian children aged less than 5 are stunted. These figures are of grave concern and it is government's responsibility to ensure that children get best childhood possible.

More than 12 crore women, over 6 crore men and 13 crore children were reached through various activities



undertaken during **POSHAN Maah** in September 2018. Thus, it must be ensured that momentum is not weakening to achieve target of malnutrition free India by 2022.

Way Ahead

To ensure the best implementation of POSHAN Abhiyaan, there is an urgent need to establish coordination among various agencies, departments of both central and state governments. There is also a need to invest in training and capacity building of Anganwadi workers, this is because, the success of Poshan Abhiyaan depends upon collective efforts of all including optimum utilization of Anganwadi Services.

Government should focus on ensuring good quality, easily accessible and affordable maternal healthcare services for all women. Increasing people's participation is also essential to ensure holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children. Also, addressing girl-dropout from schools, preventing early marriage of girls, delaying first pregnancy and adequate spacing between births will contribute to better nutrition.

Delhi enters list of top 10 most popular destinations in the world

The National Capital has been witnessing soaring popularity and wellness tourism across the world. According to Euro Monitor International, Delhi currently ranks 11th in the list of world's top 100 destinations and is to gain 8th rank in 2019. The ranking was released by the organization on December 3, 2019 under the title "Top 100 city destination ranking"

Highlights: India

The report says that various cultural traditions and enriching history makes Delhi the most favorite places among international tourists. Also, air connectivity and world class airports have helped the city to increase its position in the ranking. India is also gaining attention for its Ayurvedic and Yoga practices.

The report also says that international tourists visiting Delhi has increased by 25% in 2019 as compared to 2018. In 2019, there were around 15.2 million tourists visiting the capital. This year with seven cities in the top 100 destinations, India has emerged as the strongest tourist destination.

Highlights: World

Hong Kong has remained the topmost for three consecutive years (2017, 2018 and 2019). Followed by Hong Kong, Bangkok, London, Macau, Singapore were at the second, third, fourth and fifth ranks respectively. Around 43 cities from Asia were among the top 100 City Destination ranking.

The popularity has increased in Asia as compared to other parts of the world. This is mainly due to developing infrastructure, digitization of travel facilities, electronic Visa applications, government focus on tourism

CSIR Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Test gets US FDA certification

The CSIR-IICT, Hyderabad on December 3, 2019, announced that the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) cleared the Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) Test facility at the centre. The inspection was conducted between August 21, 2019 and August 22, 2019 with regard to Current Good Manufacturing Practices and was certified "No Action Initiated".

Significance

The Research institute has largest facility of NMR laboratory in the country. It is equipped with nine NMR spectrometers. With the USFDA clearance the research center will gain further motivation to high quality research.

Why is USFDA clearance Essential?

The pharma and food products being exported to the US should adhere to CGMP (Current Goods Manufacturing Practices) according to FDA guidelines. On completion of inspection, FDA issues Form 483. The form includes warnings and corrective action plans if in need. Upon assertion from FDA, the product being manufactured through the certified process is allowed to be exported to the US.



NMR spectroscopy is important for structural characterization of chemical molecules used in pharmaceuticals. Bottom line, USFDA certification is essential and important to increase chemical and pharmaceutical exports to US.

US is the top export destinations of India's Pharmaceuticals. In 2018-19, the Indian pharma exports to the US were 5820 million USD. Next to US, UK stands second with Indian pharma exports amounting to 630 million USD (2018-19), which is merely a tenth of exports to the US. Therefore, the USFDA certification is highly important to keep up the exports.

Nuclear Magnetic Resonance

Nuclear Magnetic Resonance is an analytical technique to determine the purity of a sample and its molecular structure. It is used to infer basic structure of unknown compounds. It helps to determine phase changes, solubility, conformational exchange and diffusion.

The technique is used to observe the local magnetic fields around atomic nuclei. Biochemists use NMR technique to identify proteins and other complex molecules.

India, Sweden join hands to set up Healthcare Innovation Centre in India

India and Sweden has joined hands to set up a healthcare innovation centre to promote research, broadly in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and help scale-up Indian start-ups in the sector. Later, AIIMS, Delhi; AIIMS, Jodhpur, and Swedish Trade Commissioner's Office in New Delhi signed a Memorandum of Intent (MoI) to cement cooperation, to set up a healthcare innovation centre. The signing of MoI marks 10 years of India-Sweden health cooperation.

Key Highlights

The announcement about cooperation was made earlier in presence of Swedish King *Carl XVI Gustaf* and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The new cooperation among two AIIMS and Swedish side will be a broad-scoped one and work in areas of cancer and other NCDs, besides innovation.

Over the past decade, the cooperation between India and Sweden has grown in strength. The year 2019 marks **Sweden-India Year of Health** marking 10 years of India-Sweden cooperation in healthcare. This collaboration is built on quadruple-helix model with active participation of government, private enterprises, civil society and academia.

A '*coordination cell*' will be set up at Swedish Trade Commissioner's in New Delhi. It will look at entire ecosystem and will promote innovation broadly in NCDs and other disease areas, besides innovation in technology, processes, data, business models and skilling.

India-Sweden innovation centre collaboration will not only strengthen India's efforts in finding innovative solutions for 'affordable and accessible healthcare in India' but will also strengthen healthcare delivery system by an outcome and result based approach.

Ministry of Tourism sanctions 18 North East Development Project

The Ministry of Tourism on December 3, 2019 sanctioned 18 projects under the schemes [PRASHAD](#) and [Swadesh Darshan](#). The Ministry has also allocated Rs 1456 crores for the projects.

Highlights

In order to develop the North Eastern region as a tourist destination several projects are being initiated. The Ministry has released television campaigns on private channels in the country and on Doordarshan. Also, numerous television commercials and films are being used as publicity material. The Ministry also organizes [International Tourism Mart](#) annually in the North Eastern region. It has also provided complimentary spaces to the North Eastern States to increase their participation in India Pavilion set up by the ministry.

The amount sanctioned will further help in developing the above initiatives. Apart from these, the allocated fund will also be used for development of wildlife circuit, development of Heritage circuit and development



of Kamakhya Temple and other important pilgrimage destination in the region.

Significance

Today Tourism contributes to 10% of world GDP. It is also the highest generator of jobs. One in every 12 jobs is generated by the Tourism sector. In India tourism contributes to 6.23% of total GDP and generates 8.78% of total employment.

Mumbai Central railway station certified as country's first 'Eat Right'

The Mumbai Central Terminus of Western Railway has been certified as **India's first 'Eat Right Station'** with a 4-Star rating awarded by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), as a part of 'Eat Right India' movement launched in 2018. FSSAI is an autonomous body under Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW).

Key Highlights

The honour came on basis of compliance of food safety and hygiene, food handling at preparation, promotion of local and seasonal foods, trans-shipment and retail or serving points, food waste management, availability of healthy diet, as well as creating awareness on food safety and a healthy diet.

Food quality regulator FSSAI, Western Railways (WR), and Indian Railways Catering Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) trained food handlers, both in canteens and base kitchens, who inspected catering establishments at station and certified and rated standard of food.

The Indian Railways as part of its efforts to help passengers make a healthy and right food choice, launched '**Eat Right Station**' as part of '**Eat Right India**' initiative of FSSAI started in 2018. 'Eat Right India' built on 2 broad pillars- '*Eat Healthy and Eat Safe*', is aimed towards engaging, exciting and enabling people to enhance their health and wellbeing. It also focused on ensuring that people ate healthy, with FSSAI making suitable interventions on both demand/ supply side, through the engagement of key stakeholders.

Organ Donation Awards given by NOTTO

The autonomous organisation National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) of Union Health & Family Welfare Ministry (MoHFW) conferred, Organ Donation Awards on the occasion of **10th National Organ Donation Day** in a programme held at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi. During the programme, the organs donor families were honoured and Best SOTTO (State Organ Tissue Transplant Organisation), Best Hospital and Best Transplant Co-ordinator awards were presented for outstanding activities in field of organ donation at national and state level.

Organ Donation Awards

Tamil Nadu bagged- Best State Award in cadaveric organ donation. The state won the award for the fifth consecutive year.

Madhya Pradesh won- Best SOTTO (State Organ Tissue Transplant Organisation) award.

Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH) in Chennai won Best Performing Hospital Award.

Gujarat bagged 3 awards of central government including Best SOTTO (State Organ Tissue Transplant Organisation), Best Hospital and Best Coordinator in field of organ donation activities.

New Zealand win 2019 Christopher Martin-Jenkins Spirit of Cricket award

The national cricket team of New Zealand was awarded the Christopher Martin-Jenkins Spirit of Cricket award for the year 2019. New Zealand's team captain Kane Williamson was presented with the award during the drawn second Test between his team and England.

Why was New Zealand Awarded?

The New Zealand team has been recognised for their sporting conduct following a dramatic defeat by England in ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2019 final at Lord's in July 2019. However, even though England lifted the trophy on basis of boundary count as runs were tied in both 50-over match and Super Over, the New Zealand team gained praise for their humility after losing the premier tournament. Thus, Kane



Williamson-led team's on and off-field display during World Cup final earned them the award.

Kumar Sangakkara, the president of the Marylebone Cricket Club (one of the creators of award) also described New Zealand team as worthy winners of this award.

About Christopher Martin-Jenkins Spirit of Cricket award

The award was created in 2013, in memory of Martin-Jenkins, the former MCC president and BBC Test Match Special commentator, to honour his longstanding passion and desire to see the game played in the right spirit. It was the brainchild of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

Winner of 2019 Ballon d'Or awards

Winners of 2019 Ballon d'Or awards ("Golden Ball") which recognises the best footballer in world for 2019, were announced by France Football magazine in Paris on 2 December 2019. This year was the 64th annual ceremony of Ballon d'Or, presented by France Football. The nominees for awards were announced on 6 November 2019.

A total of 176 international journalists voted for 2019 edition of Football Awards, with journalists from Europe and Asia voting for van Dijk, while journalists from Africa, Oceania and North and South America voted for Messi.

2019 Ballon d'Or awards winners

Ballon d'Or: *Lionel Messi* of Argentina and Barcelona FC. He won the award for a record 6th time in his career. He won previous award in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2015.

Ballon d'Or Féminin: *Megan Rapinoe* of United States and Regin FC. She won the 2019 Ballon d'Or Féminin for best female player in world.

Kopa Trophy (for best player in world under age of 21): *Matthijs de Ligt* of Netherlands

Yashin Trophy (for best goalkeeper in the world): *Alisson Becker* of Brazil and Liverpool FC won the inaugural Yashin Trophy as the best goalkeeper in the world in 2019.

Gol halts online drug sales

The Government of India has halted online sales of drugs as it is working on framing rules to regulate the sector. This has hit the pharmacy sector greatly.

Delhi High Court's Order

The order of sale prohibition was initiated by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) V.G.Somani. The order has referred to the Delhi High Court judgement pronounced in response to the case filed by Dermatologist Dr Zaheer Ahmed. Delhi High Court order says that the sales of medicines online are in violation of Drugs and Cosmetics act. Therefore, Gol is framing strict guidelines for E-pharmacies.

E-Pharmacy rules

The E-Pharmacy rules are still at draft stage. The draft includes registration of e-pharmacies, protection of privacy of customers, measures to counterfeit unauthorized sales, drugs and expired products. It also includes periodic inspection as referred by the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, verification of registered pharmacists, details of patients and drugs on E-pharmacy portal.

E-Pharmacies claim that their business comply to Information Technology Act, 2000.

Current Market Scenario of E-pharmacy in India

In the present day, retail stores contribute to 99% of medicines sales with E-pharmacy contributing to only 1% of total medicine sales. In February 2019, the DPIIT (Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) published Draft [National E-commerce policy](#). It includes E-pharmacy guidelines as well. As the industry has a billion-dollar potential, it is important to frame strict guidelines.

SPG (Amendment) Bill passed in Parliament

The SPG amendment bill says that when the SPG cover is withdrawn from a former Prime Minister, the cover



also stands withdrawn from his or her family members. The bill was passed in the parliament on December 3, 2019. The bill aimed at amending the Special Protection Group act, 1988.

Amendment Key Features

The act states that the SPG cover will be provided to the Prime Minister and his family members residing with him at his residence. It also states that the cover will be provided to the former Prime Ministers and their family members for 5 years after he ceases to hold office. The bill points that if the cover is withdrawn from the former Prime Minister, it will stand withdrawn for their family members as well.

SPG

The Special Protection Group is the highest security that was set up in 1985 to protect the Prime Minister of India. It was established after the assassination of PM Indira Gandhi by her own bodyguards in 1984. Though the act was constituted to provide security cover to the Prime Minister, it was amended in 1991 to provide security cover to former PMs.

The President of India does not come under SPG cover due to low threat. He is protected by the Indian Army's President Bodyguard Regiment.

Fourth Phase of UDAN scheme launched

The Union Government of India has launched the fourth round of **UDAN** (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) to enhance the connectivity to regional areas of the country. This phase is to focus on Hilly states, North East Region, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir and Islands.

What is new in Phase 4?

The Viability Gap Funding has been revised. The funding that was provided for Category 2 and 3 aircrafts (> 20 seats) has now been enhanced to all flights in the states of HP, Uttarakhand, J&K, North Eastern states and the islands. Also, the phase will allow operation of helicopter and sea planes. The phase also plans to promote short-haul routes, meaning no monetary support will be given to operators with stages more than 600 kms.

Previous phases of UDAN

In phase 1, around 43 airports were constructed under the scheme. It includes water aerodromes and heliports as well. In phase 2, around 30 airports were constructed and in phase 3, 33 airports were constructed.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation aims to operationalize 1000 routes and more than 100 airports in the next 5 years.

December 5, 2019

National Museum of Indian Cinema signs MoU with Films Division and BookMyShow

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for online ticketing of National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) was inked between Films Division and BookMyShow (BMS) in New Delhi. With this MoU, booking a ticket to visit NMIC will be a click away as it will now be available on BookMyShow, thus benefiting film lovers in India and abroad. The MoU has been part of Museum outreach initiatives aimed at increasing footfalls to NMIC.

About National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC)

It is the only museum in India dedicated to cinema and is an institution of national importance. The Museum was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier in January 2019, at Films Division complex, Mumbai, Maharashtra. It showcases history of India Cinema with help of rare artefacts, diorama, properties and digital elements including costumes, interactive digital screens, information based screen interfaces, kiosks, among others.

This exclusive Museum has been set up to showcase rich cinematic history and heritage of India and encapsulates India's socio-cultural history and evolution through cinema. The Museum is housed in two



buildings- (1) the New Museum Building and (2) 19th century heritage structure, *Gulshan Mahal* – both at Films Division complex.

December 5: World Soil Day

The World Soil Day was endorsed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2013. It was officially adopted through a resolution at the 68th UN General Assembly. Since then every year, the World Soil Day is marked on December 5 by the United Nations all over the world.

Theme: Stop Soil Erosion, Save our Future

SDG

The day is marked focusing on the Sustainable Development Goal 15 which is “Life on Land”. The goal aims at protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, combat desertification, manage forests, reverse land degradation.

Issues

According to the United Nations, Desertification, Land Degradation are the two major issues of soil loss. According to UNCCD, desertification is defined as degradation of dry land eco systems by human activities due to overgrazing, unsustainable farming, clear cutting of land, mining and climate change.

International Union of Soil Sciences

The concept of World Soil Day was first introduced by the IUSS in 2002 to celebrate the importance of soil. The IUSS was founded in 1924. There are more than 86 national and regional members. It acts as a hub of soil scientists and a platform to promote all branches of soil science and its applications.

Significance

The World Soil Day highlights on the problems of population expansion. It aims at reducing soil erosion and maintain soil fertility. The theme of 2019 focuses on challenges in soil management. It encourages organizations, communities and governments to work towards improving soil health

Why was December 5 chosen?

The late king of Thailand King Bhumibol Adulyadej was the main proponent of the initiative. Therefore, his birthday December 5 was chosen as World Soil Day.

Soil Conservation

The day also stresses on the importance of Soil Conservation. The FAO recommends Terrace farming, Contour ploughing, windbreaks, crop rotation, Agrostological measures, green manures, no-till farming, earthworms to conserve soil and prevent soil erosion.

Cabinet apprised of Indo-German strategic collaboration on Railways

Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was notified of Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) between India and Germany regarding strategic cooperation on Railways projects. The Joint Declaration of Intent was signed by Union Ministry of Railways with Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy of *Federal Republic of Germany* in November 2019.

Significance: Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) will provide a platform to Indian Railways to interact and share latest developments and knowledge in field of Railways. JDI will also facilitate exchange of meetings, information, technical visits, expert seminars, as well as implementation of Indo-German jointly agreed cooperation projects.

Background

Railways Ministry signed a Memorandums of Understanding (MoU)/ Memorandums of Cooperation (MoC)/ Joint Declarations of Intent (JDI)/ Administrative Arrangements (AA) for technical cooperation in rail sector with various foreign Governments and National Railways in respect of identified areas of cooperation, which includes development of world class stations, high speed rail, speed raising of existing routes, heavy haul operations as well as modernization of rail infrastructure among others. They will also facilitate exchange



of technical documents and reports, technical experts, training and seminars/ workshops focusing on specific technology areas as well as other interactions for knowledge sharing.

Citizenship (Amendment) bill, 2019 in Lok Sabha

On December 4, 2019, the Union Cabinet cleared the Citizenship (Amendment) bill, for the bill to be tabled in Lok Sabha. The bill is being tabled amidst widespread protests in the north eastern states.

Key Features

The bill aims at providing Indian citizenship to 6 minority communities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The communities are Hindu, Christian, Sikhs, Buddhist and Jain. Currently for a person to get Indian citizenship, he should have resided in the country for 11 years. The bill intends to amend this as 6 years.

Concerns

The bill has not included Muslim community. This according to the opposition is violation of Article 14 that legalizes equality before law. The article states that the government shall show no discrimination on grounds of religion, caste, race, sex or birth.

The Illegal Migrants factor

According to the Citizenship Act, 1955, illegal migrants can either be sent to jail or back to their own countries. In Assam, the protest is on rights and livelihood of ethnic communities on passage of the bill. After the bill is passed, thousands of illegal migrants will be deported according to Assam Accord. According to Assam Accord that was signed in 1985, foreigners who entered Indian soil after March 24, 1971 shall be deported. In Mizoram, the protests are by the illegal Buddhist Chakma immigrants who were displaced by the construction of Kaptai dam on the Karnaphuli river in 1962. The Nagaland Tribes Council and Naga Students Federations sees the bill as a threat to political future of their identity.

There are protests in Manipur in the fear of the state becoming a dumping ground to foreigners

In Tripura the Kokborok community has reduced to 33% of the population of the state. Initially the state was dominated by the community with 80% of the population. Tripura believes that this condition will worsen if the bill is passed.

MadhuApp: Odisha govt. launches smart learning mobile app

Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Odisha has launched a smart learning phone application 'MadhuApp' for school children. This app aims to help school students in learning their lessons via videos and tutorials.

About MadhuApp

The app named after 'Utkal Gourab' Madhusudan Das, the first graduate and advocate of Odisha. The app has been developed by Ganjam district administration in accordance with the **5T action plan** of state government. The 5T stands for Technology, Transparency, Teamwork, Transformation and Time.

The app is equipped with video lectures and exercises in Odia language by leading subject experts and educationists. In 1st phase, the study material has been created for Mathematics and Science Subjects of classes V to VIII.

About 5T Action Plan

On 25 July 2019 Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik approved 5T action plan for Higher Education Department, to ensure better service delivery to public in Higher Education sector. The 5Ts aim at achieving progress via Transparency, Teamwork, Technology, Time and Transformation. This action plan includes a number of new initiatives such as creation of a '**Mo College**' platform in line with State Government's '**Mo School**' campaign to allow alumni as well as other interested individuals contribute to development of college.

Meteor missiles: India asks for early delivery from France

India has requested for an early delivery of Meteor air-to-air missiles from France. These missiles will provide India the power to take on US supplied AMRAAM missiles possessed by the Pakistan Air Force.



Highlights

The Meteor missile has a delivery range to take over all the other air forces in the region including China. The missiles were to come by late 2020. However, India is insisting for delivery of at least 10 missiles in advance along with the first set of [Rafale fighter jets](#). The first set of Rafale jets are to arrive in May 2020 after the completion of pilot training in France.

Meteor Missiles

The Meteor missiles are air-to-air missiles with a range of 150 km and no escape zone of 60 km. This no escape zone is the largest in the world according to its manufacturers. These missiles are to be attached to the Rafale jets. With increasing tensions between India and Pakistan, India is requesting for an early delivery.

Operation Chammal

The French Government has invited India to visit the Al Dhafra air base in UAE where the Rafale aircrafts are on active operations. The base is currently executing Operation Chammal.

Operation Chammal is a French Military operation in Syria and Iraq to contain the expansion of Islamic State. The operation also supports Iraq army. The name of the operation comes from the north westerly wind that blows over Persian Gulf and Iraq.

Pacific Air Chiefs' Symposium 2019 being held in Hawaii

The Chief of Indian Air Force (IAF) Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria is set to participate in Pacific Air Chiefs Symposium 2019 (PACS 2019) being held at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Hawaii (a state of USA). **Theme** for 2019's symposium is: '*A Collaborative Approach to Regional Security*'.

About Pacific Air Chiefs' Symposium 2019 (PACS 2019)

Objective: To further strengthen existing cooperation between Air Forces of participating countries and also to pave way for enhanced interaction in future.

Participants: United States of America is the host country for symposium. Air Chiefs from across the Indo-Pacific region are participating in the conference. In addition to USA, Air Chiefs from 20 countries are present at Symposium.

The participants will provide perspectives on common challenges faced as well as on shared mutual interests while focusing on relevant topics such as Domain Awareness, Regional Security, Multi-Domain Awareness, Interoperability and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). The symposium will also entail discourse and discussions on combined effort required to maintain peace and security within Pacific region.

India at PACS 2019: Participation of Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria in PACS 2019 will provide impetus towards articulating and highlighting common regional challenges. It would also reaffirm India's commitment to peace, prosperity, stability and security in Indo-Pacific region.

Goa to host 2nd edition of Startup India Global Venture Capital Summit 2019

The 2nd edition of **Startup India Global Venture Capital Summit** is being organized in Goa on 6-7 December 2019 for Fund Managers and Limited Partners of Top Global Venture Capital (VC) Firms. The summit is being organized by Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in partnership with Goa Government. **Theme** for Startup India Global Venture Capital Summit 2019 is- '*India Opportunity- Investing in tomorrow together*'.

About Startup India Global Venture Capital Summit

Background: The first edition of Startup India Global Venture Capital Summit was held in 2018 in Goa. It brought together more than 250 participants from over 9 countries and showcased venture capital opportunities in India as well as facilitated a rich exchange of ideas on various aspects of investor world.

Objective: To showcase India's opportunity in sectors of FinTech, EdTech, E-Mobility, MedTech, Enterprise



Software, Genomics and Lifesciences. Summit also aims to understand best practices for venture capital industry, identify issues faced by them for investments in India and evaluate ways to address those issues.

2019 Edition: This year the Summit focuses on mobilizing global capital for innovation in India and is aimed towards reaching new heights in both reach and scope. The Summit will bring together a series of engagements involving more than 350 representatives of leading Global Venture Capital Firms (GVCF), High-Network Individuals (HNIs), Government of India (GoI) officials, top Corporates, Limited Partners, Family Offices, and select innovative Startups. It will showcase India Advantage, diversity and scale of Indian market opportunity, as well as cutting-edge innovations originating in India.

Significance: The summit looks at increasing capital flow for Indian Startups by showcasing high-quality tech as well as non-tech startups to global investor community and fostering **Ease of Doing Business (EDB)** by identifying and discussing issues faced by investor community. Through this event, the *Startup India* is providing Indian startups an opportunity to meet Top Global Investors at event to get business guidance and to discuss investment opportunities.

India 5th worst country in terms of invasive use of biometric data

According to a new report from **Comparitech**, a Britain-based tech research firm, India is fifth worst country after China, Malaysia, Pakistan and United States in terms of extensive and invasive use of biometric data.

Methodology: The study was conducted based on- 50 different countries were analysed to find out where biometrics are being taken, what they are being taken for, and how they are being stored. Each country was scored out of 25, with high scores indicating extensive and invasive use of biometrics/ surveillance. The low score demonstrated better restrictions and regulations regarding biometric use and surveillance. Among the factors that were used for scoring countries, the researchers looked also at whether the country failed to introduce a law to protect biometric data.

Key Highlights of Study

India scored 19 and was ranked relatively lower in the list of worst countries for biometric data collection. India was based on not permitting law enforcement to get access to national biometric database known as *Aadhaar*. India shares fifth position with Indonesia, Philippines and Taiwan. China was scored 24.

Countries in **European Union (EU)** scored better overall than non-EU countries due to **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** regulations, which protects the use of biometrics at workplace to some extent.

5 Best Countries: United Kingdom, Portugal, Cyprus, Ireland and Romania emerged as 5 best countries in terms of collection, storage and use of biometric data.

However, despite many countries recognising biometric data as sensitive, increased biometric use is widely accepted.

RBI fifth bi-monthly Monetary Policy released

The Reserve Bank of India on December 5, 2019, released its fifth bi-monthly monetary policy statement for the year 2019-20.

Highlights

According to the policy, the repo rate was unchanged at 5.15%. Last time, it was cut by 135 basis points to a 9-year low. Accordingly, the reverse repo rate stood at 4.9% and the bank rate stood at 5.4%. The CPI projection was increased to 4.7% to 5.1%. It is to be noted that RBI is currently following target inflation at 4% with a band of ± 2 per cent.

The **Monetary Policy Committee** said that the global economic activity has subdued since its last meeting.

Other Assessment of the committee

Among the other emerging markets, growth of China has decelerated in the Q3 and its exports have declined greatly mainly due to trade tensions with the US. The GDP growth of Russia and Brazil in the Q3



has accelerated. It was mainly due to agricultural output and industrial activities.

Data Protection bill approved by the cabinet

The Cabinet on December 4, 2019 approved Data Protection bill to be tabled in Lok Sabha. The bill lays down legal framework to preserve sanctity in data sharing. The Draft of the bill was released by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in 2018.

Key features of the bill

The bill provides rules for collection, storage and handling of personal data. It regulates the processing of personal data of individuals incorporated in India and abroad. The bill makes it compulsory for the collecting authority to store the data within the territory of India.

The bill provides exemptions for processing of data that are related to legal proceedings and data that are in the interest of national security. A DPA (Data Protection Authority) is to be set up under the bill.

Data Types

The bill divides data into three types namely critical, general and sensitive. The sensitive data are the data that are related to passwords, health, finances, religion, biometric and sexual orientation. The bill allows the sensitive data to be processed outside India with the consent from the provider. Critical data are those data that the government uses once in a while and are allowed to be handled within the country alone. The rest of the data that are non-critical and non-sensitive are categorized as general data.

December 6, 2019

National Public Procurement Conclave held in New Delhi

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal inaugurated the **3rd edition of National Public Procurement Conclave (NPCC)** in New Delhi. The two-day conclave was organized by **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** in association with **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)**. NPCC will be held from 5-6 December 2019.

Key Highlights

NPCC brings together a host of Buyers, Sellers and stalwarts of industry with massive opportunities in Public Procurement sector. It offers opportunities to interact with more than 800 buyers/sellers across sectors along with over 400+ Public Procurement Managers from different public sector undertaking (PSU) and Governments Departments across different states.

During the conclave, a road map for future of GeM will be put in place that will unify all government procurement, across all Ministries and Departments.

During deliberations, an actionable agenda will emerge that will facilitate work contracts in form of tenders to be made available on GeM portal in future.

About Government e-marketplace (GeM)

It is a state-of-the-art public procurement platform envisaged by Centre Government, that has uses technology to remove entry barriers for bonafide sellers. Procurement of Goods and Services by Ministries or Departments of Centre Government has been made mandatory for Goods and Services available on GeM. It has created a vibrant and truly transparent e-marketplace with a wide range of goods and services.

GeM has now introduced **GeM 3.0**, which is a more robust, flexible e-marketplace with an intuitive User Interface (UI) to make procurement of Goods and Services simpler than ever. GeM rests on 3 pillars of *fairness, openness and inclusiveness*. It epitomizes speed, skill and scale which is essential in an e-marketplace platform.

Exercise Indra: Joint tri service Exercise between India and Russia

The Joint tri service exercise between India and Russia, INDRA 2019 is to be held between December 10-19, 2019 in Pune. The event is planned for 10 days between army, naval and air force forces of both the countries.



Highlights

The exercise is to be held in Pune and Goa simultaneously. Fighter aircrafts, company sized mechanized contingents and ships of respective armies are participating in the exercise. The forces are to be trained in tactical operation end drills like handling and neutralization of Improvised Explosive devices, arms smuggling prevention and anti-piracy measures.

The exercise will be followed by 72-hour validation exercise.

Background

The series of INDRA exercises between India and Russia began in 2003. However, the first joint tri service exercise began in 2017.

The defense relations between India and Russia are historic. However, close ties of Russia with China hurt India. Similarly, India's 2+2 dialogue, LEMOA and COMCASA agreements with the USA bothers Russia. However, India is trying to balance its relations with both the countries. India went on to buy S-400 missiles from Russia in spite US's insistence under CAATSA act.

Cabinet approves Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund

On December 4, 2019, the Cabinet approved the launch of Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund (BBETF) in order to allow the investors to buy government debts. The fund will allow easy and low-cost access with the smallest amount of Rs 1000.

Highlights

The BBETF at its initial stages will hold basket of bonds that are issued by the public sector undertakings and other government organization bonds. It will have a maturity period of 3 to 10 years and are permitted to be traded on stock exchanges.

Benefits

Apart from bank financing, the BBETF will act as an additional financial source for government organizations. As it will help in increasing investors base, demand for their bonds will increase naturally. It will help to inculcate discipline in CPSE (Central Public Sector Enterprises) and the borrowings in CPSE.

Significance

This step will help in deepening corporate bond market and will increase retail participation. It will provide safety, liquidity and predictable tax efficient returns. Also, as compared to previous bonds, the BBETF is tax efficient. This is because, long term capital gains on bond funds are taxed at 20%.

Indian Coast Guard can now legally search & seize vessels in EEZ

Union Ministry of Defence has authorized every member of Coast Guard under **Coast Guard Act 1978**, to visit, board, search and seize any suspicious vessel and arrest people for offences within Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf of country. The permission also includes seizing of any artificial island/ any floating or moored object/ any underwater object including any maritime property involved or suspected to be used in the commission of any offence. Therefore, empowering Indian Coast Guard will now enhance coastal security.

Background

Just to board and search suspicious vessels, the Indian Coast Guard (maritime security force of country) have been seeking more powers under The Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976, since 2009.

Before this notification, the maritime security agency did not have the power to board any vessel that passes through India's EEZ. The Coast Guard then used provisions of **Customs Act** and **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act** and other relevant acts to board and seize vessels in EEZ. However, it did not have necessary legal backing and many cases would fall flat in court.

There was also a legal loophole using which the vessel companies could sue Coast Guard for detaining



ships without any authorisation. Moreover, if Coast Guard officials would seize drugs, detain offenders and hand them over to agencies such as local police, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). The vessels would be handed over to port authorities.

About Indian Coast Guard (ICG)

It is an independent Armed force of India that was formally established by Coast Guard Act, 1978 of Parliament. It protects India's maritime interests and enforces maritime law, with jurisdiction over territorial waters of India, including its contiguous zone and exclusive economic zone (EEZ). It operates under the Ministry of Defence and works in close cooperation with Indian Navy, Department of Revenue (Customs), Department of Fisheries, and Central and State police forces.

First Mega Food Park of Central India inaugurated

Union Minister for Food Processing Harsimrat Kaur Badal inaugurated Steel Silo based Avantee Mega Food Park in Dewas, Madhya Pradesh. This is the first food park of central India.

About Avantee Mega Food Park

It is spread over 51 acres and has been constructed at a cost of about Rs.150 crore. About 5 thousand local people are expected to get employment from this Mega Food Park. Processing of gram, wheat, soyabean and other grains and vegetables will be done in park. Warehouses will also be opened in Agar, Indore, Dhar, Ujjain and in next phases.

Benefit: Excess production compels farmers to sell their produces at low rates. Since the mega food park is now present in the region, farmers will be able to earn more through value addition by storing their produces after getting facility of food processing and storage.

What is Mega Food Park?

It is a scheme of Union Ministry of Food Processing which aims to establish direct linkage from farm to processing and then to consumer markets through a network of collection centres and primary processing centres.

Sarai Sewage Treatment Plant inaugurated in Uttarakhand

King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden inaugurated Sarai Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) in Uttarakhand. The Swedish King and Queen are on a five-day visit to India to strengthen bilateral ties.

About Sarai Sewage Treatment Plant (STP)

It is the first STP to be completed under [Hybrid Annuity \(HAM\) Based Public Private Partnership Model](#) (PPPM). The 14 million litres per day (MLD) Sarai STP has been constructed at a cost of Rs.41.40 crore under Centre government's **Namami Gange** Programme. Namami Gange – National Mission for Clean Ganga is an Integrated Conservation Mission (ICM), approved as 'Flagship Programme' with budget outlay of Rs.20,000 Crore. It seeks to accomplish twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation as well as rejuvenation of National River Ganga.

Features:

Unique feature of this HAM project is that after its commissioning, this plant will also be maintained and operated for a period of 15 years by same developer for efficient performance and for meeting output parameters.

This Sarai 14 MLD Sewage Treatment Plant is based on advanced aerobic biological process, Sequential Batch Reactor (SBR) process. Thus it is capable of removing nutrients during treatment and is a 100% eco-friendly project. The plant will meet the highest standards of output parameters and has been completed before its scheduled timeline.

NOTE: Municipal sewage is considered as the main source of pollution in Ganga. It is being tackled through 150 Sewerage projects at a cost of more than Rs.23,000 crores (over 3 billion USD), in addition to various interventions for checking industrial and other sources of pollution in Ganga basin. Namami Gange



interventions extends to urban as well as rural areas covering diverse sectors.

RBI Unveils Guidelines on Small Finance Banks

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released '**Guidelines for 'on tap' Licensing of Small Finance Banks (SFB) in the Private Sector**'. With these new guidelines, RBI has introduced major changes from earlier Guidelines issued by the apex bank on 27 November 2014, for licensing of Small Finance Banks in private sector.

New Guidelines on SFBs

1. Licensing window will be open '*on-tap*'. The on-tap facility allows RBI to accept applications and grant licence for banks throughout the year. This policy also allows aspirants to apply for universal bank licence any time, subjected to fulfilling certain conditions. As of now, the RBI has issued licences to 10 SFBs.
2. Minimum paid-up voting equity capital/ net worth requirement shall be Rs.200 crore.
3. For Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs), aspiring to voluntarily transit into SFBs, initial requirement of net worth shall be at Rs.100 crores that will have to be increased to Rs.200 crores within 5 years from date of commencement of business. However, the net-worth of all SFBs currently in operation is in excess of Rs.200 crore.
4. SFBs will have general permission to open banking outlets from date of commencement of operations.
5. SFBs will be given scheduled bank status immediately upon commencement of operations.
6. Payments Banks like Paytm an IndiaPost and Fino can apply for conversion into SFB after 5 years of operations, if they are otherwise eligible as per these guidelines.

Ripu Daman Bevli named as Plogging Ambassador of India

Union Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) Kiren Rijiju felicitated **Ripu Daman Bevli**, popularly known as **Plogman of India** and named him as Plogging Ambassador of India. Sports Minister also launched nation-wide **Plogging Ambassador Mission** under which, Indians who have been running and cleaning their cities/ towns/ districts, will be nominated as Plogging Ambassadors of their region.

Ripu Daman Bevli started plogging in 2017, started Fit India Plogging Run with the aim to make India litter-free. In about 2 months, he and his team have cleaned up 50 cities and covered over 1000km, collecting 2.7 tonnes of garbage.

What is Plog Run?

It is a unique way of picking up garbage while jogging. It was added to Fit India Movement as a unique way of combining cleanliness and fitness. Plogging Run combines the Fit India Movement and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

First Fit India Plogging Run was held on 2 October 2019 in which more than 36 lakh people participated in over 62,000 locations across India. It was organised with combined efforts of Sports Authority of India (SAI), National Service Scheme (NSS), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), NGOs, Kendriya Vidyalaya (KVs) and several other organizations joining in.

A new Head on Generation technology introduced in Indian Railways

The Indian Railways has introduced an environment friendly and energy efficient solution in passenger trains to address noise and air pollution. The technology changes the locomotives and coaches and makes them suitable for Head On Generation. The Railways has developed and improvised converter that are to be fitted in electric locomotives. These converters can replace diesel generators as well. The converters make the locomotives suitable to run-on head-on generation technology.

Head On Generation – Benefits

Between April 2018 and November 2019 around 436 trains have been converted into HOG compliant. The



technology reduces noise level, reduces emission of carbon dioxide, diesel consumption.

Head on Generation Technology

In Head on Generation technology, the power will be drawn from overhead Electric supply. Huge noise making fume emitting power generators will be replaced by silent generators. It was first introduced in India in 1996 when India signed an agreement with Germany. Germany transferred the technology to the Indian Coach Factories. Rajdhani, Samprak Kranti, Duronto, Shatabdi and Hamsafar are some of the trains where the technology was first implemented.

CSIR, BHEL signs MoU to push 'Make in India' initiative

The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) on promotion of honey production Khadi outlets to also display CSIR products.

Key Highlights of MoU

MoU is signed to leverage expertise available in CSIR with effort of KVIC for promotion of honey production as well as to enable wider outreach of CSIR technologies and products.

MoU will help formalize working relationship between two organizations, CSIR and KVIC in areas like honey testing, promotion of Honey Mission alongside CSIR Aroma Mission as well as proposed CSIR Floriculture Mission. It will also explore display of CSIR technology products at important KVIC outlets, enlisting of CSIR licensees in KVIC network in a way that CSIR products can reach to wider audience.

About Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

It is a statutory body established by Union Government, under the Parliament's '*Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956*'. It was founded in 1956 with headquartered in Mumbai. It works under Union Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), with regard to khadi and village industries within India.

About Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)

It was established by Government of India as an autonomous body in September 1942. It has since then emerged as the largest research and development organisation in India. Over the years, CSIR has been pursuing R&D in various sectors and has developed a portfolio of processes, technologies and products in these sectors.

Govt sanctions Rs.100cr to set up Women Help Desks in Police Stations

Union Home Ministry has sanctioned Rs.100 crore from Nirbhaya fund for setting up and strengthening of women help desks in police stations across country. The move came a fortnight after a young veterinarian was gang-raped and murdered near Hyderabad, leading to protests in different parts of country.

Key Highlights

The scheme would be implemented by states and Union Territories (UTs), and lady police officers would be deployed at these help desks.

The women help desks would focus on making police stations more women-friendly and approachable, as they would be first and single point of contact for any woman walking into a police station.

Women help desks officials would be trained to be sensitive towards women. These help desks would have enlisted panel of experts such as psychologists, lawyers and NGOs to facilitate legal aid, counselling, shelter, rehabilitation and training among others.

About Nirbhaya Fund Framework

It provides for a non-lapsable corpus fund for safety and security of women. This framework is to be administered by *Department of Economic Affairs (DEA)* of Union Ministry of Finance (MoF). It also provides for an *Empowered Committee (EC)* of officers headed by Secretary, Union Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD) to appraise and recommend proposals to be funded under this framework.



The Ministry of Finance through *Department of Economic Affairs (DEA)* is the nodal Ministry for any accretion into and withdrawal from corpus. However, MWCD is responsible to review and monitor progress of sanctioned projects/ schemes in conjunction with concerned Central Ministries/ Departments.

Artificial Intelligence introduced as a subject in CBSE schools

The Ministry of Human Resource and Development has introduced Artificial Intelligence in classes VIII, IX and X in CBSE schools. The study materials have already been provided to the schools through official CBSE website

Highlights

The CBSE has collaborated with several organization like Microsoft, Intel, IBM and so on in order to create the module of Artificial Intelligence. Around 1000 teachers were trained for hands-on knowledge on tools such as Flipgrid, OneNote, Outlook, Minecraft, etc. They also underwent 3-day project on digital story-telling, tools to create BOTs and concepts around artificial intelligence.

The Ministry has so far conducted 41 training programmes across several CBSE affiliated schools in which around 1690 teachers have been trained.

Significance

Having knowledge in Artificial Intelligence has become imperative. It has the ability to execute tasks like visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making and translating languages by naturally imbibing into human intelligence. It also helps to reduce error.

Introducing Artificial Intelligence at school level will help the country create a strong base in the field.

ISRO sets up Space Technology Cells in premier institutions

The Indian Space Research Organization will set up five Space Technology Cells at the premier institutes in order to carry out research activities. It includes IISc, IITs in Kharagpur, Bombay, Madras and Kanpur.

Space Technology cell

The Technology cells will consist of professors and scholars associated with the institute. Under the programme, the experts will conduct space technology research and applications.

Currently, such a joint programme is being implemented by IIT-Roorke, DRDO and ISRO on "Thin Membrane-based technology to develop parachutes for fighter aircraft". The STCs are in functioning for more than three decades

RESPOND Programme

The Space Technology cells were established under RESPOND Programme that was started in 1970s. Under this programme the STCs were installed across various premier institutions. The projects run for stipulated time period. New cells are formed after the completion of time period of the project.

Under the programme, the cells develop propulsion systems design and optimization, rocket and satellite technology, aerodynamics and heat transfer related problems.

4th India Water Impact Summit held in Delhi

The Union Minister of Jal Shakti inaugurated the fourth water impact summit in New Delhi. In 2019, the summit is to focus on integrated management of water resources in rural and urban areas. At the summit, the experts from various fields discuss the biggest problems associated with water.

Theme: Financing of High Impact projects in the water sector

Highlights

The summit will hold second Water Finance Forum that focusses on bringing global financial investors and institutions together. The event will also focus on water impact in smart cities and delivering on Jal Jeewan Mission. During the event, report on river restoration and conservation was released by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.



Significance

It is important to observe and study usage of water and its impact. This is because India holds only about 4% of global fresh water but is home to 18% of world population. By 2030, urban India will have 600 million people strength. This will increase the stress on water bodies and rivers tremendously.

Government Measures

In order to control the impact of human activities on water and to reduce water scarcity, the Government of India has launched several initiatives. It includes Environment Flow and Urban River Management Plan, Ganga River Basin Management Plan, Jal Jeevan Mission, National Mission for Clean Ganga, etc.

December 7, 2019

7 December: International Civil Aviation Day

The International Civil Aviation Day is observed every year on 7 December across the world to generate and reinforce worldwide awareness of importance of international civil aviation to social and economic development.

It also seeks to highlight unique role of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in helping member states to cooperate and realize a truly global rapid transit network at the service of all mankind.

Background

The International Civil Aviation Day was established in 1994 as part of ICAO's 50th anniversary activities. It was officially recognised in the UN system by the UN General Assembly in 1996. On this day in 1944, participants from 54 nations gathered in Chicago, US had signed Convention on International Civil Aviation, also known more popularly as the 'Chicago Convention'. Since then, the defining international agreement has permitted global civil aviation system to develop peacefully, in manner benefitting all nations across the world.

Exercise Hand-in-Hand-2019: India-China Joint Training

The 8th India-China joint training exercise Hand-In-Hand 2019 is being conducted at Umroi, Meghalaya from 7 to 20 December 2019. The exercise is being conducted under the theme of counter terrorism under United Nations mandate.

Exercise Hand-in-Hand-2019

Objective: To practice joint planning and conduct of counter terrorist operations in semi urban terrain.

The exercise is also focused upon training on various lectures & drills associated with special heliborne operations, counter terrorist handling & firing with each other's weapons as well as case studies of many operations which are carried out in counter terrorist environment.

The Chinese contingent from Tibet Military command comprising of 130 personal and Indian Contingent of similar strength will be participating in 14-day long training exercise. Exercise will be held at company level with respective Battalion Headquarters controlling training.

Two tactical exercises scheduled during training are on: (1) counter terrorism scenario; (2) Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.

Climate Emergency named as Oxford's Word of the Year 2019

Oxford Dictionaries has named 'Climate Emergency' as its 2019 Word of the Year. It has been chosen from an all-environmental shortlist that also included 'climate denial,' 'climate action,' 'eco-anxiety,' 'flight shame' and 'extinction.' Being chosen as Word of the Year, reflects that 'Climate Emergency' was a real preoccupation of the English-speaking world in 2019.

As per data collected in **Oxford Corpus**, the use of term 'Climate Emergency' increased by a 100 times as much since 2018. Oxford Corpus is a database containing hundreds of millions of words of written English. Moreover, it was the most common compound involving 'emergency,' occurring 3 times as often as next most-common, 'health emergency.'

**What does 'Word of the Year' mean?**

The Word of the Year citation is intended to highlight a word/ expression shown through usage evidence to reflect ethos or mood or preoccupations of passing year (in this case 2019), as well as have a lasting potential as a term of cultural significance. Recent winners in past includes: 'toxic,' 'vape,' 'youthquake,' and 'post-truth.' Usually, the shortlist includes a variety of different words that illustrate new trends in language usage.

OPEC cuts production to 500,000 barrels per day

On December 6, 2019, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries reached a deal deepening their output cuts. They have set the target as 500,000 barrels a day. The action is being implemented in order to eliminate surplus and bolster crude prices

Current Scenario

In 2019, the organization had agreed to reduce production by about 1.2 million barrels per day. Saudi Arabia in 2019 pumped well below its quota of 10.3 million barrels per day. Other members of the organization Azerbaijan, Mexico and Angola were unable to sustain their production quota due to natural declines. Russia had achieved its target in 3 months. Nigeria and Iraq increased their output.

The above data was published by the International Energy Agency.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia plays the major role in the OPEC decisions. OPEC oil production dipped to an eight-year low after attacks on Saudi oil plants. Following the attacks, Iraq emerged as the major producer of the organization.

India-OPEC

India imports 80% of its petroleum needs from OPEC countries. However, India has been reducing its dependence on the OPEC countries. In October 2019, India imported 4.56 million barrels per day from OPEC. This is 3.3% low as compared to the previous year.

First Meeting of Consultative Committee of Ministry of Petroleum

The first meeting of Consultative Committee of Ministry of Petroleum was chaired by the Minister of Petroleum Shri Dharmendra Pradhan.

Highlights of the meet

The committee announced that Government of India is working towards a transformative change in energy sector. It is planning to increase share of Natural gas in the energy sector from 6.2% to 15% by 2030. The committee has given a strong policy thrust to support Natural Gas enabling infrastructure.

Also, the contribution of biofuels and its usage are to be increased. The committee pointed out already existed government measures to increase the use of biofuels

Government measures of Biofuels

Gol introduced Ethanol Blended Programme to reduce dependency of oil imports, address environmental concerns and to boost agriculture sector. Government re-introduced administered price mechanism, amended Industries (Development and Regulation) act, 1951, reduced GST rates of ethanol from 18% to 5%.

Current Scenario

Today in India, oil public sector units like Indian Oil Corporation are establishing Ethanol bio-refineries. Around 12 such refineries in 11 states are being established. Currently, the biofuels are produced in accordance with National Biofuel Policy, 2018. It targets 5% blending of biodiesel in diesel by 2030. Under SATAT (Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation), 5000 Compressed Bio Gas Plants are to constructed by 2023. The initiative aims at generating 15 million metric tonnes of biogas per annum

National Florence Nightingale Awards 2019

President of India, Ram Nath Kovind conferred the National Florence Nightingale Awards to 36 awardees, on



5 December 2019 on the occasion of **International Nurses Day**, at a ceremony in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. It was conferred in presence of Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Union Minister of State, Health & Family Welfare.

Key Highlights

Award to Late Lini Sajeesh from Kozhikode, Kerala was conferred posthumously and was received by her husband Sajeesh. The 30-year-old nurse passed away while on duty caring for a NIPAH infected patient in Kerala. The 35 other awardees who were conferred the award from President of India, included Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), Lady Health Visitors (LHVs), and nurses, from different States and UTs.

The kindness and service of nurses form an important pillar of recovery for those who are ailing and as a acknowledgement of their immense role in society and healthcare system that World Health Organisation (WGO) has dedicated 2020 as '**Year of Nurses and Midwives**'. The year 2020 also marks the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, after whom the awards have been named.

About National Florence Nightingale Awards

The awards were instituted in 1973 by Government of India as a mark of recognition for meritorious services rendered by nurses to the society. It is named after Florence Nightingale also known as 'The Lady With the Lamp'. She was an English social reformer and the founder of modern nursing. Nurses play a vital role in addressing multiple health challenges, delivering quality and cost effective health care and responding to health needs of individuals, families and communities.

FM transmitters to be set up in Sashastra Seema Bal premises

Government of India has approved seven projects for setting up of FM transmitters in premises of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) for strengthening FM coverage along Indo-Nepal border. The information in this regard was presented by Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar to Lok Sabha. The FM transmitter project would be installed in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Uttarakhand, precisely for:

- Bihar- Bathnaha (Araria), Narkatiaganj (West Champaran) and Sitamarhi
- Uttar Pradesh- Gadaniya (Lakhimpur Kheri), Nanpara (Bahraich) and Maharajganj
- Uttarakhand- Champawat

About Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)

It is one of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) in India and is currently under administrative control of Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Prior to 2001, SSB was known as Special Service Bureau (SSB).

Global Climate Risk Index 2020

Global Climate Risk Index 2020, published by environmental think tank **Germanwatch** found Japan to be the most vulnerable country to climate change, followed by Philippines, Germany, Madagascar and India.

Key Findings of Index

(1) Japan: It topped the list of most affected countries in 2018 as it was hit by 3 exceptionally strong extreme weather events during year. It includes- *Torrential rainfall* from 6-8 July resulting in flash floods and mudslides; *Severe heatwave* from mid-July to August 2018; *Typhoon Jebi* in September 2018 broke.

(2) Philippines: It was hit by *Typhoon Mangkhut* (a category 5 typhoon) in September 2018, which was the most powerful typhoon recorded worldwide in 2018.

(3) Germany: It experienced 2nd hottest year due to a severe heatwave and also witnessed severe drought in October 2018 due to less rainfall, which resulted in a massive decline in harvest.

(4) Madagascar: It became victim to *Cyclone Ava* in January 2018 and *Cyclone Eliakim* in March 2018.

(5) India: Globally, it is the 5th most vulnerable country to climate change. India also recorded highest number of fatalities due to climate change and 2nd highest monetary losses from its impact in 2018. The southwest monsoon in 2018 severely affected India, southern state of Kerala was especially impacted which saw the worst flooding in hundred years. Under long term vulnerability, India is ranked 17th. India's



east coast was also hit by Cyclone Titli and Cyclone Gaja in October and November 2018 respectively.

(6) Sri Lanka: It was also affected by severe monsoon rains in May 2018, especially in the south and west coast.

(7) Kenya and (8) Rwanda: Both nations were ranked 7 and 8 respectively. They were also affected by severe monsoon rains, resulting in flooding in several areas and displacement of a large number of people.

Others:-

Canada: In beginning of 2018, Canada saw its lowest temperature in 100 years and then record high temperatures in April 2018, which melted heavy snowpacks, causing the rivers to overflow. It also saw its worst wildfire season.

Fiji: It was affected by 3 cyclones between February 2018 and April 2018- *Cyclone Gita*, *Cyclone Josie* and *Cyclone Keni*, which caused major flooding, leaving many displaced.

About Global Climate Risk Index 2020

The index assessed 181 countries and quantified impacts of climate change through economic losses, losses to GDP (Gross domestic product) and fatalities to arrive at a ranking. This year is the 15th edition of Climate Risk Index. It highlights existing vulnerabilities that may increase as extreme events and become more frequent/ severe due to climate change. It stresses on level of vulnerability of nations to severe climate events, which they should view as warnings for more frequent or severe events in future.

It is based on data from *Munich Re NatCatSERVICE* which is one of the largest databases on natural catastrophes. The Index has another set of ranking for period 1999-2018 which is based on average values over a 20-year period. In 1999 to 2018 period Puerto was the most vulnerable..

Assam govt. sets up Anti Depredation Squads to avoid human-wildlife conflicts

The state government of Assam has set up 15 Anti-Depredation Squads of Forest department to deal with human-wildlife conflicts in state. The squads would help Forest Department to reduce casualties in conflict situations.

About Anti-Depredation Squads

These squads will be stationed in 15 major human-wildlife conflict districts of Assam to deal with problem and ensure the safety of both humans and animals. They will be equipped with all logistics required for mitigating conflict and will have 12 bore pump action guns and rubber bullet ammunition.

State Forest Department has engaged specially trained 50 front line staff to handle conflict situations with 100 more staff to be trained in coming days.

Need: The loss of lives of both humans and animals is unwarranted and squads must spread awareness about avoiding man-animal conflicts. There is also a need to bring casualties to zero by completely reducing man-animal conflict situations. Moreover, the peaceful coexistence is a must for both man and animals. and urged the people of the state to cooperate with the squads in spreading awareness about animal behaviour.

Foreign Exchange reserve touches a new high of 451.08 billion USD

According to the weekly data released by the Reserve Bank of India, the [foreign exchange reserve](#) touched a new high of 451.08 billion USD. The foreign exchange currency assets include the depreciation or appreciation of the non-US currency like pound, Euro and Yen as well.

Highlights

The increase is mainly due to the rise in foreign currency assets. The Gold reserves of India also declined by 148 million USD. At present India holds 26.910 billion USD of gold. The reserve position of the country with IMF (International Monetary Fund) also decreased, and came down by 6 million USD. The special drawing rights with the IMF were down by 4 million USD.



Gold reserves and Foreign Exchange

The value of a currency is highly important for the foreign exchange to reach new heights. If the value of the currency is high, the foreign exchanges are good.

The value of the currency is determined by its imports and exports. The exports should be more (or imports become expensive) for the currency value to rise in the international market. If the country is buying more gold (as reserve), it means it is importing more. On the other hand, when the gold reserve is declining, exports are more.

Therefore, if the gold reserve is declining, value of the currency increases and therefore foreign exchange increases

100 days of Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana

The National programme driven by TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India), Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY), completed 100 days under Ministry of Tribal Affairs on December 7, 2019. The programme aims at empowering the tribal community.

Highlights

In order to mark 100 days of success, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs organized celebrations and forged association with Global designer Ritu Beri. During the celebration, the significance of the programme in forming cluster of self-help groups was emphasized.

The ministry at the event announced that around 676 VDVK (Van Dhan Vikas Kendras) have been sanctioned by the TRIFED in 24 states since its launch in 27 August, 2019. Though the Van Dhan Scheme was launched earlier, the 100 days celebration is to mark the launch of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras.

Targets of TRIFED

TRIFED will establish 3,000 VDVKs each year till 2024 and will cover around 2 crore tribal beneficiaries. The programme also aims to cover 117 tribes in the country. It has also partnered with UNICEF to promote tribal craft, cuisine, culture and commerce.

Recently TRIFED also organized the [Aadi Mahotsav](#) between November 16 and November 30, 2019 to cherish the spirit of tribal culture. Apart from this, [internship programmes](#) were also conducted in October 2019.

Jharkhand's Mahuamilan station becomes country's 5500th station to get free wifi facility

Jharkhand's Mahuamilan station which comes under East Central Railway (ECZ) zone has become 5500th station to get free wifi facility. The RailTel Corporation of India Ltd. (RCIL), the digital arm of Indian Railways, has thus provided free WiFi at 5,500 stations across country. RailTel is a 'Miniratna' enterprise that focuses on providing broadband and VPN services.

WiFi across India

Indian Railways began the service of providing free WiFi at its railway stations from January 2016. The mission was to provide WiFi at all railway stations (except the halt ones). For this purpose of providing WiFi, RailTel roped in partners including Tata Trust, Google, PGCIL (Power Grid Corporation of India Limited) for some parts of the project. It also got funding from Department of Telecom USOF (Universal Service Obligation Fund) for 200 stations.

The first station covered was Mumbai Central station, Maharashtra and in a span of 46 months RailTel has extended service to 5,500 stations across country. WiFi is being provided under brand name '**Railwire**'- the retail broadband service of RailTel. In October 2019 a total of 1.5 crore user logins in RailWire Wi-Fi services across all stations recorded a consumption of 10242TB data.

Girish Chandra Chaturvedi appointed new of Chairman National Stock Exchange

The National Stock Exchange(NSE) has appointed Girish Chandra Chaturvedi as its new chairman. His appointment comes following the approval of markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India



(SEBI). The NSE chairman was lying vacant since January 2019 when then incumbent Chairman of NSE Ashok Chawla resigned in the middle of charges of corruption in **Aircel-Maxis case**. The Aircel-Maxis is a case of alleged corruption in grant of Foreign Investment and Promotion Board (FIPB) clearance in Aircel-Maxis deal.

About Girish Chandra Chaturvedi

He is a former bureaucrat who retired from Indian Administrative Services (IAS) in January 2013 as Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. He is currently on board of ICICI Bank and member of government appointed board of Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Ltd (IL&FS). In past, he has also served as Director (Government Nominee) on Boards of Canara Bank, IDBI Bank Ltd, Bank of Baroda, IDFC Ltd, GIC Re of India, United India Insurance Co. Ltd, Agriculture Insurance Co. of India, New India Assurance Co. Ltd, National Insurance Academy and Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS).

December 8, 2019

South Asian Games: India leads with 214 medals

India has won 110 gold, 69 silver and 35 bronze at the [South Asian Games, 2019](#). On the whole India won 214 medals. The event was held in Nepal.

Highlights

In athletics, India won 49 medals that comprised of 23 gold, 20 silver and 6 bronze. India also won two gold and five silver medals in table tennis category. Different cities of Nepal are hosting the event namely Kathmandu, Pokhara and Janakpur.

This year Cricket has also been included after a gap of 8 years. Around 2,715 athletes participated in the event.

South Asian Games

The official mascot of the South Asian Games is a pair of Black bucks. Blackbucks is an endangered species that is found in the southern region of Nepal.

Black Bucks

The Black bucks are also known as Indian Antelope. It is extinct in Bangladesh. It is mainly found in India. The population of Blackbucks declined in 20th century due to excessive hunting, habitat degradation and deforestation. It has been introduced in Argentina and United States recently.

In India, hunting of Blackbucks is prohibited under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

NMCG of Jal Shakti Ministry organises the 4th India Water Impact Summit

The 'India Water Impact Summit' is an annual event where problems and solutions for the biggest water related issues in the country are discussed.

The 4th India Water Impact Summit was held from December 5th to 7th, 2019 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. It was jointly organised by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) of Ministry of Jal Shakti and Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga) led by IIT-Kanpur. The summit was inaugurated by Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekawat.

Several ambassadors and representatives from across the globe, especially from the European Union countries participated in the summit.

During the summit, the Jal Shakti ministry also released the following reports:

1. 'Ambassadors' Meet'
2. 'River Restoration and Conservation – A Concise Manual and Guide'
3. Documents on 'Ganga Hubs'

Theme

The theme for this year's summit was: '**Valuing Water – Transforming Ganga**'. The annual summit also focussed on integrated water resource management in urban and rural areas. The prime objective of the



summit was bringing together global financial investors and institutions to focus on water impact in smart cities.

About cGanga

In 2016, The Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (**cGanga**) was established at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. The centre acts as a comprehensive think-tank to the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, in achieving its goals and objectives towards the Ganga River Basin.

Previous Summit

The previous annual summit, which was the 3rd edition of Water impact summit was organised on the 5th to 7th of December, 2018 at New Delhi.

Funding for India-Palestine Techno Park released

Recently the Indian Representative to Palestine, Sunil Kumar released the third tranche of funding for the construction of India-Palestine techno park in Palestine. India had committed to invest 12 million USD as a part of capacity building in Palestine. India currently pays 3 million USD on half yearly basis

The Techno Park

The park will create knowledge-based technology clusters and creative enterprises to operate locally, globally and regionally. The main objective of the park is to create an environment that supports process of industrialization and commercialization. The park also aims at bridging the gap between the academia and private sector.

India-Palestine relations

India is the first non-Arab country to recognize Palestine Liberation Organization as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians in 1974. In 1988, India again was the first country to recognize an independent Palestine. The trade between the countries is roughly 40 million USD and spans medical tourism, spare parts, textiles, pharmaceuticals and agro-chemicals.

Santhali used in Rajya Sabha for the first time

On December 6, 2019, MP Sarojni Hembram from Odisha for the first time spoke in a tribal language called Santhali. She raised the matter of public importance during the zero hour. Also, Srimati Sarojini demanded Bharat Ratna for Pundit Raghunath Murmu, the Santhali scholar who introduced Ol Chiki script for the language in 1925.

Santhali Language

The language is predominantly spoken by the North Mundari Group of the Austroasiatic-Munda family. The language is spoken in parts of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Odisha and also in Nepal and Bangladesh. The Ol Chiki script for the language was created by Raghunath Murmu in 1925.

Schedule 8 of the Constitution

Santhali language was included in the Schedule 8 of the constitution through the 92nd Constitutional Amendment act, 2003. Along with the language, 3 other languages were included namely Maithili, Bodo, Dori.

In 2017, Shika Mandi became the first Indian to host a show in Santhali language.

Santal Tribes

The Santals are the third largest tribal group in India. They are called Horhopon ko (Sons of Man), Hor Ko or Manjhi. They are classified as Scheduled Tribes in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal but not in Assam.

In 1855, they protested widely for their mistreatment by the landlords, traders and money lenders. It was called the Santal Rebellion.



Law Ministry to set up fast track courts after data on POCSO from HCs

The data from the High Courts across the country say that more than 96% of 1,66,882 rape trials registered under [POCSO](#) (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) are pending. After receiving the data, law ministry has drawn comprehensive plans to fast track disposal of pending rape cases within a year. The plan is to set up fast track courts to hasten the process.

Highlights

The aim of the fast track courts is to dispose the cases within 1 year. So far there are 1,66,882 cases that are registered as rape cases and 1,60,989 cases registered under Pocso Act. The government of India is also planning to propose similar fast track courts under the 15th Finance Commission (2020-25).

The law ministry will set up 1,023 fast track court to complete the pending cases. The data from the HC says that there are around 389 districts all over the country where the number of cases under POCSO act exceeded 100.

The Ministry had earlier directed state governments and union territories to set up fast track courts for POCSO cases. Under the order around 218 such courts were set up in UP. The information was given in the Lok Sabha on December 6, 2019.

Issue

POCSO act mandates that the investigation of cases registered under the act has to be completed within a time span of 2 months. In spite of such strict law and policy framework, the number of rape and POCSO cases have increased.

India attended the Madrid Climate Conference

The Minister of Environment Shri Prakash Javadekar represented India at the Madrid Climate Conference. The United Nations Climate Change Conference is being held in Madrid between 2nd December, 2019 and 13th December 2019.

The COP25 (25th Conference of Parties) was to be held in Chile. However, [Chile government cancelled COP25](#) due to the protests that are plaguing the country. Following its cancellation, Spain offered to organize the event.

Highlights

The Conference insisted the member countries to enhance their [NDCs \(Nationally Determined Contributions\)](#) in the coming 12 months till COP26. A yearbook was launched that called on the governments to strengthen the UNFCCC agenda post 2020. It also insisted to create actions for a climate resilient world between 2020 and 2050.

Report on Oceans

The conference also released report on oceans titled "Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate" (SPROCC). According to the report, global mean sea level increased from 1.4 mm (1901-1990) to 3.6 mm (2006-2015). Also, the report says that the ocean warming has increased since 1993. Between 1993 and 2017, 700 to 2000 metres of ocean layers have warmed up.

Nairobi Work Programme

The Nairobi Work Programme was reviewed and its progress were discussed at the conference. The Programme was established in 2005 at COP11. It aims at impacts, adaptation and vulnerability to climate change.

The objective of the programme is to assist least developed countries to understand and assess impacts of climate change.

The [Global Climate Risk Index](#) 2020 was published at the conference

December 7: Army Forces Flag Day

Every Year India dedicates December 7 to the Armed Forces Flag Day. The day is dedicated towards fund



collection from people of India for the welfare of Indian Armed Forces. The day is being observed annually since 1949.

Significance

The main purpose of the observation is rehabilitation of battle casualties, resettlement and welfare of ex-servicemen and their families and welfare of serving personnel and their families. The day commemorates fund collection through distribution of flags. It also acknowledges those who died in serving the country.

Highlights

On the Flag day, all the three forces of the India arrange carnivals, shows and dramas to show the public about their efforts to ensure national security. On the flag day, car flags, small flags in deep blue, red and light blue colors representing the three services are distributed in return for donations.

History

As India gained independence a need arose to manage the welfare of the defense personnel. In 1949, a committee was set up to observe Flag Day annually on December 7. The day gains its importance as it considers that it is the responsibility of every citizen to take care of the families and dependents of armed forces personnel.

7 December: GST Stakeholder Feedback Diwas

The central and state authorities organised GST (Goods and Services Tax) Stakeholder Feedback Diwas on 7 December 2019. The aim of organizing this event was to get an on-the-spot response and suggestion to the new system for filing GST Returns to be introduced from next fiscal year. The new return form will be made mandatory from 1 April 2020. The programme was organised on the new system for filing returns across 125 cities to get on-the-spot response and suggestion.

About GST Stakeholder Feedback Diwas

As per Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) about 7,500 trade associations/stakeholders participated in the programme. Besides them a large number of taxpayers, all prominent chambers of commerce and industry, compliance managers and tax practitioners also participated.

The participants were encouraged to upload GST returns (ANX-1 and 2) and give feedback in regard to ease of compliance, deficiencies, improvements and uploading. There was overwhelming response from GST stakeholders and several useful suggestions were received.

The focus was on assessing ease of compliance and uploading of these new returns so that taxpayers as well as traders do not face any difficulty when returns are made legally mandatory.

Background

On November 2019 Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman directed CGST (Centre Goods and Services Tax) and SGST (State Goods and Services Tax) authorities to organise a nationwide interaction with stakeholders in order to get a first-hand feedback on new GST returns that are proposed to be rolled out from next fiscal year (April 2020). The finance minister then on November 16, held a meet with select taxpayers, Chartered Accountants and tax practitioners on the same subject. Later, during **first National Conference on GST** (held on 25 November), Revenue Secretary had also urged states GST authorities to hold similar stakeholder consultations in their jurisdictions as well as to all GST stakeholders to actively participated in these feedback sessions in their nearest CGST or SGST Office cross the country.

Integrated Command and Control Centre inaugurated in Haryana

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar inaugurated the ambitious Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) in Gurgaon, Millennium City of the country. The ICCC has been developed as nerve centre to provide multifaceted online smart services to people.

About Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC)

It has been designed to serve as nodal point for all online data related to Smart City applications, including



CCTV-based public safety and adaptive traffic management system, pollution monitoring, smart parking system, water supply management system, asset management system and property tax management system. ICCC was built at cost of Rs38 crore.

Mobile App: A mobile app has also been developed for ICCC by bringing entire citizen services on one platform so that the public can access these easily and to increase the reach of this ICCC, plans have been made to cover 358 traffic intersections with installation of 1,200 CCTV cameras. Currently 250 CCTV cameras have already been installed and made operational, covering 50 intersections at present and 1,200 CCTV cameras will be operational on 222 crossings by March-2020. With installation of cameras, the vehicles' speed, (their) registration number plate, colour besides the 2-wheeler drivers without helmet can be identified at ICCC itself.

Smart Street Light: The city's smart street light facility too can be controlled from this centre. Moreover, the monitoring of vehicles engaged in solid waste management too will be done from this centre and adding drinking water supply meters too have been integrated with it.

All government buildings and police stations of Gurgaon city will soon be connected with optical fiber network. At present 160 government buildings and police stations of city have been connected with this network and within the next six to nine months all the government buildings in Gurgaon city will be equipped with public Wi-Fi system.

Human Library event held in Mysuru

Human Library, a concept which seeks to replace books with humans, was held in the City of Palaces, Mysuru, Karnataka. It was organized by international non-profit organization- Human Library for first time in Mysuru. The objective of this event was to break past long-standing prejudices and stereotypes by creating a safe framework for conversation by using a library analogy of lending people rather than books. It also intended to generate greater human cohesion across various social, religious and ethnic diversities. This event provides readers of human library opportunity to borrow Human Books and to engage in conversation with the books. It also helps them to acknowledge the need for a change in societal attitudes and encourage social reforms.

About Human Library

It is also known as *The Human Library Organization*. It is a registered international not for profit organization headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark. It aims at ensuring a global implementation of the Human Library as a learning platform. It was initially launched in the year 2000 and currently exists in more than 85 countries. In India, it is spread across various metropolitan cities including Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru.

December 9, 2019

December 9: International Anti-Corruption Day

The International Day of Anti-Corruption is marked by the United Nations every year on December 9 since 2003. This year the day is being marked by the organization all over the world on the following theme

Theme: United Against Corruption

The 2030 Agenda forms the backbone of the campaign.

Sustainable Development Goal

Ending corruption is important to achieve SDG 16 and 17. The SDG 16 insists on "Promote peace, justice and strong institutions". It insists on anti-corruption targets. the goal 16.4, insists on reducing illicit financial and arms flow. The Goal 16.5 insists on reducing bribery on all forms and 16.6 says that it is essential to create transparent institutions at all levels.

Significance

According to the United Nations, every year 1 trillion USD is paid as bribe and 2.6 trillion USD is stolen



annually. It is more than 5% of global GDP. The United Nations Development Programme says that the funds lost to corruption are 10 times the amount spent in official development assistance.

Rafale Jets Tail Numbers to honour Ex IAF Chief

The Indian [Rafale Fighter Jets](#) are to fly with tail sign BS. BS stands for retired Chief Birender Singh Dhanoa. The tail number initials are unique.

Tail Number

The Tail number is an identification number on an aircraft. Every aircraft flying in the country is provided with the tail number. The tail numbers are allocated according to the norms of International Civil Aviation.

Convention on International Civil Aviation

According to the convention, the civil aircraft should be registered with the National Aviation Authority. The convention was also known as Chicago Convention. This registration number is the tail number of the aircraft.

International Civil Aviation established the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). It is a specialized agency of the UN that is responsible for coordinating international air travel. It was signed in 1944 in Chicago.

National Aviation Authority

The National Aviation Authority maintains an aircraft register. It also oversees the regulation and approval of civil aviation. The authority also regulates maintenance of aircrafts, their condition of manufacturing, aircraft design, pilot licensing, standards of air traffic control.

Birender Singh Dhanoa

BS Dhanoa served Indian Air Force as Air Chief Marshall. He was born in Deoghar, Bihar. His ancestral village is in Punjab. His father was a retired IAS officer. He has been awarded several medals namely Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Yudh Seva Medal, Ati Vashisht Seva Medal.

During Kargil war, Dhanoa and his squadron devised innovative methods of night bombing that had never been attempted before. He was awarded with Vayu Sena Medal and Yudh Seva Medal for his actions in the war.

Sanna Marin becomes World's Youngest-Serving Prime Minister

The 34-year-old Sanna Marin, was selected by her Social Democratic party of Finland to become the country's youngest prime minister ever, taking over after resignation of outgoing leader **Antti Rinne**. Sanna who will now be youngest head of government in the country's history, has earlier served as transport minister of Finland.

Key Highlights

At 34, Sanna Marin also becomes world's youngest serving prime minister once takes office in the coming days. Finland's Parliament is expected to formally swear in the new prime minister on 10 December 2019. She is now ahead of Ukraine's prime minister *Oleksiy Honcharuk*, who is currently 35.

She narrowly won the vote to replace Antti Rinne, who resigned after losing the confidence of coalition partner Centre Party over his handling of a postal strike. Sanna's party is the largest in a five-member governing coalition.

NOTE: In Indian, Rajiv Gandhi was the youngest person to become Prime Minister. He became PM at 40 years of age.

Only Aadhar authenticated bank accounts to get PM-Kisan payments: Govt

The Government of India has notified that the fourth instalment of the PM-KISAN (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi) income support scheme due in December 2019 will be transferred only to Aadhar-authenticated bank accounts of more than 50 million beneficiaries. This will be the first time since the launch of this scheme on 24 February 2019, that the government is insisting on mandatory condition of



Aadhar seeding.

Key Highlights

The instalment for December 2019 to March 2020 will be transferred to Aadhar-authenticated bank accounts at one go this month. Thereby, from 4th instalment onwards, payment would be made only to farmers whose Aadhar numbers have been authenticated with their bank accounts. The department has authenticated over 50 million bank accounts.

Government has not yet decided the date and venue for disbursement of the installment but is expected to disburse over Rs.10,000 crore to farmers in a one day. This will also be the largest disbursal in one day so far under PM-KISAN, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the launch on February 24 distributed first instalment of Rs.2,000 each for December 2018-March 2019 period to over 10 million farmers. The step is expected to boost sagging rural economy at a time when GDP growth has hit bottom.

About Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) Yojana

It is a Central Sector scheme with 100% funding from Centre Government. Under PM-Kisan Yojana, the central government provides income support of Rs.6,000 per year to all farmer families in country. The income support is paid in instalments of Rs.2,000 every four months. The Scheme defines farmer family as husband, wife and minor children. The entire responsibility of identification of beneficiary farmer families rests with State Governments and Union Territory government.

South Africa's Zozibini Tunzi wins Miss Universe 2019 title

Miss South Africa Zozibini Tunzi was crowned as Miss Universe 2019 at the event held at Tyler Perry Studios in Atlanta, United States. The 26-year-old Zozibini Tunzi was presented the crown by Philippines' **Catriona Gray**, who was the Miss Universe winner in 2018.

India was represented by Vartika Singh in the beauty pageant. Vartika Singh failed to enter the top 10 of the Miss Universe 2018 competition. After Lara Dutta had won the crown in 2000, no Indian contestant has been able to win Miss Universe title in all these 19 years.

About Miss Universe 2019

Miss South Africa Zozibini Tunzi and Miss Universe Puerto Rico Madison Anderson were the top two contestants for Miss Universe title. Miss Tunzi won the title beating Puerto Rican and Mexican finalists and more than 90 contestants from around the globe.

Runner Up: Miss Universe Puerto Rico Madison Anderson was declared first runner up and Miss Universe Mexico was the second-runner up.

This year 2019 was 68th edition of Miss Universe pageant. The event was hosted by Emmy Award-winning American comic-turned-TV personality Steve Harvey.

Report says arms sales increased by 5% in 2018

On December 9, 2019, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute published a report according to which arms sales rose by 5% through out the world in 2018.

Key findings of the report

The report said that the turn over of 100 biggest arms manufacturers came to 420 billion USD. Amongst arms manufacturers, US manufacturers accounted for 59% of global weapon market. Next to the US, Russia ranked second in arms production contributing 8.6% of the weapon market. UK and France ranked third and fourth contributing 8.4% and 5.5% respectively.

The study did not include China as there was insufficient data. However, the report said that China has spent 1.9% of gross domestic product on defence every year since 2013.

Findings on S-400

The increase in sales of weapons continued to grow particularly in the exports of S-400 air defense system. Turkey was the largest buyer of S-400 missiles in spite of US threat of sanctions. Two arms industries of



Turkey are in the top 100 with an annual turn over of 2.8 billion USD.

Arms Exports

Malaysia records first polio case in 27 years

Malaysia has reported the first case of Polio in 27 years, when a three-month-old Malaysian infant boy was diagnosed with polio. The last polio case in Asia-Pacific country occurred in 1992, and in 2000, after which the country was declared polio-free. In this recent case, the child was confirmed to be infected with **vaccine-derived poliovirus Type 1 (VDPV1)** on 6 December 2019.

Concern: Those who have been immunized/vaccinated will be protected from infection, but, in unsanitary environments, the virus can infect others who have not been immunised against polio and thus can spread in communities whose polio immunisation rates are below 95%. The longer the virus spreads in community, it will undergo genetic mutation until it once again becomes an active virus.

Also, the resurgence of Polio in Malaysia comes just months after Philippines, north of Borneo, reported its 1st cases of polio since 1993 in September 2019.

About Polio or poliomyelitis

It is a potentially deadly infectious disease caused by poliovirus. It can cause paralysis by invading a person's brain and spinal cord. So far, the disease has no cure and can only be prevented through vaccination.

There are 3 serotypes of wild poliovirus: type 1, type 2, and type 3. Each type has slightly different capsid protein. Immunity to 1 serotype does not give confer immunity to other two. The vaccine-derived poliovirus Type 1 (VDPV1) is classified as a *circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV) Type 1*. The cVDPV originates from poliovirus that has been weakened by orally-administered polio vaccine.

National Energy Conservation Week

National Energy Conservation Week is celebrated all over India from December 14 to December 20. Various Government enterprises and Public Sector Undertakings celebrate the week by organizing energy conservation message-oriented activities.

December 14: Energy Conservation Day

The Energy Conservation Day is celebrated every year on December 14 since 1991. Energy Conservation Day is an initiative of Bureau of Energy Efficiency. The objective of the day is to demonstrate achievements of government in saving energy and conservation.

On the day, National Energy Conservation awards is distributed to industries that play major role in conserving energy.

Energy Conservation Organization in India

The **Petroleum Conservation Research Association** is an inter-governmental body that was created in 1978 to promote energy conservation. It creates public awareness in saving fossil fuels.

The **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** created in 2001 is also responsible for promoting energy efficiency and conservation. The BEE was established under Energy Conservation Act, 2001. The aim of the organization is to reduce energy demands.

Diwali-Power of One Awards

Four eminent diplomats have been honoured with the '**Diwali – Power of One**' award in recognition and of their work, especially at United Nations (UN), for a secure and peaceful world. The Winner were honoured with the 'Power of One' awards during a ceremony at UN Headquarters in New York, United States. The award annually honours those who have made exemplary contributions in upholding the values that the United Nations stands for.



Winners 2019

Awardees: The award is conferred to former High-Level UN diplomats or Permanent Representatives or those diplomats who will soon finish their tenure at world organisation for working selflessly towards helping form a more secure, peaceful and perfect world for all.

The diplomats who were honoured are:

- *Kairat Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan)*- Former foreign minister and Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to UN
- *Nicholas Emiliou (Cyprus)*- former Permanent Representative of Cyprus to UN
- *Frantisek Ruzicka (Slovakia)*- Former Chef de Cabinet to President of 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and Permanent Representative of Slovakia to UN
- *Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine)*- Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the UN

About Diwali-Power of One Awards

The awards which have now come to be known as '**Oscars of Diplomacy**' were established by Diwali Foundation USA, Inc in 2017. The awards seeks to promote a peaceful and consensus-based process to achieve societal good, as befitting high hopes and ideals of humanity enshrined in UN Charter. The co-organisers of this year *Diwali Foundation USA's Power of One* awardees were- Permanent Missions of Belarus, Georgia and India to UN, along with 32 co-sponsors.

Currently, Ranju Batra chairs, the Diwali Foundation USA. Ranju Batra had spearheaded efforts for nearly 7 years to get a commemorative 'Forever Diwali' stamp issued by US Postal Service in 2016. The 'Power of One' award institutionalises Diwali Stamp effort of Ranju Batra and her partners who worked tirelessly and made it the most popular stamp issued by US Postal Services.

Hornbill Festival celebrated in Nagaland

Every year the "Hornbill Festival" is celebrated between December 1 and December 10. It is also called Festival of Festivals. The festival is organized by the State Tourism and art and culture department in Kohima.

Highlights of the festival

The festival is held every year in the Kisama village near Kohima, the state capital. The aim of the festival is to protect and revive the rich culture of Nagaland. All the tribes of Nagaland take part in the festival. Traditional arts of the state such as wood carvings, paintings and sculptures are displayed in the festival.

Tourism

The festival is a major tourist attraction. Till December 8, 2019, around 2,39,901 visitors have visited the festival. It includes 2,799 foreigners as well. The festival contributes a major share in boosting the economy of the state.

Naga Morungs

The Naga Morung is one of the major highlights of the festival. The Morung is a self-governing body that aims to protect the village men. Morungs were the community spaces in Nagaland where the young boys were trained. The boys are taught history and culture of the tribes in the land. They also learnt folk songs and tales during their stay. The boys were made Naga warriors in these Morungs.

At the Hornbill festival, the culture of the Morung tribes is exhibited. Their arts, paintings, lifestyle are displayed. Tourists stay at Morung cottages during the festival.

The name

Hornbill is a revered bird that is featured widely in the songs of Nagaland tribes. Hence the name horn bill is given to the festival. Hornbills are birds that are found in tropical and sub-tropical Asia, Africa and Melanesia.



ISRO to launch RISAT, the Spy satellite of India

The Indian Space Research Organization is gearing to launch RISAT-2BR1 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on December 11, 2019. It is the second satellite in the RISAT series. The first satellite RISAT-2B was launched earlier this year.

Highlights of the launch

The launch is the 50th mission of ISRO's PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle). Along with the RISAT-2BR1, it will also carry 9 commercial satellites. They are 6 from the US, and each from Italy, Israel and Japan.

The RISAT-2BR1 is a spy satellite that is launched to boost Indian military's Earth surveillance.

RISAT

RISAT are Indian radar imaging reconnaissance satellites built by ISRO. These satellites provide all weather earth observations. So far, ISRO has put 310 foreign satellites into orbit.

Satellite Launch Market

So far India has launched satellites for 19 countries. Broadly, the US shares 40% of global launching services market. Following the US, European Union holds the second place. Though China plays a major role, it is not a consistent player and is not popular among the satellite customers namely USA and European Union. India has been launching satellites for foreign clients for 15 years now.

Chandrayaan 3

Apart from RISAT series, ISRO is also planning to launch Chandrayaan 3. Following the partial success of Chandrayaan 2 with the Vikram lander crashing on the moon's surface, Chandrayaan 3 will help in fulfill the unaccomplished components. ISRO has sought Rs 75 crore from the Department of Economic Affairs to complete the mission. It is now official!

Fact Box: Alliance Air flags off Guwahati-Dimapur-Imphal flight under UDAN-RCS

Alliance Air has flagged-off its first flight operations between *Guwahati* in Assam to *Dimapur* (largest city of Nagaland) and *Imphal* (capital of Manipur), under the Regional Connectivity Scheme – Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (RCS-UDAN). This direct 50 minute-long flights connecting Guwahati-Dimapur-Imphal is under a **Regional Connectivity Scheme** (RCS), part of government's **Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)** programme.

The commencement of flight operations in region marks another step by the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation to establish a strong air network in North East India. The Alliance Air, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Air India, currently connects 57 destinations and with addition of Dimapur and Imphal, there will be 59 stations in its ambit.

Key Highlights

A 70-seater aircraft will be deployed on these routes by the airline with the price of a one-way ticket from Dimapur to Imphal or vice versa costing Rs 1,811. The flights between Imphal and Dimapur route will operate thrice-weekly- on every Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays.

Itinerary: *Flight 9I 741* will depart from Guwahati at 8 am and arrive in Dimapur at 8:55 am, then the plane will depart from Dimapur at 9:20 am and arrive in Imphal at 10:10 am. While, *Flight 9I 742* will depart from Imphal at 10:35 am, arrive in Dimapur at 11:25 am and the plane will depart from Dimapur at 11:50 am and arrive in Guwahati at 12:45 pm.

Need: Flight services from Dimapur to capital of Manipur, Imphal was a long pending demand from the region. This flight marks the inception of *first-ever alternative option of connectivity to Imphal* as until now, the Imphal is yet to be connected with India's railway network. Therefore, till now, for a mere distance of 200 km, people had to travel for 7 hours by bus from Dimapur to reach Imphal, but now with establishment of the air route, people can now travel to Imphal in 50 minutes by air from Dimapur and can also access air connectivity to other parts of the country as well from Guwahati.

**About UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik)**

UDAN-RCS, launched in April 2017, is a regional airport development and Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) of Union Government, which aims to enable air operations on unserved routes, connecting regional areas, to promote balanced regional growth and to make flying affordable and widespread for masses. It also seeks boost inclusive national economic development, job growth and air transport infrastructure development of all regions and states of India.

Constitution (126th amendment) bill, 2019 introduced in Lok Sabha

The Constitution (126th amendment bill), 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha on December 9, 2019. The bill seeks to extend the reservation provided to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes by 10 years.

Key Features

The reservation provided to the Anglo-Indian community, SC, ST is to end by January 25, 2020. The bill is being introduced to continue the reservation of seats for another 10 years, that is till January, 25, 2030.

The reservation has been included in Article 334 and therefore the bill seeks to amend the article.

Article 334

Article 334 lays down that the provisions for reservation of seats and special representation of anglo-indians, SC and ST will cease after 40 years. The clause was included in 1949. After 40 years, it is being amended with an extension of 10 years.

Constitutional Amendment

The Constitution Amendment is making changing in the constitution. According to Article 368, there are two types of Constitutional Amendments namely, the amendment effected by special majority and the amendment effected by special majority and ratification by at least one half of state legislatures.

Special majority requires ratification by two-third members present at the voting. At the time of voting, more than 50% of the total strength of the house should be present.

Duchifat 3: Satellite built by Israeli school students to be launched by ISRO's PSLV C48

Three youngsters *Alon Abramovich*, *Meitav Assulin* and *Shmuel Aviv Levi*, all 17 to 18 years old from Sha'ar HaNegev High school in Israel's southern region will be traveling to India to launch a satellite dubbed as 'Duchifat 3', designed and built by them aboard PSLV C48 from Sriharikota launch site of ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) on 11 December 2019.

Besides Duchifat 3, the PSLV C48 will carry place India's RISAT-2BR1 and 8 other foreign satellites as payload. India was chosen for the launch because of success enjoyed by country's space programme and also because of close relations between the two countries.

About Duchifat 3 Satellite

It is a remote sensing and photo satellite which will be used for ecological research of Earth from space. It is designed to serve children from across the country to carry experiment through Earth observation. It is the third in the series of Israeli student-made satellites. The size of satellite is 10x10x30 cm (3U) and it weighs 2.3 kg. The satellite is a platform for ecological studies such as air pollution, water source pollution, forest monitoring, and more and will also be of good help to agriculturists. It has been jointly built by Herzliya Science Center and Sha'ar HaNegev High School students, who have worked for almost two and a half years to build it.

About Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)-C48

PSLV is an expendable medium-lift launch vehicle. It is designed and operated by ISRO. The PSLV-C48 will blast off from launch pad at Sriharikota rocket port, Andhra Pradesh. It will place **RISAT-2BR1**, a radar imaging earth observation satellite, having a life of five years, into an orbit of 576 km. Besides RISAT-2BR1, other payload includes 9 foreign satellites- from, Israel (remote sensing **Duchifat-3**), Italy (search and rescue **Tyvak-0092**), Japan (**QPS-SAR** – a radar imaging earth observation satellite) and USA (multi-



mission **Lemur-4 satellites**, earth imaging **1HOPSAT**, technology demonstration **Tyvak-0129**). These international customer satellites are being launched under a commercial arrangement with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) under Department of Space.

December 10, 2019

Parliament passes The Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019

On 9 December 2019, Parliament passed the landmark '**The Recycling of Ships Bill 2019**' for *Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships* in India. Passing of this Bill will have far reaching effects in Indian Ship Recycling industry and is also a giant step and historical moment in Indian Maritime arena.

Key Features: The Recycling of Ships Bill 2019

It joins together the existing **Shipbreaking Code (revised), 2013** and the provisions of the **Hong Kong Convention, 2009**. Thereby, now, ships to be recycled in India will need to obtain a '*Ready for Recycling Certificate*' in accordance with Hong Kong Convention.

The protection of environment and safety of workers are soul of this bill. Once the Bill receives President's assent and becomes an Act, it will ensure environment friendly recycling process of Ships and adequate safety of the yard workers.

The bill adequately address various environmental issues and workers' safety concerns interconnected with the ships recycling Industry.

Key Benefits of bill:

It will herald significant increased number of global ships entering into Indian Shipyards for Recycling. The Recycling of Ships will in turn boost business & employment opportunities and strengthen India's position in recycling industry.

It will raise brand value of India's **Ships Recycling Yards** located at Alang (Gujarat), Mumbai Port, Kolkata Port & Azhikkal (Kerala).

10% of country's Secondary steel needs, which is an outcome of Recycling of Ships, will be met in an eco-friendly manner.

Ships Recycling facilities will comply to International standards and Ships will be recycled only in such authorised facilities. Thus the tremendous growth of business activities will turn contribute to the country's GDP.

Significance

India is a leader in global ship recycling industry with a share of more than 30% of the global market. With enactment of this bill, India will set global standards for safe and sound environmentally-friendly recycling of Ships, and will ensure adequate safety of yard workers. This this bill will also pave the way for more global ships to enter into Indian Shipyards for recycling and boost employment and business opportunities also.

United States shuts down WTO appeal court

The Appeal Court of the World Trade Organization that acts as trade dispute settlement body for the members was shut down by the United States on December 9, 2019. The seven-member body that was cut down to a 3-member body in 2018 is now completely blocked by the United States.

Without WTO's appellate body, the dispute settlement will return to pre-1995 GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) status quo.

Highlights

The WTO dispute settlement body has provided 120 rulings out of 592 registered cases. Out of the 120, many were solved outside WTO as well. Experts in other countries also believe that the WTO system of settlement of disputes take too long to resolve.



The WTO appellate body judges and their ranks have been dwindled in the past under the other Presidents of the US as well. It includes George Bush, Barack Obama and Trump. Apart from US, other countries also believe that the WTO is ill-equipped to deal with the challenge posed by the Chinese unconventional blend of state control and capitalism. The alternate solution of reforming the system is difficult as it requires consensus from 164 member countries.

GATT

The **GATT** is a legal agreement among several countries. It was signed by 23 nations in 1947. In 1993, 76 members of GATT and European community came together to create World Trade Organization.

UNDP Report: India ranks 129 in Human Development Index

The United Nations Development Programme released the Human Development Index for 189 countries on December 9, 2019. The rankings were listed by the report titled "**Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today: Inequalities in Human Development in 21st century**".

India ranked 129 among them, which is one rank ahead of its previous positions. In 2018, India ranked 130. The rankings were listed based on the assessment of poverty, education, life expectancy and access to health care.

Highlights: World

Among all the regions, South Asia was the fastest growing region. It witnessed 46% growth between the years 1990 and 2018. Despite its growth, the region accounts to 31% of partner violence. Next to South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific reported good growth. The growth rate of these regions was assessed by the report as 43%.

Singapore reported the least partner violence faced by women.

Highlights: India

The report says that around 27.1 crore people in India were lifted out of poverty between the time period 2005-06 and 2015-16. However, India is the largest country constituting to 41% of world's poor according to the report!

India ranked 122 in the Gender Development Index

NSIC & ARAMCO Asia signs MoU for development in Oil & Gas Sector

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed between National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) and Saudi Aramco (Asia) for the development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Ecosystem in India in Oil & Gas Sector. The MoU will pave a way for accredited Indian MSMEs to carve out a space as vendors in Global space.

National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC)

It is the flagship Mini Ratna public sector undertaking (PSU) under Union Ministry of MSME in the business of facilitating MSMEs in India. It was established in 1955 as a Government of India agency and was later made into a fully owned government corporation.

Saudi Aramco (or Saudi Arabian Oil Company)

It is a Saudi Arabian national petroleum and natural gas company based in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. It is world's largest Oil & Gas Company and is one of the largest companies in world by revenue.

Russia's SIRIUS and NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission ends

The second phase of Russia's SIRIUS Deep Technology Learning and NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission ended on December 9, 2019. The joint programme was conducted based on a Memorandum of Understanding between SIRIUS and AIM.

Highlights

The event was held between 28 November, 2019 and 8 December, 2019. Around 50 Russian and Indian students participated in the event. They shared best contemporary innovation practices in the field of



biotech, clean energy, IT and Data analysis, Remote Earth Sensing, Robotics and Drones.

The students also created classification of farmland based on the data from satellite and neural network in order to achieve effective management of crop land. Under Clean Energy, students created free energy island prototype that can withstand energy requirement of 600 people. Under Drones and Robotics, an automated machine to collect tea leaves was created.

SIRIUS

SIRIUS is Scientific International Research in Unique Terrestrial Station. It is a series of experiments that investigate flights to moon. It was started in 2017.

In 2017, joint SIRIUS experiments were conducted by US and Russia. It was called SIRIUS-17. The scientists under the programme conducted preventive measures and technologies to protect the health of scientists during space flight.

In March 2019, SIRIUS-19 was conducted. Under this initiative, 80 experiments were carried out that simulated human visit to the moon.

India & Australia hold third 2+2 dialogue in New Delhi

The third India-Australia Secretary-level 2+2 dialogue was held on 9 December 2019 in New Delhi. The Indian side was led by Defense Secretary Ajay Kumar and Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale, while its counterpart delegation was led by Australia's Defense Secretary Greg Moriarty and Foreign Secretary Frances Adamson.

Ahead of 3rd 2+2 dialogue, the two defense secretaries of India & Australia held a bilateral meeting. The Indian defense secretary expressed satisfaction on ongoing defense engagements between armed forces of two countries, and conveyed India's commitment to further enhance defense cooperation with Australia, both in scope and complexity.

Highlights: India-Australia 2+2 dialogue

Both the sides discuss issues related to bilateral defense engagements, areas towards enhancing cooperation in field of defense industry/ defense technology as well as prevailing regional security concerns.

This year's edition of 2+2 dialogue, assumes additional significance as they come months after India, Australia, Japan and United States (US) decided to upgrade their interactions in '*Quadrilateral Security Dialogue*' (Quad) format to ministerial level in September 2019. All aspects of bilateral relations will be reviewed, with the focus on security and strategic relations.

The main focus of 2+2 dialogue will be on bilateral outcomes for Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison's visit in January 2020. Morrison is visiting India at invitation of his counterpart Prime Minister Narendra Modi and will deliver the inaugural address at **Raisina Dialogue**.

India's 2+2 Mechanism

India has put in place 2+2 dialogues, either at level of officials or ministers, with several key partners, including Japan and the US. The maiden India-Japan 2+2 ministerial dialogue, was also held in New Delhi. India and US are expected to hold their ministerial 2+2 dialogue in Washington, US on 18 December.

Paris Summit: Russia-Ukraine agree to cease fire

At a Paris Summit mediated by Germany and France, Russia and Ukraine agreed to restore peace by implementing cease fire. Both the countries also agreed on prisoner exchanges.

Highlights

On December 9, 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky agreed to cease fire in the eastern Ukraine by the end of 2019. The countries also pledged to disengage military forces in the other three additional regions of Ukraine by the end of March 2020.

During the meet, the issue of Russian gas exports through the Ukraine border have been fixed. However, the



countries still disagree on certain issues like withdrawal of Russia-back troops, elections to be held by the separatist rebels in areas of Ukraine.

The Deadly Conflict

In 2014, Russia annexed the Crimea peninsula of Ukraine with the help of pro-Russian separatists. Following this, Russia conducted several military actions. Crimea Peninsula is located in the north of Black sea. The Peninsula is important as it had port access to the Black sea. In 2018, Russian Navy seized three Ukrainian ships in the Crimea Peninsula. In 2019, Zelensky won Presidential elections. Zelensky is the major competitor to the Russia supported leader Viktor Yanukovich.

10 December: International Human Rights Day

Every year 10th December is celebrated as International Human Rights Day across the world. The **theme** for 2019 Human Rights Day is: 'Youth Standing up for Human Rights.' The 2019 edition of day will celebrate the 'youth' as agents of change and will encourage them to amplify their voices against hate speech, discrimination, racism, bullying, and fight for climate justice, among other issues, as well as to engage a broad range of global audiences in promotion and protection of rights.

International Human Rights Day

Why 10 December? It was on this date in 1948, the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**, was adopted and proclaimed by United Nation General Assembly (UNGA) as the shared standard yardstick to protect human rights across the globe. UDHR was the first global enunciation of human rights as it recognized that inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of mankind are the foundation of justice, freedom and peace globally.

Formal establishment: However, the Human Rights Day was formally established when UNGA at its 317th Plenary Meeting on 4 December 1950, declared resolution 423(V), inviting all member states and any other interested organizations to celebrate and adopt 10 December of each year as Human Rights Day. Later in December 1993, UNGA announced to celebrate Human Rights Day annually.

Draj Bridge for all-weather connectivity inaugurated in J&K's Rajouri

Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Girish Chandra Murmu, inaugurated Draj Bridge in Rajouri, J&K. It is an important bridge for the military as well as for socio-economic development of J&K's Rajouri District as a whole. This bridge will facilitate all-weather and speedy movement of Army troops and locals.

About Draj Bridge

It is a 72-metre-long Multi Cell Box Type Load Class 70 bridge. The bridge spans over Draj nallah and connects Draj Area with Tehsil Kotranka area under District Rajouri and is constructed to bear heavy load up to 70 tons. The upgradation of existing causeway with National Highway specifications was essential as it is on important line of communication.

The important bridge has been constructed by 110 Road Construction Company of 31 Task Force under **Project Sampark** of **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**. BRO is responsible for infrastructure development and war preparedness through construction of roads, bridge and tunnels. BRO is plays an important role in field of surface transport by connecting far-flung inaccessible remote areas along borders. It is involved with more projects in area to strengthen road network.

India Skills Report: Maharashtra with highest employable talent

On December 9, 2019, the India Skills Report was released jointly by the CII (Confederation of Indian Industry), AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and AIU (Association of Indian University). The report provides employability of citizens in the country across the states and. The report also ranked the cities based on the availability of employment.

The report was prepared based on a survey that assessed 300,000 candidates from 35 educational institutes across 28 states and 9 Union Territories.

**Highlights: State wise**

According to the report, Maharashtra topped the list with the highest employable talent. Following Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh ranked second and third respectively.

Highlights: City wise

Among the cities, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Pune were rated as the most employable cities in the country. Mumbai was at the top most followed by Hyderabad. Hyderabad entered the top ranks for the first time since the launch of the report.

Highlights: Profession

The report said that MBA holders were at the top slot with an employability score of 54%. This position was held by engineers in 2018. MBA category was followed by pharmacy, commerce and arts candidates at second, third and fourth places respectively. The employability in these slots increased by 15%.

Highlights: Gender wise

The Employability scores of male and female for the year 2019 was 46% and 47% respectively. Last year, the scores of male and female was 48% and 46%. This shows that women are more employable than men. Overall employability rate of the country was 46%.

FAQs: Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah on December 9, 2019. It was passed on the same day in Lok Sabha.

What are the objectives of the Citizenship Act, 1955?

The bill is re-introduced to amend The Citizenship Act, 1955, which was enacted to provide for the acquisition and determination of Indian citizenship i.e. to regulate who can acquire Indian citizenship and on what basis.

The original act states that a person may become an Indian citizen if

1. they are born in India or
2. have Indian parents or
3. resided in the country for a period of time, etc.

But the Indian citizenship is not provided to illegal migrants. An illegal migrant is a foreigner who

1. enters the country without valid travel documents or
2. enters with valid documents, but stays beyond the permitted period.

The Indian Government can imprison or deport illegal migrants under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920.

A foreigner may register as an OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) under the 1955 Act if they are of Indian origin or the spouse of a person of Indian origin. They have the right to travel to India, to work and study in India.

What is the need of the amendment?

During the partition of 1947, several citizens of undivided India of various religions were staying in the regions of Pakistan and Bangladesh. The constitutions of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh have provisions for a specific state religion. Therefore many persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities have faced discrimination on grounds of religion in those countries. Many such persons fled to India and continued to stay in India.

Under the existing provisions of the Act (section 5 or section 6), those people belonging to the above-said religions and countries who entered India without valid travel documents or with expired documents are regarded as illegal migrants and they are ineligible to apply for Indian citizenship.

What are the previous initiatives of the Government?

The Centre, in 2015 and 2016 issued two notifications exempting some groups of illegal migrants from the above mentioned 1946 and the 1920 Acts. The groups are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and



Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who came to India on or before 31.12.2014.

This means that these groups of illegal migrants will not be deported or imprisoned for being in India without valid documents.

Later in 2016, the Central Government also made them eligible for long term visa to stay in India.

Is this the first time the amendment bill being introduced?

In 2016, a similar bill was introduced to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955, which sought the extension of citizenship to the migrants of six religions of the three countries and to revise the provisions of OCI card holders. The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on January 8, 2019. But as the 16th Lok Sabha was dissolved, the bill lapsed.

What are the new amendments?

- The new bill is passed to provide Indian citizenship to the illegal migrants, who are from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan and are
 1. Hindus
 2. Sikhs
 3. Buddhists
 4. Jains
 5. Parsis and
 6. Christians
- The Bill seeks to amend the act to allow cancellation of OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) registration if the person has violated any provision of the act or any law in force in India. A provision is also to be added where the OCIs are given opportunity to be heard in courts before the cancellation.
- The Bill says that on acquiring citizenship:
 - such persons shall be regarded as Indian citizens from the date of their entry into India, and
 - all legal proceedings against them related to their illegal migration or citizenship will be closed.
- The bill also proposes to amend the 3rd Schedule to the Act, to make the applicants of the aforesaid religions and countries eligible for **citizenship by naturalisation** if they can prove their residency in India for **five years** instead of the existing eleven years.
- The illegal migrants who have entered into India up to the cut of date of **31.12.2014** shall be granted the certificate of registration or certificate of naturalisation and they may be given the citizenship of India from the date of their entry in India if they fulfil the conditions.

What are the exemptions?

The Bill adds that the provisions on citizenship for illegal migrants will not apply to

1. the tribal areas of Karbi Anglong (**Assam**), Garo Hills (**Meghalaya**), Chakma District (**Mizoram**), and **Tripura** Tribal Areas District and
2. the areas under the Inner Line Regulation, whose permit regulates the visit of Indians to Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland.

Why is the bill opposed?

The prime opposition voice is that the act violates the right to equality under **Article 14 of the Constitution**. Many severe resistances and oppositions are seen against the bill as it is seen to show disparity to illegal migrants on the following grounds:

- **Their country of origin:** The Bill chooses to extend the citizenship only to non-Muslims from three nations with a Muslim majority. The Bill classifies migrants based on their country of origin to include only Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It is not clear why migrants from these countries are differentiated from migrants from other neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka and Myanmar.
- **Religion:** Instead of the term "persecuted minorities", the bill lists the six religions which clearly



excluded Muslims. Recently the people of Tamil Eelam and Rohingya Muslims are seen fleeing to India and taking refuge here. It fails to allow Shia and Ahmadiyya Muslims to apply for citizenship, who also face persecution in Pakistan. It is not clear why illegal migrants belonging to religious minorities from these countries have been excluded from the Bill.

- **Date of entry into India:** It is also unclear why there is a differential treatment of migrants based on their date of entry into India and the cut off date of 31.12.2014 is being fixed.
- **Place of residence in India:** Though the Bill further seeks to protect the constitutional guarantee given to indigenous populations of North Eastern States covered under the Sixth Schedule, it excludes illegal migrants residing in those areas, which are the notified tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.
- **OCI cancellation:** There is no clear regulation about the nature of the laws, which when violated lead to the cancellation of OCI registration.

Despite all these oppositions from various segments of the country, the government reiterates that there is no discrimination shown between the people. The subsequent implications may be visible only after the act is implemented across the country.

ASI identified 138 monuments as 'Must See Monuments': Govt

The Minister of State for Culture and Tourism Prahlad Patel, informed Parliament that Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has identified 138 monuments as 'Must See Monuments'. This information has been made available on 'Must See' portal of ASI.

World Heritage Sites (WHS) in India & 'Must See' List

WHS is a landmark or area selected by UNESCO (a UN specialized agency) as having historical, cultural, scientific or any other form of significance. Such site is legally protected by international treaties.

There are 38 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India, which includes 30 cultural sites, 7 natural sites and 1 mixed-criteria site. India has 6th largest number of sites in world. Out of 38, the 22 cultural sites including monuments, buildings and caves are under protection of ASI. Therefore, the 'Must See' list features outstanding Indian monuments and archaeological sites, under protection of ASI, including those that feature on World Heritage List of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). Such buildings, monuments and sites are a unique testimony to civilization in past, as they display exceptionality in terms of arts and architecture, planning and design as well exemplary engineering skills.

About Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

It is an Indian government agency that is responsible for archaeological research, conservation and preservation of cultural monuments in country. It functions under Union Ministry of Culture. It was founded in 1861 by *Alexander Cunningham* who was also the first Director-General of ASI.

India and France to begin patrolling mission in Indian Ocean Region

India and France are to launch joint naval patrolling mission after the [Varuna Naval Exercise](#) that was held in May, 2019. The joint mission is to be executed in the Indian Ocean Region to protect the strategic interests of the countries and to check large scale illegal fishing.

Highlights

The Joint Patrol mission is to start in 2020. The navies will operate joint patrols with Indian Navy deploying P8I maritime surveillance and the French Navy operating from Reunion Islands. The Reunion Islands is an island of France in the Indian Ocean. It was discovered in 16th century by the Portuguese. France has bases in Reunion Islands, Djibouti and Mayotte to balance China.

Significance

The joint mission is important as China is expanding its naval influence in the region. China has increased



its presence in the region through its strategic bases like Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka and a key military facility in Djibouti, Horn of Africa.

Common interests

When two tankers were attacked in Strait of Hormuz in June 2019, both India and France decided to deploy one of their frigates in the area individually. Later, Indo-French pact was signed in which the countries agreed to share information between them in order to strengthen the security in the region.

Digital Exhibition on history of Constitution of India being held in New Delhi

The 'Digital Exhibition on History of Constitution of India', was inaugurated in New Delhi by Dr. Jitendra Singh, Minister of State (M/S) for Development of North Eastern Region (I/C), Prime Minister's Office, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space. It will be organised for two days from 9-10 December 2019.

About 'Digital Exhibition on History of Constitution of India'

It has been organised by Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT), Union Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, in collaboration with Parliament Museum and Archives of Lok Sabha Secretariat and Bureau of Outreach and Communication (BOC).

Exhibition contains Replica of the Constitution, photograph of Constituent Assembly Members, Debates (audio) in Constituent Assembly, Quotes and audio speeches of Constituent Assembly Members, Movie on making of Constitution, Posters on- Preamble, Constitution, Fundamental Duties, Directive Principles among others.

Importance of 9th December: It is an important day from historical point of view, as the *first sitting of Constituent Assembly was held on this day in 1946*. The current year 2019, marks 70th Year of adoption of Constitution.

NOTE: The Constitution of India was *adopted* on 26th November, 1949, and the Members appended their signatures to it on 24 January 1950. In all, 284 Members (total Members-299) actually signed Constitution and the Constitution of India then *came into force* on 26 January 1950. The day of adoption of the Constitution is celebrated in country as 'Constitution Day'.

China Pakistan: Secure CPEC sea route

In order to secure the CPEC sea route, China and Pakistan have signed a deal to build drones with maximum payload of 480 kg, with top speed of 370 km per hour and can fly up to 20 hours. The drones are called Loong II. These drones are similar to the MQ-9 Reaper drones developed by the US.

Highlights

Pakistan and China have agreed to build 48 drones in the Pakistan soil. The deal is to be implemented by the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex and Aviation Industry Corp of China. This deal is considered to be the biggest drone sale of China to any country. Pakistan is already operating Loong I drone. China has sold Loong I drones to other countries as well. It includes Kazakhstan, Indonesia and United Arab Emirates

Global Concerns

China is building its counter drone systems and laser weapons largely as it tries to catch US on UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) Technology. These technologies focus on **spoofing techniques** that prevent sending false information to UAVs. Together China and Russia are in arms race with the United States. There are concerns raised by number of countries about the trade war, repeated sanctions, imposition of taxes, space race and arms race between the countries.

India Concerns

CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor), a major part of China's BRI project passes through the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir region. India is concerned about the countries strengthening security in the region. With series of attacks and tensions between the India and Pakistan namely Pulwama, Balkot strikes, Abrogation



of Article 370, etc, India sees the current move as a tension addend.

Govt launches Pilot Project for using Fastags for Parking at Hyderabad Airport

To ensure the benefits of FASTag beyond tolling, the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has launched a pilot project for using FASTags for parking purposes at Hyderabad Airport. Conceptualised as **FASTag 2.0**, the tag would cover parking payments, fuel payments, etc. After the success of project in Hyderabad, it will be launched at Delhi airport.

Key Highlights

Pilot project has been launched in two phases. In Phase I, a controlled pilot testing is being undertaken, wherein only ICICI tags would be used, while, the Phase II of pilot would cover all other Issuer Bank tags. Other banks such as SBI, HDFC, IDFC and Axis are also in talks with airports in Mumbai, Bangalore & few of the malls to launch FASTag 2.0.

The **FASTag 2.0** has many exciting use cases such as Fuel Payments, Enforcement (E-challan) payments, Access Management at offices & residence. The GST council has also mandated FASTag for all commercial vehicles which would be generating an E-way bill from 1 April, 2020. This integration will be a big boost to GSTN (Goods and Services Tax Network) as it would help in identifying leakages with respect to non-issuance/ miss reporting of E-way bill.

About National Electronic Toll Collection (FASTag) programme

It is the flagship initiative of Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. It has been implemented on pan India basis across National Highway toll plazas. The programme has given a major fillip to digital India initiative by converting cash toll payments to electronic and has thus enhanced transparency in entire tolling ecosystem.

Government has recently mandated to declare all lanes of fee plazas on National Highways as 'FASTag lanes'. This has seen a much wider adoption of FASTags both in terms of new tag sales as well as higher transactions at the toll plazas. The mandate would further increase the penetration of *National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC)* and the higher NETC penetration will further ensure a seamless movement of traffic which would in turn bring down the overall Logistic cost in country.

December 11, 2019

World Anti-Doping Agency imposes 4-year ban on Russia

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has slapped Russia with a four-year ban from international sports events, over longstanding doping scandal. The ban includes next summer's Tokyo Olympics (which opens 24 July 2020) and 2022 Beijing Winter Games. However, Russia's anti-doping agency can appeal decision to **Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)** within 21 days.

Highlights: WADA Ruling

The sanctions are harshest punishment yet for Russian state authorities who were accused of tampering with a Moscow laboratory database. WADA investigators and International Olympic Committee (IOC) agreed that evidence showed Russian authorities corrupted data from Moscow lab that was long sealed by security forces. As a result, hundreds of potential doping cases were deleted and evidence falsely planted to shift blame onto whistleblowers.

The WADA ruling means that Russia's flag, name and anthem will not appear at Tokyo Games, and the country also could be stripped of hosting world championships in Olympic sports. Although Russia's athletes will still be able to compete in major events only if they can show that they are not implicated in positive doping tests or if their data was not manipulated.

For soccer's 2022 World Cup, as per WADA ruling, the Russian team will play under its name in qualifying program in Europe. Bu, if it qualifies to play in Qatar, the team name must be changed to something neutral that likely would not include the word 'Russia.'



December 11: International Mountain Day

International Mountain Day predominantly refers to the day, the United Nations marks on December 11 every year since 2003. The same day is celebrated in US and Japan as well as National Mountain Day. The US began to mark mountain day even before the UN since 1877. However, in Japan it is being celebrated since 2014 and is a national holiday.

Theme: Mountains matter for youth

Why Mountain Day?

Around 15% of world population live in mountain according to the UN. Today, mountains are under threat due to over exploitation, climate change

Highlights

The day highlights that living is hard for those in the mountains. It focuses predominantly on the youth. It encourages and highlights the opportunities for young people in mountains. The day marks the importance of market access, education, training, public services and employment opportunities for the youth living in mountain region.

Migration-Major Issue

The day also focuses on abandonment of mountains. Today many young people leave hilly terrains for better life and employment. This leads to abandoned agriculture, loss of cultural values and land degradation. International Mountain Day also focuses on solutions to migration problems in the hilly regions.

Background

The idea of International Mountain Day was framed in United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. The idea was introduced in Agenda 21, which is "Managing Fragile Ecosystem: Sustainable Mountain Development"

Sustainable Development Goal

Mountains are the most important ecosystem that needs maximum attention. They provide freshwater for every day life. Conservation of mountains is important for sustainable development and is a part of Goal 15. The SDG 15 focuses on "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably"

Anti-Maritime Bill introduced in Lok Sabha

On December 10, 2019, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar introduced the Anti-Maritime bill in parliament. The bill was introduced in days after the kidnapping of 18 Indians aboard in Nigeria. It aims at ensuring safety and security of India's maritime trade and the crew members

Key Features

The bill is framed in accordance with the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea). It provides punishment of death penalty to those involved in piracy at sea. Section 3 of the bill mentions that persons involved in the act of piracy shall be punished with imprisonment and death penalty.

Need for the bill

Piracy has been growing in the Indian Ocean region since 2008. It is especially more in the Gulf of Aden, which is used by more than 2,000 ships a day. The Gulf has seen several attacks from Somalia. The region is important as it is the busiest trade route between Europe, Asia and East Coast of Africa. These incidents affect the west coast of India as well. This is because, several countries jointly and individually are increasing their security in the Gulf of Aden region to protect their ships. This has forced the pirates to shift their operation eastwards and southwards. This affects India greatly and a strict legislation is required.

UNCLOS

The UNCLOS or the Laws of the sea was framed at the third UN Conference that was held between 1973 and



1982. As of 2016, 167 countries including the European Union have joined UNCLOS. There is no direct role played by the UN in implementing the UNCLOS. However, organizations like International Whaling Commission, International Maritime Organization and International Seabed Authority have major role in following and implementing the rules.

IUCN adds 1840 new species to the Red List of Threatened Species

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) added about 1,840 new species to its updated "Red List of Threatened Species", a catalogue of plants and animals that risk extinction. The list now contains over 30,000 species under threat of disappearing. The group released its Red List update in the middle of COP25 climate talks in Madrid, Spain. The year 2020 will see two global IUCN gatherings, first in June in Marseille, France and another in Kunming, China, in October.

Key Findings of IUCN List

IUCN finds that hundreds of plant and animal species who already face the threat of habitat destruction, are now under further pressure from manmade climate change.

IUCN had earlier witnessed a genuine declines in 73 species since its last assessment. This new update reveals the ever-increasing impacts of human activities on wildlife. Moreover, the Climate change is adding to multiple threats species face, and there is a to act urgently and decisively to curb the crisis.

More than 1 million species are now at risk of vanishing as insatiable human demand puts them in danger of overexploitation, habitat loss, pollution and climate change.

Fish: Rising temperatures have already contributed to declines of several freshwater fish and sharks. Latest update showed that 37% of Australia's freshwater fish species were threatened with extinction. Stocks of Short-tail nurse shark have declined around 80% in last 30 years, as its shallow water habitat is being degraded because of ocean warming.

Bird: Dozens of species of birds and plants are now also threatened by rising temperatures. However, IUCN also highlighted a small handful of conservation successes, including the recovery of *Guam Rail*, a bird previously listed as extinct in wild.

About International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

It is an international organization that works in field of conservation of nature and sustainable use of natural resources. This membership Union is composed of both government and civil society organisations. It has more than 1,300 Member organisations and over 15,000 experts, this diversity and vast expertise makes IUCN the global authority on the status of the natural world and measures needed to safeguard it. IUCN is best known for its compiling and publishing of *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*, which assesses the conservation status of species worldwide.

CCPI Index, COP25: India among top 10 countries

On December 10, 2019, at the COP25, the Climate Change Performance Index was presented. The Index measures renewable energy share, emissions and climate policies of 57 countries and the European Union.

Highlights: India

India ranked 9th in the ranking provided. The ranking was to the "high category", where the countries have ambitious 2030 targets. The report noted that India received medium rating in the renewable energy category. Also, the 2030 target set by India was rated high for its well-below 2-degree Celsius compatibility. The report also says that India is yet to develop a road map to phase-out fossil fuel subsidies in order to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels.

Highlights: World

China, one of the largest polluters improved in its ranking and was placed in medium category. US and Saudi Arabia were the major polluters. They hardly showed signs of reducing their green house gas emissions. US ranked the last followed by Saudi Arabia and Australia.



According to the report, 31 of the 57 high emitting countries are responsible for 90% of emissions. Some of the EU countries like Sweden (ranked 4th), Denmark (ranked 5th) were the highest achievers in terms of performance.

Among the G20 countries, only India and UK were ranked in the high category.

National Anti-Doping Agency appoints Actor Suniel Shetty as its brand ambassador

National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), India's anti-doping body has selected Bollywood actor Suniel Shetty has been selected as its brand ambassador. NADA hopes that his celebrity status would help its efforts to clean up sports in the country from the menace.

NADA's Concern

Earlier this year, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) had suspended NADA. This is another issue facing the country now that dope samples collected by NADA from the athletes will have to be tested outside India. Another raised concerns is about whether India would be able to test enough number of athletes in the coming months ahead of the Tokyo Olympics 2020.

About National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)

It is formed by Government of India under societies Registration Act. It includes scientists and representatives from the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). It is the national organisation responsible for monitoring, promoting and coordinating, doping control program in sports in all its forms in India. NADA deals with adopting and implementing *anti-doping rules* and policies which conform with World Anti-Doping Agency. It also promotes anti-doping research and education as well as cooperates with other anti-doping organisations besides WADA.

Switzerland to seek closer ties with India at BioAsia 2020

The BioAsia 2020 is scheduled to be held in Hyderabad in between February 17 and 19, 2020. On December 10, 2019, the Ministry of Industries and Commerce and IT informed that Switzerland will serve as India's partner at the conference.

Why Switzerland?

India is Switzerland's 8th largest trading partner. The trade between the countries amount to 19.7 billion USD. Also, India is one of the eight non-EU countries with which Switzerland intends to deepen its scientific relations.

Also, Switzerland generated over 15.8 billion Swiss Franc (CHF) revenue in the health technology alone. There are over 1,400 companies and 58,500 professionals involved in the health sector technology and its innovation. Apart from this there are more than 312 biotech companies that generate 1.5 billion CHF in research and development alone.

BioAsia 2020

The BioAsia 2020 is a comprehensive framework hosted by the Government of Telangana. It is dedicated to investors, health care, pharma, biotechnology and startups.

Theme: Today for Tomorrow

The purpose of the event is to create business relations between life science sectors. It acts as a platform for the corporate and government agencies to interact with each other and provide valuable feedback that will aid in investments, policy making, reforms, etc.

India-Japan meet to review Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

On December 10, 2019, a Japanese delegation led by Japanese Minister Mr Hiroshi Kajiyama visited Minister of North Eastern Region Development. The ministers discussed different areas of cooperation that included nuclear power, technology and infrastructure. The Countries also renewed their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.



Highlights

The Joint Working Group meeting of India and Japan was also held. During the meeting, the issues related human resources were discussed. In previous JWG meeting the countries discussed on the issues of civil nuclear liability. The next meeting is scheduled to be held in January 2020.

Japanese Investment in the North East

The Japanese Government will invest Rs 13,000 crores in the North Eastern region. The investment will include projects such as Guwahati Water Supply project, North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project in Meghalaya, Guwahati Sewage Project in Assam, Bio-Diversity Conservation project in Sikkim, Forest Management Project in Sikkim, Technical Cooperation Project for Sustainable Agriculture and Irrigation in Mizoram, etc.

India's Expectations

India calls to enhance Japanese Investments in steel and energy sectors. Steel demand of India is expected to grow exponentially as the country embarks becoming a 5 trillion USD economy by 2024. Also, India has plans to invest 1.4 trillion USD in infrastructure development in next five years.

2019 South Asian Games concluded in Nepal: India finish on top

South Asian Games 2019 concluded on 10 December in Nepal, with India finishing on top with a best-ever medal haul of **312 medals** comprising of 174 gold, 93 silver and 45 bronze. Host Nepal remained second and Sri Lanka got third place in the regional multi-sporting. The year 2019 marks the **13th edition of South Asian Games**.

Key Highlights

India finished on top, continuing its undisputed domination in regional multi-sporting event by finishing on top for the 13th time-in-a-row. India has topped the medal tally of every South Asian Games since its establishment in 1984.

In this 13th edition India surpassed its 309 medal tally (189 gold, 90 silver and 30 bronze) it had won in the previous edition in Guwahati and Shillong in 2016. However, the number of gold India won this time was 15 less than 2016 edition. India had sent 487 athletes in this edition.

Hosts Nepal stood 2nd with 206 medals (51 gold, 60 silver and 95 bronze) while Sri Lanka was 3rd with 251 medals (40 gold, 83 silver and 128 bronze).

Basketball: Indian cagers fetched both the men's and women's basketball gold by defeating host Nepal (127-46) and Sri Lanka (101-62) in their respective summit clashes.

Squash: In squash, India won a gold and a silver in women's and men's team events respectively.

Boxing: Indian boxers brought home a rich haul of 12 gold, 3 silver and 1 bronze. 2014 Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Pinki Rani (women's 51kg category) and Commonwealth Games (CWG) gold medallist Vikas Krishan (men's 69kg category) guided India to 6 more gold medals. Other boxers among men who bagged the gold were, Sparsh Kumar (52kg), Narender (+91kg). While Sonia Lather (57kg) and Manju Bamboriya (64kg) also contributed to India's gold medal tally among women.

Participating Country		Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
India		174	93	45	312
Nepal		51	60	95	206
Sri Lanka		40	83	128	251
Pakistan		31	41	59	131
Bangladesh		19	32	87	138
Maldives		1	0	4	5
Bhutan		0	7	13	20

World's First Electronic Flight takes off from Canada

The first fully electronic flight in the world completed its test flight successfully on December 10, 2019. The flight is to operate from Vancouver, Canada to the near by islands.

Highlights

The zero emission completely electronic flight proved that all-electric commercial aviation is possible. The electrical aircraft designed was a 6-seater sea plane that was retrofitted with an electric motor. The first flight lasted for 15 minutes. The electrical flight was designed by the company Harbor Air.

India also promotes and incentivizes the use of electric vehicles.

Promotion of Electric Vehicles in India

The Department of Heavy Industry is implementing FAME-India scheme (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India) to increase the awareness and usage of electric vehicles. Till March 2019, GoI under the scheme supported 2.8 lakh hybrid vehicles by incentivizing around Rs 359 crores and saving 50 million litres of fuel and reducing 124 million kg of carbon dioxide.

The GST on Electric Vehicles were reduced to 5%. Also, Ministry of Power had recently allowed sale of electricity for charging electric vehicles. These moves have increased the investments in charging infrastructure.

Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles in India

Under Phase I of the FAME scheme around 500 charging stations have been sanctioned. Out of these 500, 230 charging stations were installed. The Department of Heavy Industry has expressed interest to get proposals for establishing 1000 charging stations.



Iron Union 12: UAE, US Joint Military Exercise commence

'Iron Union 12', a joint military exercise between ground forces of United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United States, commenced on 10 December 2019 in presence of UAE Commander of Land Forces *Major General Saleh Mohamed Saleh Al Amiri* and Commander of US Army Central (USARCENT) *Lieutenant General Terry Ferrell*. It is aimed at enhancing combat efficiency and tactical expertise between two countries.

About Iron Union 12

The exercise spanning over a few weeks, will see the two sides take part in joint military cooperation to enhance combat and tactical capabilities.

In recent years, UAE, a major oil supplier, has established a growing defence industry, mainly in armoured vehicles and naval military equipment. The joint military exercises of UAE Armed Forces with fraternal and friendly countries like US, takes place in a manner consistent with latest developments. Such exercises also reflect the UAE Armed Forces' determination to stand firmly against all threats and challenges facing the region.

NAVARMS-19: International Seminar on Naval weapon Systems

The fourth edition of International Seminar cum Exhibition on Naval Weapon Systems '**NAVARMS-19**' is scheduled to be held on 12-13 December 2019 at Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), Development Enclave, New Delhi. The theme for 2019 edition is: "*Make in India – Fight Category: Opportunities and Imperatives*".

Key Highlights

The two day will provide opportunity for exchange of ideas, create awareness and identify emerging prospects for Indian and International defence industry in domain of Naval Weapon Systems.

NAVARMS-19 will be held in five plenary sessions:

- *First session:* It will be about 'Opportunities for Industry in Naval Weapon Systems – 2030' in all the three dimensions namely, surface, air & underwater.
- *Second session:* on 'Needs and Concerns of the User and Industry' would provide a platform to users and industry to bring out their respective needs and concerns with prevailing policies and issues.
- *Third session:* It would focus on 'Naval Weapon Systems – Modern Trends and Technology in Upgrade & Upkeep'.
- *Fourth session:* It will be an interactive session of Panel Discussion on 'Govt Policy Imperatives to Encourage Indigenisation'.
- *Fifth session:* It will be on 'Building of Indigenous Capability through Collaborative Approach between Industry, R&D organisations and Indian Navy'.

About NAVARMS

It is the only international seminar and exhibition on Naval Weapon Systems conducted in India. It invites all the stakeholders in life cycle management of Naval Weapons and provide a common platform to share their views and concerns. The past three editions of NAVARMS were organised in 2007, 2010 and 2013. Previous editions aroused much enthusiasm and active participation by Industry, Union Ministry of Defence, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the users.

Project Gandhi Encyclopedia approved by Gol

The Ministry of Culture on December 10, 2019 approved Rs 2.95 crores financial assistance for the development of Gandhi Paedia. The project is to be implemented by National Council of Science Museums, Kolkata.

Highlights

The Gol is developing "Gandhi Encyclopedia" in order to spread awareness in the country. The aim is to promote Gandhian philosophy and thoughts through social media platforms. The Gol sanctioned financial



assistance of Rs 5.25 crores rupees for the commemoration of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. A part of the amount allocated is being used for the project.

National Council of Science Museums

The council is an autonomous organization that is operating under Ministry of Culture. There are around 24 such museum all over India. The purpose of establishing these councils is to coordinate all informal science communication activities in the country.

The first science museum called the Birla Industrial and Technological Museum was built in May 2, 1959. The Council is now developing science centres in collaboration with State Governments.

Science Centres

The science centres have good manpower to create the best infrastructure and manpower to conceptualize, develop, design and organize science exhibits. So far, the council has constructed 5 science centres in Mumbai, Nagpur, Calicut, Bhopal and Goa. Every year, more than 750,000 people visit these centres.

Abu Dhabi selected as World's leading Sports Tourism Destination

Abu Dhabi has been selected as the World's leading Sports Tourism Destination for seventh time in a row. This time the coveted award was conferred at **26th edition of World Travel Awards (WTA)**, being held in Muscat, Oman.

In 2019, Abu Dhabi gained many prestigious accolades, including being selected as **Best City Break** at UK's Selling Travel Agents' Choice Awards and **West Asia's Leading Business Tourism Destination** at the West Asia edition of WTA.

Why was Abu Dhabi Awarded?

Abu Dhabi, the capital of UAE, has been making strides within sports tourism by developing and promoting sports facilities and events. In early 2019, Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi had announced a 5-year partnership with Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) for hosting annual premier fixtures in capital as part of *Abu Dhabi Showdown Week*. Also, recently the emirates has won the rights to host **2020 FINA Short Course World Championship**.

Abu Dhabi has shined as a premium destination for sports tourism once again this year, after hosting some of the world's top sporting events like: *FIFA Club World Cup 2017 and 2018*, the *first edition of UAE Tour*, the *UFC 242 showdown*, the *Special Olympics World Games 2019*, the *AFC Asian Cup 2019*, and the *Brazil vs South Korea* international friendly match.

Abu Dhabi also continues to play host to annual acclaimed sports events including Formula 1 Etihad Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, the ITU World Triathlon Abu Dhabi, the Mubadala World Tennis Championship, the ADNOC Abu Dhabi Marathon and the Abu Dhabi Golf Championship.

About World Travel Awards (WTA)

WTA was established in 1993. They are made annually by an international jury of hospitality experts and peers, mainly from World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). The awards are given both on an overall world-level basis, and on 8 international region-levels. It acknowledges and rewards excellence across all key sectors of hospitality, travel and tourism industries.

NOTE: The **United Nations World Travel Organisation (UNWTO)**, has labelled Sports tourism as one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism worldwide.

Parliament passes The Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Parliament has passed the Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019, which seeks to amend the **Arms Act, 1959**. Apart from introducing new categories of offences, the Bill also seeks to decrease number of licensed firearms allowed per person and increase penalties for certain offences under the Act.

Key Features of Bill

License for acquiring firearms: The Bill reduces the number of permitted firearms under Arms Act, 1959



from three to one (including licenses given on inheritance basis). The Bill provides a time period of 1 year to deposit excess firearms with officer-in-charge of nearest police station or with a licensed firearm dealer as specified. The excess firearms will be delicensed within 90 days from expiry of 1-year period.

Firearm License Validity: Bill also increases the duration of validity of a firearm license from 3 years to 5 years.

Ban on firearms: In addition to bans mentioned in Arms Act, 1959, the Bill additionally prohibits obtaining or procuring un-licensed firearms, as well as conversion of one category of firearms to another without a license.

Increase in punishment: Bill amends punishment in relation to several offences and increases the punishment to between 7 years and life imprisonment, along with a fine for: (1) dealing in un-licensed firearms, including their manufacture/procurement/ sale/ transfer/ conversion, (2) shortening or conversion of a firearm without a licence, and (3) import/ export of banned firearms.

The Bill increases the punishment for acquisition, possession or carrying of prohibited ammunition without a license to imprisonment between 7 and 14 years, along with fine. However, a court may impose a punishment of lesser than 7 years, with recorded reasons.

Adds New offences: The Bill adds new offences, which includes: (1) **forcefully taking a firearm from police or armed forces**, punishable with imprisonment between 10 years and life imprisonment, along with fine, (2) **using firearms in a celebratory gunfire** which endangers human life/ personal safety of others, punishable with imprisonment of up to 2 years, or fine of up to Rs.1 lakh rupees, or both.

Defines offences or Organised crime committed by Organised Crime Syndicates: Possession of firearms or ammunition by a member of a syndicate, in violation of Act, will be punishable with imprisonment between 10 years and life, along with a fine. This punishment will also apply to anyone dealing in un-licensed firearms (including its manufacture or sale), converting a firearm without license, or importing or exporting firearms without license, on behalf of a syndicate.

Defines illicit trafficking: To include trade, acquisition, sale of firearms/ ammunitions into or out of India where firearms are either not marked as per Act/ violate provisions of Act. Illicit trafficking is punishable with imprisonment between 10 years and life, along with a fine.

Tracking of firearms: Central government may make rules to track firearms and ammunition from manufacturer to purchaser to detect, investigate, and analyse illicit manufacturing and trafficking.

Odisha to set up 45 fast track courts

Odisha Government has decided to set up 45 fast track courts in the State, to expedite the trial of cases relating to women and children. The State government's action comes after Centre has decided to formulate a scheme for setting up 1,023 fast track special courts for expeditious trial and disposal of rape cases. For this purpose, the Union Law and Justice Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has asked States and Chief Justices of High Courts to expedite investigation in cases of rape and those registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Key Highlights

The fast track courts will function under Additional District Judges as per provisions of Orissa Civil Courts Act, 1984. Out of these 45 fast track courts being set up in Odisha, 21 courts would be dedicated for cases of rape and sexual harassment of women and the remaining 24 fast track courts will specifically deal with Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) cases.

Once set up, the courts that deal with only rape incidents will expeditiously dispose of long pending cases in the Sessions Courts. At present, Odisha has over 15.65 lakh pending cases, including crimes against women.

NOTE: As per the annual crime data released by *National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)* recently, 94.7%



cases related to crime against women are pending at hearing stage.

December 12, 2019

World's New Nation: Bougainville gains independence from Papua New Guinea

On December 11, 2019, the South Pacific Archipelago of Bougainville voted to become independent of Papua New Guinea. Around 98% of 1,81,067 voters voted to get independent from Papua New Guinea.

Bougainville

It is the largest island of the Solomon Islands Archipelago. The island has the world's largest copper deposits. The most widely spoken language in the country is Halia.

The country is yet to prove its recognition in the United Nations. In India, Godman Nithyananda is said to have built a new country called "Kailassa" near Ecuador. Kailassa is also yet to prove its recognition in United Nations.

Godman Nithyananda

Recently Godman Nithyananda is said to have created a new country called "Kailassa" near Ecuador in South America. The country is said to have separate flag, national animal, passport entry, visa, separate currency, etc. However, it is essential to obtain international diplomatic recognition to become a new country.

Diplomatic Recognition

By international law, a country should recognize the other for the later to become an independent country. The recognition can be proved by the new country through United Nation Resolution. If majority of the countries vote in favour of membership of the country, then the country enters world map and begins to exist legally. 'There are 195 countries in the world today that are recognized by the United Nations.

Apart from Diplomatic recognition, the countries of North America and South America assent on

Montevideo Convention.

Montevideo Convention

The Montevideo Convention is a treaty that was signed in 1933. The convention defines rights and duties of statehood. It lists the criteria for a country to become independent and declare its sovereignty. The most important factor of the convention is that it prohibited the use of military force to gain sovereignty.

Cabinet approves Indo-Japan pact in Steel Sector

Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its approval for signing Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between Government of India and Government of Japan to constitute 'India-Japan Steel Dialogue' to strengthen cooperation in steel sector. MoC will help in capacity building for high grade steel manufacturing in India.

About 'India-Japan Steel Dialogue'

The Dialogue envisages enhancement of mutual understanding to secure sustainable growth in steel sector. It aims to examine all aspects of cooperation in steel sector including promotion of investment in high grade steel making and finding new avenues of steel usage in India.

Note: Already Japanese companies like Nippon steel are cooperating with other steel makers for development and production of value added steel in India. More such ventures would flow from cooperation in coming years after the MoC.

BIMSTEC: International Seminar on Climate Smart Farming Systems held in New Delhi

A three day "International Seminar on Climate Smart Farming systems" is being held in New Delhi. It was inaugurated on December 11, 2019. The seminar is being organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

Highlights

The seminar is attended by all the seven BIMSTEC countries. It includes Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal,



Bangladesh, India, Thailand and Myanmar. The seminar focuses on adopting technological interventions in small holding farming. It will also give attention to targets set by BIMSTEC countries in reducing emissions at those levels to mitigate agricultural situations.

The objective of the seminar is to enable improvement of tropical small holder farming system that are resilient to climate change and will provide greater productivity.

BIMSTEC

The seminar is being organized by Government of India as an initiative at the [fourth BIMSTEC summit](#) that was held at Katmandu in August 2019. As all the BIMSTEC countries are lying in adjacent areas of Bay of Bengal and have similar type of climate, the solutions provided at the seminar are suitable and more reliable for all the countries.

Climate Smart Agriculture

According to FAO, Climate Smart Agriculture is an approach that reorients agriculture towards food security in a changing climate. FAO also hosts **Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture**. It aims to improve nutrition, food security and resilience. The alliance has three aspirational outcomes namely improving farmers, building climate resilient farmers and reducing green house gases emitted due to agriculture.

Cabinet approves MoU between CDSCO and Saudi FDA

Union Cabinet has given ex-post facto approval to Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) and Saudi Food and Drug Authority in field of Medical Products Regulation. The MoU was signed on 29 October 2019 during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Highlights of MoU

It would facilitate better understanding of regulatory aspects between two sides and will also enable better coordination in international fora. It will also help in increasing India's export of medical products to Saudi Arabia.

About Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)

It is Central Drug Authority for discharging functions assigned to Central Government under **Drugs and Cosmetics Act**. It is the national regulatory body for Indian pharmaceuticals as well as medical devices. It functions under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

It serves parallel function to European Union's European Medicines Agency (EMA), Japan's PMDA, United State's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Medicines and United Kingdom's Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

Major CDSCO Functions: Approval of new drugs and clinical trials; Approval of certain licenses as Central License Approving Authority, Regulatory control over import of drugs; and meetings of Drugs Consultative Committee (DCC) and Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB).

Cabinet approves Aircraft (amendment) bill, 2019

The Union Cabinet on December 11, 2019 approved Aircraft (Amendment) bill, 2019 to amend the Aircrafts act, 1934. The main objective of the bill is to fulfill the safety requirements of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Key Features of the Bill

The Bill intends to regulate the areas of air navigation. It enhances the punishment from 10 lakh rupees to 1 crore rupees for those failing to comply norms of Government of India. Also, the bill will enable three regulatory bodies namely Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB).

It will increase safety and security of air transport in the country.



Need

In 2018, the ICAO, a global aviation watchdog of the United Nations carried out a Universal Safety Audit Programme for India. The audit showed that the safety score of India declined to 57.44% in 2018 from 65.82% in 2017. The score was far less than Nepal and Pakistan. The audit was performed in air navigation services, aerodromes, aircraft accidents and investigations, ground aids, etc.

The world average score for aircraft safety set by ICAO is 65%. India's score is far below the world average. With the successful implementation of UDAN scheme, the aircraft carriers and operators have increased. Therefore, it is mandatory to imply strict regulations to keep up the safety of the passengers.

Cabinet approves Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019

Union Cabinet has approved certain amendments in **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (code)**, through *Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019*. The amendments aim to remove certain difficulties being faced during insolvency resolution process to realise objects of code, protect corporate debtors, prevent ill-thought-out triggering of bankruptcy proceedings and to further ease doing of business (ADB).

Proposal: Amendment Bill seeks to amend sections 5(12), 5(15), 7, 11, 14, 16(1), 21(2), 23(1), 29A, 227, 239, 240 of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Code) and insert new section 32A in it.

Significance of Amendments to IBC

It aims to remove bottlenecks, streamline *Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP)* and protect last mile funding in order to boost investment in financially distressed sectors of country.

It introduces additional thresholds for Financial Creditors represented by an authorized representative due to large numbers in order to prevent insignificant triggering of CIRP.

It also ensures that substratum of business of corporate debtor is not lost, and it can continue as a going concern by clarifying that permits, licenses, clearances, concessions, etc. cannot be terminated or suspended or not renewed during moratorium period.

Moreover, changes to IBC could also lead to ring-fencing of corporate debtor resolved under IBC in favour of a successful resolution applicant from criminal proceedings against offences committed by previous promoters or management.

Social Security Code Bill introduced in Lok Sabha

On December 11, 2019, the social security code bill was introduced in Lok Sabha. The bill paves way for universalization of social security of 50 crore workers in the country.

Key Features of the bill

The bill proposes setting up of a social security fund to fulfill benefits such as medical cover, pension, death and disablement benefits including gig workers. This will help to tap the corporate social responsibility fund and divert it towards the unorganized sector.

The bill will provide options of reducing the provident fund contribution of the employees. It is currently 12% of basic salary. This will increase their take-home payment.

The bill also makes the fixed-term contract workers eligible for gratuity. Currently under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972, workers are not entitled to gratuity before the completion of 5 years.

The bill is completely based on the [Drafts Security Code](#).

The bill intends to merge 8 laws and to support the unorganized workers as that mentioned in the code.

Need for the bill

India leads in global gig economy contributing 24% of online labor market in the world! The data was provided by the Oxford Internet Institute. Apart from internet, being the second most populous country in the world, India has maximum number of unorganized employees.



Cabinet approves Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme

Union Cabinet approved the 'Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme' that allows public sector banks (PSBs) to purchase high-rated pooled assets from financially sound non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs). However, the amount of overall guarantee has been limited to first loss of up to 10% of fair value of assets (FAV) being purchased by banks under the scheme or Rs.10,000 crore, whichever is lower, as agreed by department of economic affairs (DEA), Union Ministry of Finance.

About Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme

The proposed government guarantee scheme will help NBFCs and HFCs to resolve their temporary liquidity and would enable them to continue contributing towards credit creation or cash flow mismatch issues. It will also provide last mile lending to borrowers, which will spur economic growth.

Scheme would cover NBFCs and HFCs that may have slipped into 'SMA-0' category during the 1 year period prior to 1 August 2018, and asset pools rated 'BBB+ or higher'.

Scheme will provide liquidity to NBFCs and HFCs concerned for financing credit demand of economy, and would also protect financial system of country from any adverse contagion effect that may arise due to failure of such entities.

Window: The window for one-time partial credit guarantee offered by government will remain open till 30 June 30 or till such date by which Rs. 1 lakh crore assets get purchased by banks, or whichever is earlier. Union Finance Minister has been delegated the power to extend the validity of scheme by up to three months taking into account its progress.

Background: Earlier, in Union Budget 2019-20, the government had announced that for purchase of high-rated pooled assets of NBFCs, amounting to a total of Rs.1 lakh crore during current financial year, government will provide one time 6 months' partial credit guarantee to PSBs for first loss up to 10%.

Cabinet approves Social Security Agreement between India and Brazil

On December 11, 2019, the Union Cabinet chaired by PM Modi gave its approval for signing Agreement on Social Security between India and Brazil. The Social Security Agreement is being signed by India with several other countries in order to protect the interests of the professionals and skilled workers living abroad

Highlights of the agreement

There are around 4.700 Indians living in Brazil and 1,000 Brazilians living in India. The agreement would promote inclusiveness and equity for the Indians living in Brazil and vice versa.

The agreement also allows export of social security benefits of the Indian workers after they relocate from Brazil.

Background

The idea of signing social security agreements conceived in the BRICS Labor and Employment Ministers meet that was held in June 2016 in New Delhi. It was also insisted at the [8th BRICS summit](#). It was after this summit India and Brazil began their negotiations and finalized the text of Social Security Agreement.

Benefits

The agreement helps to avoid double social security contributions made by the workers. It also avails easy remittance of benefits offered by the governments of the respective countries. The agreement also allows the NRIs to aggregate the contribution periods. This will help to avoid loss of benefits.

Culture Ministry launches a portal to showcase Indian culture

Union Minister of State (M/s) for Culture and Tourism (IC) Prahlad Singh Patel, launched the **Indian Culture web portal**, <http://www.indian culture.gov.in>, which brings together all the cultural resources of the country on one platform. The Indian Culture portal was envisioned by Union Ministry of Culture and was developed by a team from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National



Open University (IGNOU), over a course of three years.

This project is a part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Digital India initiative to showcase information about the rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage of India both at home and abroad. The larger aim of portal is to create awareness among the citizens about the diverse heritage of our country.

About Indian Culture Web Portal

It is the first government authorized portal where knowledge and cultural resources of various organizations of Ministry of Culture such as the National Archives of India, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Smriti, Archaeological Survey of India and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, are now available in public domain on a single platform.

This portal is a digital resource of documents, artefacts, paintings and other items available in the archive. It hosts images, audio-video files and other data from archives, museums, academies and libraries across the nation. Information about more than 90 lakhs items are currently available on this portal.

One of the unique features of portal is the stories, based on original archival documents narrated in an interesting, easy to read and understand format. Portal also contains write-ups and beautiful pictures on festivals, folk art and classical art, cuisines, paintings, from different states of India, along with rich information about rare books, manuscripts and research papers on India's cultural heritage.

Content on portal is available in both English and Hindi language in an interactive, user-friendly interface. The portal also will soon be available in other regional languages.

12 December: International Universal Health Coverage Day

Every year 12 December is celebrated as International Universal Health Coverage Day across the world, as an annual rallying point for the growing movement for health for all. The day is promoted by World Health Organization (WHO).

About Universal Health Coverage Day

Objective: To raise awareness of need for strong and resilient health systems and universal health coverage with multi-stakeholder partners.

Why this day? The day marks the anniversary of United Nations' historic and unanimous endorsement of universal health coverage (UHC) and providing affordable, quality health care in 2012. Later, on 12 December 2017, UN proclaimed 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day) by resolution 72/138.

Theme for UHC Day 2019 campaign: 'Keep the promise.' The theme has been chosen following the UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage on 23 September 2019, where world leaders endorsed the most comprehensive and ambitious political declaration on health in history. This year's theme seeks to keep leaders, our health systems and ourselves accountable to promise of health for all.

Each year on 12 December, universal health coverage (UHC) advocates raise their voices to share stories of millions of people still waiting for health, champion what world have achieved so far, call on leaders to make bigger and smarter investments in health, as well as encourage diverse groups to make commitments to help move world closer to UHC by 2030.

NOTE: Universal health coverage (UHC) has been included in United Nations' new Sustainable Development Goals for year 2015-2030.

Union Cabinet authorises NHAI to set up Infrastructure Investment Trust

Union Cabinet approved the proposal of Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), which authorizes National Highways Authority of India (NHA) to set up **Infrastructure Investment Trust(s) (InvIT)** as per InvIT Guidelines issued by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). This will enable NHA to monetize completed National Highways that have a toll collection track record of at least 1 year and the NHA reserves the right to levy toll on identified highway.



Implementation

NHAI's InvIT will be established as a Trust, named as '**InvIT Trust**'. InvIT Trust will be under **Indian Trust Act, 1882** and **Securities and Exchange Board of India (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014**. It will be formed with an objective of investment primarily in infrastructure projects (as defined by Union Ministry of Finance) and may hold assets either directly or through an Special Purpose Vehicles (SPV) or a holding.

Significance

Infrastructure Investment Trust(s) (InvIT) as an instrument provides greater flexibility to investors and is expected to create following opportunities-

- It would generate specialized Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Concessionaires.
- It would attract patient capital (for about 20-30 years) to Indian highway market, as these investors are unwilling towards construction risk and are interested in investment in assets which provide long-term stable returns.
- Retail domestic savings and corpus of special institutions such as mutual funds, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), among others, will be invested in infrastructure sector through InvIT.

Background:

Roads and highways are the lifeline of the economy, therefore, development of National Highways has a multiplier effect in terms of facilitating trade and enhancing overall economic development of a region. In October 2017, Union Government launched its flagship highway development programme called **Bharatmala Pariyojana**, for development of 24,800 km of roads for a total investment of Rs. 5,35,000 crore.

UNESCO to train 4,000 Indian teachers in AI-powered Digital Technology

UNESCO and Dell Technologies will launch a new education programme where they will train 4,000 Indian teachers in Artificial Technology. The programme will aid in Gol step of introducing [Artificial Intelligence as a subject in school](#).

Highlights

The programme will be spread across three phases. In the first phase, teachers in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka will be trained. The organizations will use technologies like FramerSpace, frontier technologies and ICT to train the techers. FramerSpace is a digital platform that will help teachers implement and monitor learning plans for students. Teachers who are certified in Dell's Aarambh programmes are to be given preferences.

In second phase, face-to-face familiarization training will be provided. Later in third phase, teachers will be provided 12 months training.

Significance

The programme will help in achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4.7. The Goal aims at providing education to build peaceful and sustainable societies. Under SDG 4, the United Nations aim at providing 100% free education to boys and girls all over the world. It also aims at substantially increasing the number of scholarships available to students by 2020

December 13, 2019

Consultative Committee meeting chaired by Minister of North Eastern Region

The Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh chaired the Parliamentary Consultative Committee meeting of the North Eastern Region on December 12, 2019. The issues of development of North East was discussed at the meeting.

Highlights

At the meeting the issue of utilization of 10% of GBS in the North East Region was discussed. With



Government of India prioritizing development project in North East India, allocating the right amount for the projects is essential. Also, the ministry invited other ministries to approach DoNER to identify projects. The GBS allocated for the North East Region for the year 2019-20 is 59,369 crores.

In 1996, it was decided that all the ministries will set apart 10% of their GBS to the North East Region unless exempted.

What is GBS?

GBS is **Gross Budgetary Support**. It includes sources of revenue raised by the Government and tax collection. The amount to be allocated to GBS is fixed by the Finance Commission. It collects the requirement of all the ministries and fixes the amount based on priority. Like other budget, GBS is also split into revenue and capital components.

Infrastructure Projects in North East India

In order to hasten the development of North East Region, GoI set up Special Infrastructure Development Scheme in 2018. Under the scheme, so far 1765 crores of rupees have been allocated. The scheme focuses on physical infrastructure like power connectivity, water supply, connectivity to enhance tourism, etc and social sector creation infrastructure such as primary and secondary health and education development.

FSSAI, Nasscom Foundation partners to develop app to prevent food wastage

Food regulator FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) and Nasscom Foundation, a trade association of Indian IT and Business Process Outsourcing industry, have signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly build a technology platform to prevent food wastage and encouraging food donation by developing an app for the purpose. The collaboration is a significant step in the direction of leveraging technology for solutions of social problems.

Key Highlights

FSSAI and Nasscom (National Association of Software and Services Companies) Foundation will develop a common 24x7 helpline number and a mobile application '**Food Donation in India**' to donate food to the needy. The helpline number will connect donors with surplus edibles to food distribution organisations. Platform will help in facilitating registration of surplus food distribution organisations. Initially, the network of 81 such organizations across India, known as **Indian Food Sharing Alliance (IFSA)** will be a part of the platform.

Significance: The collaboration would provide a recognition to organisations involved in surplus food distribution and would help in reducing the wastage of food in country through food donation. This solution will also provide an easy accessible platform that will cater to different stakeholders such as food businesses, hoteliers, caterers, individuals etc and will facilitate food donations in any part of country.

Poland out of EU's Climate Neutrality 2050 plan

On December 13, 2019, Poland left 2050 Climate Neutrality Agreement of European Union as the Union demanded for more funds to support nuclear power and for economic transition.

Highlights

Poland, whose 80% of energy needs are relied on coal opted out of Climate Neutrality 2050 plan. The country requested to extend the plan execution deadline to 2070 availing longer period to cut emissions according to the plan. But net players like Netherlands refused to agree to the terms that led Poland to leave the plan.

Hungary and Czech Republic stopped their resistance after nuclear energy was recognized as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

European Union 2050 Climate Neutrality Plan

The Climate Neutrality Plan is a key commitment under **2015 Paris Agreement** on Climate Change. It is a 100 billion Euro plan for net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. It is also called European Green Deal



or Europe's man on the moon moment.

Previously under Paris Agreement, the EU had committed to reduce its emission by 40% by 2030 as compared to 1990. There were no goals set for 2050 initially. Under the new plan, the 2030 target has been increased to 50% and a new 100% target has been set for 2050.

Climate Neutrality means emissions will have no impact on climate. It also includes warming effects that do not come from carbon. The plan is important as the EU bloc that comprises of 28 countries is the third largest economic bloc after China and US in contributions to climate change.

GRSE hands over Landing Craft Utility amphibious ship to Indian Navy

Warship builder Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd (GRSE) has delivered a Landing Craft Utility (LCU) to Indian Navy. The LCU delivered is 7th out of eight such vessels being built for Indian Navy by GRSE, will add to India's maritime security prowess.

About Landing Craft Utility (LCU)

LCU is an amphibious ship, that can transport and deploy main battle tanks, armoured vehicles, troops and equipment from ship to shore. It can accommodate 216 personnel.

Features: It is 62.8 metres long, 11 metres wide and has a displacement of 830 tonnes, with a low draught of 1.7 metres. The ship has an ability to attain a maximum speed of 15 knots and is equipped with two indigenous CRN 91 guns to provide artillery fire support during landing operations.

LCU can also be deployed for multi-role activities such as disaster relief operations, search and rescue, supply and replenishment, beaching operations and evacuation from distant islands.

Background

The Landing Craft Utility (LCU) **Mark IV class** of ships, the first of which was commissioned into Indian Navy in 2016, are fitted with close to 90% indigenous equipment. The GRSE, one of India's leading shipyards, located in Kolkata (West Bengal), has so far manufactured 103 warships since its inception in 1960.

National Financial Reporting Authority submits first report since constitution

The **National Financial Reporting Authority** (NFRA) issued its first audit report of IL&FS Financial Services Limited for the year 2017-18. It is the first report submitted by the authority since its constitution in October 2018. The audit was conducted abiding Section 13(2) of the companies act, 2013 and **NFRA rules, 2018**.

Highlights

Prior to NHRA, the audit of the IL and FS financial services were conducted by Deloitte Haskins and Sells (DHS). NHRA reports that the audit conducted by DHS was inadequate.

IL and FS crisis

IL and FS is a non-banking financial company that was established 30 years ago in order to conglomerate funds for infrastructure projects in India. The company fell short of cash recently and faced cash over runs, delays in land acquisition and approvals in 2018.

National Financial Reporting Authority

National Financial Reporting Authority was established in 2018 under the Companies act, 2013. Due to the establishment of NFRA, India is now eligible for membership of International Forum of Independent Audit Regulators. It is a global member organization that includes regulators from 53 jurisdictions. It was established in 2006 at Paris. It works to enhance investor protection by improving auditing globally.

Companies act, 2013

The powers and function of NFRA is listed under Section 13(2) of companies Act, 2013.

Under **Section 13 (2)** of the Companies act, 2013, the NFRA is responsible to audit policies and standards in the country, impose sanctions against defaulting auditors, audit firms and their monetary penalties. It is also responsible to audit companies that are listed in stock exchanges and those that function outside India.



Rajya Sabha passes Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019

Rajya Sabha passed the **Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019** on 12 December 2019 by voice vote. The bill seeks to amend Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 to include three tribes namely– **Parivara, Talwara and Siddi community** of Dharwad and Belagavi districts, in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka. The bill was introduced by Tribal Affairs Minister of State Renuka Singh Saruta in Upper House.

Key Features of Bill

The tribal and tribal communities which are deemed to be Scheduled Tribes (STs) are specified in the **Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950**. Thus the Bill amends Part VI of the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 which specifies the Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka.

Bills amends the Order by substituting- (1) 'Siddi (in Uttar Kannada district)' with 'Siddi (in Belagavi, Dharwad and Uttar Kannada districts)'; (2) 'Naikda, Nayaka' with 'Naikda, Nayaka (including Parivara and Talawara)'. Currently, the Siddi tribe of Uttar Kannada district alone is included in list.

73 Countries join Climate Ambition Alliance at COP25

Around 73 countries have joined the Climate Ambition Alliance (CAA) at the **COP25**. The alliance is led by Chile and was launched at the **Climate Action Summit**, New York in 2019.

Both Chile and UK will work together to mobilize additional actors to join the alliance. They will also work towards COP26 that is to be held in November 2020 at Glasgow, UK.

Climate Ambition Alliance

The CAA will focus on Nationally Determined Contributions in order to achieve Net Zero by 2050. It will focus in resilience in infrastructure, management of water and sustainability of cities. The main purpose of the alliance is to upscale 2020 targets of members of UN and to achieve Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050.

Significance of the alliance

The alliance is important to enhance the Nationally Determined Contributions of countries all over the world. The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** in its Emissions Gap Report, 2019 warned that in order to achieve the goal of 1.5°C increase in temperatures over pre-industrial levels, it is essential to reduce the emissions by 7.6% between 2020 and 2030.

Emissions Gap Report, 2019

The Emissions Gap Report that was released by the UNEP in December 2019, measures the gap between measures being done and measures to be done to tackle climate change.

Key Findings of the report

The report says that the global temperature will increase by 3.2 degrees by 2100 as compared to pre-industrial levels. The top four emitters of the world namely China, USA, European Union and India contributed to 55% of total emissions in the last decade.

Suggestions of the report

The report suggests that a minimum of 1.58 billion USD of annual investment in renewable sector is required for efficient energy use. It also says that solutions like coal phaseout, decarbonization of transport and industries and increased access to electricity will help tackle climate change.

Lok Sabha passes Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019

Lok Sabha passed the Central Sanskrit University Bill 2019, which seeks to convert three deemed Sanskrit universities, presently functioning in the country, into central universities. The bill was piloted by Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'.

Key Features of Bill

The Bill seeks to upgrade three deemed Sanskrit universities into Central universities, which are- **Rashtriya**



Sanskrit Sansthan in Bhopal, **Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth** in New Delhi and **Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth** in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

The purpose of these universities is to impart Sanskrit education to students, so that they get knowledge contained in Sanskrit language-literature.

NOTE: Sanskrit language is taught in 250 universities in 100 countries across the world, including 14 universities in Germany.

FICCI India Sports Awards 2019

The coveted FICCI India Sports Awards 2019 were presented to the winners on 11 December 2019 at New Delhi. The awards are an attempt by **FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry)** to acknowledge and recognize contribution of sports persons and various stakeholders who deliver excellent results during the year.

Winners: FICCI India Sports Awards 2019

- Sports Person of the Year: Female- *Rani Rampal*, women's hockey team captain; Male: *Saurabh Chaudhary*, ace pistol shooter
- Best National Sports Federation: *National Rifle Association of India*
- Best Company Promoting Sports (Public Sector): *Railway Sports Promotion Board*
- Best Para-athlete: *Sandeep Chaudhary* (javelin).
- Breakthrough Sports Person: *Amit Panghal* (boxing)
- Lifetime Achievement (Administrator): *Govindaraj Kempareddy*
- Lifetime Achievement: *Pankaj Advani* (cue sport)
- Best State promoting sports: *Odisha*
- Best Sports Journalist: *Kamesh Srinivasan*

Greta Thunberg named TIME's 2019 Person of the Year

The Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, who became voice of a generation facing climate change emergency was named as Time magazine's 2019 Person of the Year. The magazine announced 16-year old Thunberg as its choice among other 2019 finalists, which included The Hong Kong Protesters, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, President Donald Trump, and anonymous whistleblower whose memo on Trump's dealings with Ukraine triggered impeachment inquiry.

Others honoured by TIME for year 2019:

Athlete of the Year: US Women's Soccer Team

Guardians of the Year: the US Public Servants

Entertainer of the Year: Singer Lizzo

Business Person of the Year: Disney CEO Bob Iger

About Greta Thunberg

She is a Swedish environmental activist on climate change whose campaigning movement, which became known as "Fridays for Future," prompted millions of people in about 150 countries "to act on behalf of the planet. She had been nominated for a Nobel peace prize, recognised for her mobilisation of students in her 'Fridays for Future' weekly school strikes.

MEA hosts 6th Indian Ocean Dialogue, Delhi Dialogue XI

Union Ministry of External Affairs will be hosting 6th Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) and Delhi Dialogue XI at Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra in New Delhi on 13 December 2019. This is for the first time that these two dialogues, which are key elements of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and India-ASEAN calendars will be held consecutively and on similar Indo-Pacific themes.

Theme for 2019 Indian Ocean Dialogue is- '*Indo-Pacific: Re-imagining the Indian Ocean through an Expanded Geography*'. The 6th IOD which takes place on 13 December, is being organized with assistance of the



Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA).

Theme for 2019 Delhi Dialogue is- 'Advancing Partnership in Indo-Pacific'. It is being organized with assistance of Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a New Delhi-based autonomous policy research institute. The event will be held from 13-14 December.

Key Highlights of 6th Indian Ocean Dialogue

The IOD is Indian Ocean Rim Association's (IORA's) premier 1.5 track forum for dialogue between academia and officials on strategic issues of interest and concerns facing the Association. The member states will hold high-level discussions on IORA role within Indo-Pacific. The summit was preceded by 25th Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) (took place on 12 December).

IORAG explored cooperation and collaboration between academics and experts on promoting Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation which is a key priority under **IORA Action Plan (2017-2021)**.

Importance of Indian Ocean Rim Region

Just like Asia-Pacific to east, this IOR region is among the world's most vital in terms of energy, global commerce, environmental and geopolitical stability. Almost 50% of world's container ships and two-thirds of world's oil shipments pass through this region, which is home to around 2.7 billion people.

Andhra Pradesh Cabinet clears Disha Bill

The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet on December 11, 2019 cleared the Disha Bill that proposed harsh punishment for crimes against women. Disha bill is also known as the Andhra Pradesh Criminal Law (Amendment) bill.

Key Features

The act provides harsh punishments to those who did heinous crimes against women. The decision was taken to protect women and children in the state. The cabinet also approved establishment of special courts for offences against women and children under Women and Children Act, 2019. The courts will also deal with cases under POCSO (Protection of Children against Sexual Offence) act.

The act specifies that judgement for every case registered should be pronounced within 21 days. Special attention should be given to cases such as rape, acid attacks.

Punishment

Under the act, those found guilty under the act will be tried under Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code. However, the punishment has been increased. Accused with proven charges of sexual attack on children will be imprisoned for 10 to 14 years.

The act also includes strict actions against persons uploading degrading posts against women on social media. In this case, the first-time offenders will be punished with 2 years of jail term and the second term offenders will be punished with four years of jail term.

The act proposes death sentence for heinous crimes against women.

Background of the act

The act was drafted to hasten the trial process of crimes against women and children. Currently the time period to solve these cases in the state is 4 months. The act reduces it to 21 days. The act has also increased the punishment to 10 years of jail that was previously 3 to 5 years in case of sexual abuse against children.

Parliament passes International Financial Services Centre Authority bill, 2019

On December 13, 2019, the International Financial Services Centre Authority bill was passed by Rajya Sabha. It proposes to set up an authority to regulate financial services in the International Financial Services Centres in India.

Composition of the authority

According to the bill, the authority will comprise of nine members along with the chairperson. Among the nine members, two will be from Ministry of Finance and one each from SEBI, RBI, IRDAI and PRFDA. Two



other officials are to be appointed on the recommendation of search committee. The members will have a term of three years.

Functions of the authority

The authority will regulate financial products like contracts of insurance, financial institutions and services, deposits and securities that were previously approved by regulators such as SEBI, RBI and IFSC. It has power to regulate services offered by financial bodies as notified by the Union Government. This makes it independent from the government and to work autonomously.

Performance Review Committee

Under the law, the authority will constitute Performance Review Committee that will review the functioning of the authority. It will consolidate the findings of the authority and submit a report to the authority at least once a year. The committee will comprise of at least two members of the authority.

International Financial Service Centre Authority Funds

The bill proposes setting up of International Financial Service Centre authority funds. The charges, fees collected will be received by the authority from different sources and will be credited to the fund. The fund will also be used to pay salaries and allowances of the employees and other expenses incurred by the authority.

India Design Council launches initiatives to promote Design Education and Standards

India Design Council (IDC) launched two initiatives, called Design Education Quality Mark (DEQM) and Chartered Designs of India (CDI), with the objective to support and set standards for design profession. The initiatives will harmonise the different education systems whilst taking into account their great diversity.

About Design Education Quality Mark (DEQM)

It will benchmark design education programmes on predetermined standards and will accord a quality mark to institutions that meet standards. It includes a trademark-protected logo, thus will help students choose right design programme as well as aid prospective employers to understand standing of design institute. The mark will be granted to institutions that will undergo a review process and meet expectations for quality and standards as prescribed in **Quality Code**.

Chartered Designs of India (CDI)

It is an institution that will establish and uphold the professional standards of design practice in India. It is a cohesive platform that adheres to design practice to standards in professional design competence, ethics and service. CDI will focus on 'Professional Designer' identified by a design qualification and or experience.

December 14, 2019

ICAR and NABARD sign MoU to develop Climate Resilient Technologies for farmers

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and National Board of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) signed Memorandum of Understanding on December 13, 2019. The agreement was signed to facilitate the research and technologies to develop climate resilient practices in the agriculture sector and hi-tech farming practices.

Highlights

Under the agreement, the organizations will take up technology transfer in integrated farming system, agro-forestry, crop intensification, horticulture and plantation. The initiative will help to strengthen the competition among NABARD officers and other working partners. The agreement will also help to upgrade technologies developed by ICAR. It includes hi-tech farming practices, climate resilient practices and models. It will also aid in evaluation of NABARD assisted projects like farm-mechanization, agri-incubation centres, and report generation for climate change projects.

In order to develop climate resilient agriculture, GoI has launched several initiatives. One among them is the National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA).



NICRA

NICRA was launched in 2011. The project has three main objectives namely strategic research, capacity building and technology demonstrations. NICRA has four main modules namely crop production, natural resource management, improving soil health and livestock. Though the scheme was launched for 2 years, it was extended and is still active. The scheme is implemented by ICAR.

The main objectives of the scheme include enhancing resilience of Indian agriculture covering crops, fisheries, livestock. It will also demonstrate technology specific packages for Indian farmers to adapt to climate risks. The scheme will also enhance the capacity of scientists in climate resilient agricultural research and application.

Gol invokes DPCO, 2013 for the first time

On December 13, 2019, the Government of India for the first-time invoked Drug Price Control Order, 2013 in order to increase the prices of 21 medicines to ensure their availability. The prices were increased by 50%. These medicines were under price regulation as majority of their ingredients were imported from China.

Background of the issue

In the past two years, pharma industry was complaining over the price rise of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API). The prices have gone up by 5% to 88%. These ingredients constitute 40% to 80% of formulation cost. However, due to price ceiling of Gol, the sales of these products in the country got affected greatly as the pharmaceuticals hesitated to sell or manufacture these products.

Highlights

The price rise has been done on 21 key formulations namely BCG vaccines, malaria, penicillin, leprosy medicine, common antibiotics, anti-allergy medicines, life saving drugs like Furosemide. In January 2019, NPPA (National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Authority) received 49 application for 72 drugs. It was referred to Standing Committee on Affordable Medicines and Health Products (SCAMHP), NITI Aayog. The SCAMPH recommended that there is a need for one-time hike in prices in these formulations by 50%.

Legislation

Paragraph 19 of the DPCO 2013 deals with increase or decrease in drug prices under extraordinary circumstances. The prices have been increased under this legislation.

Gol to allot six Coal Mines to reduce coal imports

On December 13, 2019, Ministry of Coal initiated the auction process of 27 coal mines. Out of the 27 coal mines, applications were received for 6 mines. It includes mines at Bikram, Brahmapuri, Bhaskarpara, Jagannathpur and Jamkhani.

Highlights

The mines will add 5 metric tonnes of coal per annum. Also, it will generate Rs 15,000 crores of revenue for the state governments. The purpose of these auctions is to reduce the dependence of the coal industry on imported coal. India is currently importing 233.56 million tonnes of coal (2018-19). Coal imports increased by 8.8% as compared to 2017-18.

Government Measures

Government of India is currently planning to decrease dependence of coal and its imports. In order to achieve this, Coal India aims to raise its annual output to 880 million tons by 2024. This will help in reducing imports and eventually stop the country's energy dependence on coal. This will also aid in India's plan to expand the economy to 5 trillion USD by 2024.

The Government of India is also using Clean Coal Technology to reduce air pollution caused due to usage of coal.



Clean Coal Technology

Some of the Clean Coal Technology methods that are currently used in the country includes pre-combustion capture, oxy-fuel combustion and post-combustion capture. **Pre-combustion capture** includes production of heat through gasification of feedstock. In this process, a mix of hydrogen and Carbon dioxide rich gas is produced and the mixture can be separated easily. In **Oxy-fuel combustion**, fossil fuel such as coal is burnt in recirculated flue gas and oxygen rather than air. This eliminates nitrogen largely.

Trakea: A Unique bar-coding software used by Haryana Police

The Haryana Police Department has adopted a unique barcoding software. The software is used to ensure that 1000s of digital forensic reports are stored safe and secure. It offers a foolproof security to the samples collected from the crime scene.

Conventional Forensic Management

In conventional methods, the crime exhibits like parcels or samples are labeled with details like FIR number, names and addresses of victim, medical officers and accused. The crime exhibits include documents, DNA samples, serology, toxicology or biology examinations, lie detections, etc. These exhibits are easy to track and trace as they are stored on FIR number and are available to be tracked virtually by anyone.

About the Software

The Software features two stages of bar coding to maintain the secrecy of the samples. The samples and reports are sent through biometrically authorized chain. The cases are allocated to the biotechnology experts through automated case allocation. Therefore, the experts will not know about the details of the case or the names associated with case. Similarly, the police department or the other officials associated with the case will not know about the details of the professional performing the examination.

Benefits

The software is android based and has been prepared in an application format. Therefore, usage becomes simple. It can be well integrated with the judicial system and doing so will help reduce time lags. Above all, the system helps in reducing malpractices greatly.

Fact Box: Nagaland extends Inner Line Permit regime to Dimapur district

The state government of Nagaland has extended Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime to Dimapur district, which is the commercial hub of the state. *Dimapur was the only district that was not under ILP regime* unlike the rest of Nagaland, which came into being in 1963. *The ILP regime was also extended to neighbouring Manipur with President Ram Nath Kovind signing the order in this effect.*

Key Highlights

The Inner Line permit was extended by the Governor of Nagaland in exercise of powers conferred under Section 2 of *Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873*. Earlier, on 15 February, state Cabinet had approved the proposal to extend ILP to Dimapur.

As per the notification: All non-indigenous people who have entered district after 21 November 1979, will have to obtain ILP within 90 days from 9 December 2019. However, those who have settled or have entered before 21 November 1979, and have been staying continuously, will be exempted from the ILP regime, along with his/her direct descendants.

Also, the Non-indigenous persons living in Dimapur prior to 21 November 1979, will have to produce documents to deputy commissioner for exemption. Any non-indigenous person passing through district as a transit passenger and having a valid ticket will not be required to obtain ILP.

What is ILP regime?

The main aim of ILP system is to prevent settlement of other Indian nationals in these states to protect indigenous population. Thus to visit an ILP-regime states, the outsiders, including people from other states of country, need to take permission. There are also protections for locals with regards to lands, jobs and



other facilities. As of now, besides Nagaland and Manipur, the ILP regime is also applicable to Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.

ILP regime is applicable under Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, and under Section 2 of this regulation, citizens of other states require ILP for visiting these states.

What is the sudden need for ILP?

With passing of Citizenship (Amendment) Bill by parliament, there have been widespread protests in Northeast against it. According to the act, members of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Parsi and Christian communities, who have come from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, till 31 December 2014, facing religious persecution there, will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had also announced that proposed law will not be applicable to ILP regime states and areas governed under **6th Schedule of Constitution**.

Note: Under 6th Schedule of Constitution, autonomous councils and districts were created in certain tribal areas in Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya. The autonomous councils and districts enjoy some executive and legislative powers.

7th Economic Census: First time digital; to be complete by 2020

The Seventh Economic Census is being conducted nationwide through Common Service Centres (CSC) and is expected to be completed by March 2020. This is the first time the census is being conducted digitally.

Highlights

As the census is being conducted digitally, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation conducting the census has tied up with CSC e-governance services for the 7th census. Currently the census is being held in Delhi. Delhi is the 26th place where the census is launched. The process is long and will take minimum of three months to complete the census in Delhi region alone. Already the census is on in 20 states and 5 union territories.

Initially the economic census process will take minimum of 2 years to complete. With digital processes implemented in the census, it is being completed in less than 6 months according to the Ministry. Around 1.5 lakh trained enumerators have been employed in the census. They will visit 35 crore households and establishments to carry out the census.

Economic Census

The Indian Economic Census is counting entrepreneurial units in the country. It involves both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. It provides information such as number of persons employed, number of establishments, type of ownership, source of finance, etc. The information provided by the census is used to plan and assess contribution of various sectors towards GDP of the country.

Indian Economic Census

The Indian Economic Census was first launched in 1977. So far 6 census have been conducted in the years 1977, 1980, 1990, 1998, 2005, 2013. The economic census 1980 and 1990 were integrated with population census.

Ministry of Home Affairs deploys drones to destroy hidden marijuana plantations

The Ministry of Home Affairs along with the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) will investigate illegal plantations of marijuana plantations and destroy them deploying drones before the plants are harvested. The ministry is to use the help of satellites to detect the crops.

Highlights

India is currently on the steps of modus operandi adopted by the US to deal with marijuana plantations. US uses airplanes and drones to detect illegal plantations of marijuana. In 2018, India seized 414 tons of marijuana plants in more than 24,000 cases filed. According to NCB, the figure is expected to rise up. The satellite data is to be collected by the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau.



Marijuana Smuggling

The smuggling of Marijuana is predominant in the states of Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Haryana and Rajasthan. Among these states, large scale smuggling of marijuana occurs from Tuticorin port in Tamil Nadu to Maldives.

Legislation

Government of India allows legal plantation of Section marijuana under Section 10 of Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. Govt allows the use of marijuana in medicines like homeopathy and Ayurveda. Also, under Section 20 of the act says that illegal cultivation of the plant is an offence.

14 December: National Energy Conservation Day

The National Energy Conservation Day is celebrated every year on 14 December. The **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**, under Union Ministry of Power spearheads the celebrations of the day every year since 1991. BEE is also observing National Energy Conservation Week from 9-14 December 2019, in order to drive mass awareness about importance of energy efficiency and conservation.

About National Energy Conservation Day

Objective:

- To drive mass awareness about importance of energy efficiency and conservation
- To showcase India's achievements in energy efficiency and conservation.

Every year on this occasion a **National Energy Conservation Awards Programme** is also organised to recognize and encourage the efforts of various organizations, who have achieved efficient utilization and conservation of energy. The award also recognizes energy efficiency achievements in 56 sub sectors across industry, establishments and institutions including zonal railways, railway workshops and stations, municipalities, thermal power stations, electricity distribution companies, State Designated Agencies, hospitals, hotels, shopping malls and manufacturers of BEE Star labeled appliances or equipment.

In addition to felicitating awards to winners of National Energy Conservation Awards Programme, BEE also felicitates prizes to winners of **National Painting Competition on Energy Conservation**, with the objective to sensitize school children towards Energy Efficiency and Energy Conservation.

Angela Merkel tops 2019 Forbes' List of World's most-powerful women

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has topped the **Forbes' 2019 edition of 100 World's Most Powerful Women** for the ninth consecutive year. She was joined in top spots by fellow prominent female political leaders. The 65-year-old German leader has made 14 appearances in list's 16-year history of Forbes magazine which releases a wide-ranging list intended to celebrate 100 most influential females. She was praised for standing up to US President Donald Trump and for allowing over a million Syrian refugees into Germany.

Other Winners:

Every year Forbes' magazine annually compiles a list of influential women leaders from around the world in politics, business and entertainment.

Top 5: In this year's list, Angela Merkel was followed by **Christine Lagarde**, president of European Central Bank (ECB) and has earlier served as MD of International Monetary Fund (IMF). Christine rose to the second spot in the list after standing at number 22 last year on same list. **Nancy Pelosi**, Speaker of U.S. House of Representatives, stood at number 3 as the highest-ranking and most powerful female elected official in American political history. **Ursula Von Der Leyen**, President of European Commission stood at number No. 4 and **Mary Barra**, CEO of General Motors stood at number 5.

Indian Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman**, too, found a spot on 2019 Forbes' list. She was ranked 34, ahead of **Queen Elizabeth II**, who is at number 40, and Ivanka Trump, who stood at number 42.

Swedish teen environmentalist **Greta Thunberg**, who was recently named Time's Person of the Year, stood



at 100th spot on 2019 Forbes' list.

December 15, 2019

PM Modi reviews Namami Gange Project

On December 14, 2019, PM Modi reviewed the [Namami Gange Project](#) at Kanpur Atal Ghat. He was accompanied by UP CM Yogi Adityanath. He also visited the recently closed Sisamau Nala. PM Modi also chaired the first meeting of National Ganga Council with the Union Ministers.

Why Kanpur?

The most polluted stretch of the Ganges from Gaumukh to Gangasagar lies in Kanpur. The sewage treatment in Kanpur was inadequate with only 150-175 MLD (million litres per day) of sewage being treated and the rest of untreated sewage discharged into the river directly. The Sisamau Nala channel that was closed recently discharged 140 MLD of sewage. There are around 400 leather tanning industries in and around the city discharging unregulated discharges into the river.

Council review

The Council chaired by the Prime Minister for the first time reviewed 10 projects at estimated cost of Rs 2315 crores. It also included the diversion of Sisamau Nala channel. The Sisamau Nala drain, the largest drain in Asia was used as a sewerage conveyance channel since 1890. The drain was closed by the UP government in 2018.

Organic Farming along the Ganges

The Council has planned to launch organic farming on the banks of the river. This is because, besides industrial and sewerage pollution, agricultural run off is a major pollution in the river. The council has planned to encourage farmers in sustainable agricultural practices such as planting of fruit trees, zero budget farming and building plant nurseries on the banks of the river.

National Ganga Council

The National Ganga Council holds overall responsibility to direct, develop and control River Ganga and the entire River Ganga Basin. It also includes protection, prevention and abatement of environmental pollution in River Ganga.

Jurisdiction of the Council

The jurisdiction of the council is extended to states Himachal Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Delhi and Haryana.

Composition

The PM is the chair person of the council. The Union Minister of Water Resources, river development and Ganga Rejuvenation are the ex-officio vice-chairperson of the council. The other members include ministers of finance, urban development, environment, tourism, drinking water and sanitation, shipping, vice chairman of NITI Aayog and CMs of the states to which the jurisdiction extends.

India-Maldives review their Defence Cooperation

On December 14, 2019, India and Maldives agreed to expand their maritime security and boost their anti-terror cooperation in order to deal with the common challenges in Indian Ocean Region where China is expanding its military presence. The countries also held the 6th Joint Commission Meeting. It was co-chaired by the External Affairs ministers of the countries.

Highlights

The countries discussed about implementation of 1.4 billion USD economic package that was pledged by India earlier. At the Joint Commission Meeting, the countries reviewed the ongoing construction of police training facility in the city of Addu and other building projects that are implemented in Maldives with India's assistance. It includes **Composite Training Centre** to train defence forces of Maldives, setting up of **Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CSRS)**. It is to be noted that India had set up CSRS in Seychelles, Sri Lanka and



Mauritius. The countries also agreed to partner **Greater Male Area Connectivity Project**. The project aims at connecting islands in the west of Male with the capital.

India-Maldives: Recent Developments

The countries will hold Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Exercise. They have also planned for the lease of Dornier aircraft. At the **Goa Maritime Conclave** that was held in October 2019, India offered to share real-time movement of maritime traffic in the Indian Ocean littoral states.

Military Literature Festival organised in Chandigarh

The third edition of coveted Military Literature Festival (MLF) is being held from 13 to 15 December at UT Lake Club, Chandigarh. The military literature extravaganza was inaugurated by Punjab Governor and UT Administrator VP Singh Badnore. The festival would bring together the finest men from battle grounds and literary fields to discuss watershed of information on defence issues.

The land of Punjab has borne the brunt of ruthless invaders since times immemorable, thus to honour and commemorate the legendary bravery and sacrifices of people from this great land, the Military Literature Festival is organized annually.

About Military Literature Festival 2019

The Fest was led by Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh with discussions in various aspects of military and sharing his experiences of serving country in armed forces. All three days also had Clarion Call theatre events comprising of special audio visual shows on 'Josh', 'Jazbaa' and 'Junoon' of being part of armed forces.

The festival will be marked by presence of legendary litterateur Sir Mark Tully, historian Pushpesh Pant, Ramon Magsaysay awardee Ravish Kumar as well as gallantry award winners and defence experts. At the event panel discussions on subjects ranging from military histories to wars to current cyber security concerns were witnessed. It also encapsulated stories of battleground from gallantry awards winners that will be shared during Samvad.

Gol to regulate Vintage Vehicles with new policy

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a draft notification on December 15, 2019, to regulate the registration of old vintage vehicles. The ministry has planned to provide a special number plate with letters VA to signify the vintage vehicles.

Highlights

The Ministry has launched **Regulation of vintage motor vehicles order, 2019** in order to implement the plan. The registration plates of the vehicles will bear letters "XXVAYY", where VA stands for Vintage, XX stands for state code and YY stands for numbers between 1 and 9. It also envisages that a one-time fee of Rs 20,000 has to deposited by the owners with the state transport authorities. The deposition is valid for 10 years after which the owners have to renew their ownership. The policy is first of its kind.

Significance

The aim of implementing the policy is to avoid harassments from enforcement agencies. It will also help to identify and regulate vintage vehicles by providing scrappage exemption to them. The aim of the draft rules is to preserve vintage vehicles owing to their historic, technical, cultural and aesthetic significance.

The current Central Motor Vehicle rules that is in operation states that vehicles taking part in vintage car rallies are exempted from registration. It also says that any car that is older than 50 years is a vintage car.

Background

The policy is being implemented after its need was felt at the 55th meeting of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules-Technical Standing Committee. The committee was constituted to receive recommendations from other committees such as Bureau of Indian Standards, Automotive Industry Standards Committee and provide safety recommendations.



World Design Organization to launch World Design Protopolis in Bengaluru

World Design Organization (WDO) will be launching its new global programme 'World Design Protopolis' in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The announcement regarding World Design Protopolis was made at ongoing 3-day **Kochi Design Week (KDW)**, India's largest design conclave that kicked off at *Bolgatty Island* in Kerala. The mega event, which concluded on 14 December 2019, witnessed convergence of policymakers and government officials, design professionals from India and abroad, architects, interior designers, heads of various companies, thought leaders, besides general public.

About World Design Protopolis

Objective: It is aimed at implementing holistic progress in mega cities across the world and thus making them sustainable. The project also aims to measure progress of city, attract investments and solve problems so that the city becomes a better place for citizens.

With this project, the WDO is trying to prototype a future city. It has selected Bengaluru as first ever city in world to implement this project, which is exclusively for big cities.

Also, unlike WDO's 1-year celebratory programme, the *World Design Capital*, this 5-year project stresses on measurability, which is the main difference in project. Moreover, WDP will also measure what WDO did in the city and how city benefitted and who benefitted over a period of 5 years.

India expands Indo-Pacific Policy; includes Gulf and Africa

At the end of the joint [Indian Ocean Dialogue](#) held in New Delhi, External Affairs Minister officially announced that India is planning to expand its Indo-Pacific policy. So far, the Indo-Pacific covered Indian Ocean and the Arabian sea. With the expansion, the region will now include Gulf states and Africa.

Indo Pacific

[Indo-Pacific](#) is a US construct that includes regions between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. According to the US, it ranges from the eastern shores of the African continent to the western shores of the US. The move of US was perceived to contain China's military expansion in the region. In June 2018, PM Modi outlined India's vision on the Indo-Pacific region while addressing the [Shangri-La Dialogue](#).

Significance

The expansion will help India in its Act East Policy. It also clearly sets out message that India's focus is more on the Indian Ocean element of the Indo-Pacific rather than Pacific Ocean element. This is because with the expansion of the Indo-Pacific, ASEAN becomes the geographical centre of a greater perimeter and becomes heart of Indo-Pacific. This will also help India in moving beyond cultural, historical and economic linkages.

ICMR: Task Force on Gene Therapy

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) will set up a task force on gene therapy in order to encourage research in the field. The purpose of setting up the task force is to explore gene editing based therapeutic approaches that will treat illness.

Highlights

The task force will work on genetic diseases affecting brain, eye disorders, muscles, heart, retina, cornea and blood disorders. The blood disorders include Thalassemia, Haemophilia and Sickle cell disease. The task force will also work on diseases such as diabetes, cancer and lung diseases. The work of the force will be completely abided to the guidelines on gene therapy released by ICMR.

Need

ICMR believes that many inherited disorders are not treated by existing drugs and therapies. While the western world has stridden far ahead in the field in the last 30 years, India is lagging in the field. Around 70 million Indians suffer from rare diseases whose cure can be achieved through gene therapy.

Even with advancements, the countries leading in the field are still in the stage of clinical trials and have not



yet proved the success of the therapies. To mention a few, ICMR states that drugs like Luxuturna used to treat Retinitis Pigmentosa (illness that affects retinal cells of human eye) and Yescarta used to in cell therapy to treat cancer are still in clinical trial phase.

Therefore, it is important to build a strong task force that will work exclusively on gene therapy.

China's interests in the new country Bougainville

Recently, Bougainville, a chain of islands voted for a [referendum of independence](#) from Papua Guinea. The referendum saw 85% voter turnout choosing Papua Guinea as second option. The referendum was introduced because the peace agreement signed before 20 years ended. The agreement was signed to end nine year conflict or civil war that killed almost 10% of the country's population. Employment and land acquisition in the island by copper mines (owned by Papua Guinea, Australia and other foreign countries) were the major reason behind the war.

Implications

The independence of the country sends strong signals to other movements across the Pacific, especially New Caledonia (a French collectivity) that is preparing itself for the second referendum. The other important message that the independence sends is for the so-called traditional partners of the Pacific namely US, UK, Australia, France and Japan. The referendum has taken place during the period when the strategic anxiety among the traditional partners of the Pacific is at its peak.

China's interests

The prevailing situation in the Pacific is advantageous to China. China seeks to influence an independent Bougainville. The political and economic presence of china in the country has increased already. China's support to the island will increase its support among the Pacific islands against Taiwan. It is important to note that Taiwan recently lost two of its Pacific allies this year. Australia, UK and US believe that there are possibilities of China bringing Bougainville into its debt trap diplomacy. China is also interested in Bougainville for its rich fisheries, copper, gold and other resources. Building strong ties with the country will help China increase its presence in the Pacific.

2020 Crystal Award: World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum (WEF) announced the Winners of 26th Annual Crystal Award for the year 2020. The Crystal Awards recognises as well as celebrates the achievements of leading artists and cultural figures whose leadership inspires inclusive and sustainable change. The annual awards are hosted by World Economic Forum's *World Arts Forum*.

WEF's 2019 Crystal Award Recipients

Jin Xing– China's media personality. She was recognized for her leadership in shaping inclusive cultural norms

Theaster Gates– Chicago-based artist. He was recognized for his leadership in creating sustainable communities

Lynette Wallworth- Australian artist. She won for her leadership in creating inclusive narratives

Deepika Padukone- Indian actress. She won the award for her remarkable leadership in raising mental health awareness. She is the only Indian actress who has won 26th Annual Crystal Award for spreading mental health awareness.

The three awardees will be honoured at opening session of **World Economic Forum's 2020 Annual Meeting** in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, on 21-24 January. The 2020 annual meeting will take place from 22-25 January under the theme, '[Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World](#)'. The WEF Annual Meeting brings together leaders from international organisations, government, civil society, culture and media, business, foremost experts and young generation from all over the world, at highest level and in



representative ways.

BEE organized International workshop on Energy Efficient Cooling

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), a statutory body under Union Ministry of Power, conducted an International Workshop on 12-13 December 2019 on 'Energy Efficient Cooling' at Scope Convention Centre in New Delhi. The two-day international workshop was organised as part of 'Energy Conservation Week' being celebrated from 9- 14 December 2019.

About International workshop on Energy Efficient Cooling

Objective of Workshop:

- To chart out steps towards accelerating development and deployment of efficient cooling appliances, equipment and systems.
- To explore innovation, technologies, business models, policies and new approaches across space cooling and cold chains.
- To reduce energy intensity in country by optimizing energy demand and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) which are responsible for global warming and climate change.

It was organized by BEE in association with International Energy Agency (IEA) under **Super-Efficient Equipment and Appliance Deployment (SEAD) initiative** of *Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM)* and *International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation (IPEEC)*.

Participants: It was attended by various delegates such as policy makers, Govt. officials, regulatory bodies, PSUs, etc. from across the world as well as officials and experts from different international bodies related to Energy Efficient Cooling.

Highlights of Workshop:

It acted as platform for stakeholders to adopt new technologies and policy frameworks for an Energy Efficient Cooling environment. It also provided a platform for global experts, industries, and policy makers to explore opportunities to accelerate deployment of energy efficient cooling, across different sectors and establishments.

It highlighted action plans, international best policy practices, measures to stimulate innovation and deliberations on steps forward. These initiatives and knowledge sharing sessions help in framing best policies and support industry bodies to adopt technologies from across the globe.

NOTE: India has committed to reduce 33-35% of GHG emission by 2030 as part of document submitted to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Multiple Choice Questions

1. 50th International Film Festival of India was recently concluded in which city?

- [A] Mumbai
- [B] Goa
- [C] New Delhi
- [D] Chennai

Answer: Goa

The Golden Jubilee Edition of International Film Festival of India, IFFI, culminated in Goa. The festival saw screening of 300 films of various languages from India and abroad for delegates from different parts of the world. The IFFI was awarded the ICFT-UNESCO Fellini medal at the closing ceremony which was received by Information and Broadcasting Secretary Amit Khare and Director of festivals Chaitanya Prasad. Governor of Goa Satyapal Malik, Chief Minister of Goa Dr. Pramod Sawant, Union minister Babul Supriyo and others were present on the occasion.

2. Which city organized the 47th All India Police Science Congress?

- [A] Kolkata



- [B] Gurugram
- [C] Lucknow
- [D] Pune

Answer: Lucknow

A 2-day All India Police Science Congress (AIPSC) has started at Lucknow on November 28. It is the 47th session of the AIPSC. The objective of this programme is to focus on various issues related to the police. It has five related topics on challenges in policing. Uttar Pradesh is hosting AIPSC after 22 years. Chief of the event was former IPS and Puducherry LG Kiran Bedi.

3. Researchers of which country have recently discovered a massive black hole in the Milky Way?

- [A] India
- [B] China
- [C] USA
- [D] Russia

Answer: China

Researchers from the National Astronomical Observatory of China have discovered a black hole in the Milky Way. The black hole is so huge that it challenged the existing models of the evolution of stars. The black hole was discovered by an international team of scientists using China's sophisticated Large Sky Area Multi-Object Fibre Spectroscopic Telescope (LAMOST) telescope. The black hole, LB-1, is located 15,000 light-years away from Earth.

4. Who was awarded 2019 Karmaveer Chakra by iCONGO and United Nations?

- [A] Manjeet Singh
- [B] Rahul Adhikari
- [C] Aman Desai
- [D] Sachin Tanwar

Answer: Rahul Adhikari

2019 Gold-Medalist from Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee (IIT-R) & founder of International Changemaker Olympiad Rahul Adhikari, was conferred with 2019 Karmaveer Chakra Award REX Karmaveer Global Fellowship at the REX CONCLiVE held in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. The award was given for his contribution in the education sector.

5. Bala Singh, who recently passed away, was a famous personality of which profession?

- [A] Actor
- [B] Novelist
- [C] Singer
- [D] Sculptor

Answer: Actor

Veteran Tamil actor and theatre artist Bala Singh passed away at the age of 67 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu due to illness. Bala, an alumnus of National School of Drama (NSD) started his career as a theatre artiste. He rose to fame in actor Nasser's Avatharam(1995), where he played the role of a villain. It was also his debut film.

6. Who is the author of 'Garam pahad'?

- [A] Namdev Tarachandani
- [B] Moti Prakash
- [C] Anita bhatnagar Jain
- [D] Fahmida Hussain



Answer: Anita bhatnagar Jain

Union Minister of Human Resource Development (HRD) Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank has launched 3 books for children namely Kumbh, Garam Pahad and Dilli ki Bulbul (Sindhi edition) in New Delhi. The 3 books, penned by Dr. Anita Bhatnagar Jain (an officer of Indian Administrative Services (1985 batch)), are a collection of stories for children and have documented the environmental issues & topics like socio-cultural unity, cultural heritage along with the message of save environment in a very lucid manner.

7. Which IIT has joined hands with the National Council of Science Museums to develop 'Gandhipedia'?

- [A] IIT Kharagpur
- [B] IIT Delhi
- [C] IIT Madras
- [D] IIT Bombay

Answer: IIT Kharagpur

Two IITs and the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) have joined hands to develop Gandhipedia, an online repository of books, letters and speeches written by Mahatma Gandhi, to commemorate his 150th birth anniversary. The entire project will be done with the help of Artificial Intelligence (AI). In the first phase, over 40 books written by Mahatma Gandhi will be digitised and indexed and their portions tweeted. IIT Gandhinagar is also a part of the project along with IIT Kharagpur and NSCM, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Culture.

8. Which film won the Golden Peacock Award 2019?

- [A] Marighella
- [B] Particles
- [C] Rwanda
- [D] Jallikattu

Answer: Particles

Particles, the French-Swiss film directed by Blaise Harrison won the Golden Peacock Award at the 50th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa. The IFFI 2019 concluded on November 28, 2019. The Golden Peacock Award includes a cash prize worth Rs 40 lakh, a trophy and a citation. The jury described 'Particles', which is produced by Estelle Fialon, as an "ambitious yet modest film about the mysteries of being a teenager." The prize money is to be distributed equally between the director and producer.

9. Which company has become the first company to list commercial papers on stock exchanges?

- [A] Tata Capital
- [B] Aditya Birla Finance
- [C] Muthoot Finance
- [D] Bajaj Finserv Ltd.

Answer: Aditya Birla Finance

On November 28, 2019 Aditya Birla Finance became the first company to list its commercial papers borrowing of Rs 100 crore on the Indian stock exchanges. The non-banking finance company (NBFC) listed its CPs on NSE with a value date of November 28, 2019 and maturity date on February 7, 2020.

10. Which bank is to assist in strengthening power connectivity in Chennai-Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor?

- [A] Asian Development Bank
- [B] Reserve Bank of India
- [C] Swiss Bank



[D] BRICS Bank

Answer: Asian Development Bank

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has extended a \$451 million loan to strengthen power connectivity between the southern and northern parts of the Chennai–Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor (CKIC). CKIC is part of the East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC) in Tamil Nadu. Government of India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) has signed a \$451 million loan for strengthening power connectivity between northern and southern parts of Chennai–Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor (CKIC) which is part of East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC). ECEC is India's first coastal economic corridor. It will help establish extra-high-voltage transmission link between Coimbatore and Virudhunagar. It will meet increased power demand in CKIC by transferring additional generation capacity of 9,000 megawatt (MW), including 6,000 MW from renewable by 2025. This will help reliably evacuate power from these new power plants in southern CKIC.

11. Election Commission of India (ECI) has recognized Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) as state party of which state?

- [A] Haryana
- [B] Jharkhand
- [C] Maharashtra
- [D] Odisha

Answer: Haryana

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has recently recognized the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) as state party of Haryana and allotted the symbol of "key" for the party. The decision in this regard was taken on the basis of the poll performance of the party in the recent 2019 Assembly elections in Haryana. The JJP was formed in December 2018 by a breakaway faction of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) & won 10 seats in the recently-held Haryana Assembly elections and formed the government with the BJP.

12. Yasuhiro Nakasone, who passed away recently, was the former PM of which country?

- [A] North Korea
- [B] China
- [C] South Korea
- [D] Japan

Answer: Japan

In Japan, Yasuhiro Nakasone (101) has passed away at Tokyo on 29th November 2019. He was one of the longest-reigning Prime Ministers and known for his friendship with Ronald Reagan. He also broke an unwritten rule on limiting the annual defence budget to 1% of Gross National Product (GNP). In 1983, he became the first Japanese Premier to officially visit South Korea & mended fences with a country that Japan had brutally colonized from 1910 to 1945.

13. Angad Vir Singh Bajwa is associated to which sports?

- [A] Chess
- [B] Cricket
- [C] Boxing
- [D] Shooting

Answer: Shooting

In shooting, Angad Vir Singh Bajwa unofficially hit a world record score in the men's skeet final at the 63rd National Shooting Championships for Shotgun events in New Delhi on 29th November 2019. He



defeated his senior and fellow Tokyo 2020 quota winner Mairaj Ahmad Khan of Uttar Pradesh. He also equalled a record he jointly holds with skeet legend Vincent Hancock and two others.

14. Who has become fastest man to reach 7,000 Test runs?

- [A] Virat Kohli
- [B] Rohit Sharma
- [C] Steve Smith
- [D] Aaron Finch

Answer: Steve Smith

Steve Smith has become the fastest man to score 7,000 Test runs in the ongoing second Test against Pakistan. He broke English great Wally Hammond's record that had stood since 1946. Smith also passed Bradman's 6,996 Test runs. It took Smith 70 Tests to do so, while Bradman needed only 52.

15. Noted theatre artiste Paramananda Sahu, who passed away recently, was from which state?

- [A] Madhya Pradesh
- [B] Odisha
- [C] Uttar Pradesh
- [D] Rajasthan

Answer: Odisha

Renowned theatre artiste of Odisha, Paramananda Sahu (72) has passed away in Balasore on 30th of November. He had directed and acted in more than a hundred dramas, besides being an artiste in All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan.

16. Who is the author of the book "The Legacy of Militancy in Punjab: Long Road to Normalcy" ?

- [A] Dona Suri
- [B] Vikram Seth
- [C] Arundhati Roy
- [D] Vani Kaushal

Answer: Dona Suri

The book titled "The Legacy of Militancy in Punjab: Long Road to Normalcy" have been authored by civil rights activist Inderjit Singh Jaijee and journalist Dona Suri. The book provide details how militancy in Punjab affected judiciary by delaying trials, how it influenced the popular culture and how the youth today are still responding to conditions in the northern state. It also aims at holding up a mirror to developments in post-militancy Punjab regarding politics, government policies, and functioning of police and courts among other things.

17. Schistura syngkai is the scientific name of which type of species?

- [A] Elephant
- [B] Fish
- [C] Frog
- [D] Tortoise

Answer: Fish

The fish species, that has a scientific name Schistura syngkai, has been discovered in West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. It was discovered at Twahdidoh stream (a tributary of Wahblei river) by a team of scientists led by Prof Khlur Mukhim of Shillong's Lady Keane College. Both sexes of the fish have golden-brown bodies with blackish lateral stripes and slightly emarginate tail fins. Earlier, Mukhim had discovered a blind fish species that lives 1,600 feet inside a limestone cave in East Jaintia Hills district of the state.



18. Akkitham Achuthan Namboothiri, who has been chosen for the 55th Jnanpith Award, is associated to which language?

- [A] Kannada
- [B] Tamil
- [C] Malayalam
- [D] Telugu

Answer: Malayalam

Eminent Malayalam poet Akkitham Achuthan Namboothiri has been chosen as the recipient of the 55th Jnanpith Award for the year 2019. Born in 1926, Akkitham is one of the most revered names in Malayalam poetry. Apart from poetry, his literary excellence has footprints in genres like drama, reminiscence, critical essays, children literature, short stories and translation. He has authored 55 books out of which 45 are collections of poems including “Khanda Kavyas”, “Katha Kavyas”, “Charitha Kavyas” and songs. His works have also been translated into many Indian and foreign languages.

19. The first-ever International Conference on “Landslides Risk Reduction and Resilience” was held in which city?

- [A] Geneva
- [B] London
- [C] Paris
- [D] New Delhi

Answer: New Delhi

Minister of State for Home Affairs, G Kishan Reddy inaugurated the first-ever International Conference on “Landslides Risk Reduction and Resilience” in New Delhi. This first-of-its-kind conference aims to bring together all the stakeholders including relevant Ministries and experts to discuss, debate and disseminate information, experiences and innovations for landslides risk reduction and resilience at national and international levels.

20. Who has been appointed as chairman of microfinance panel of the Code for Responsible Lending (CRL)?

- [A] H R Khan
- [B] R Gandhi
- [C] Mahesh Kumar Jain
- [D] Anand Sinha

Answer: H R Khan

Former deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), H R Khan has been appointed as the first chairman of the steering committee of the Code for Responsible Lending (CRL) in micro-credit. The CRL is a self-regulatory step for the micro-credit industry making diverse entities like banks, NBFC-MFIs and NBFCs adhere to standards of customer protection.

21. According to the recently released UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2019, the global temperature will rise by how many degrees till 2100?

- [A] 3.2 degree Celsius
- [B] 4.7 degree Celsius
- [C] 1.9 degree Celsius
- [D] 2.4 degree Celsius

Answer: 3.2 degree Celsius

Recently released United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Emissions Gap Report-2019 warns that the Earth’s average temperature may rise by 3.2 degrees Celsius by 2021. Moreover, despite all



scientific warnings and political commitments emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) couldn't decrease globally. The report was released prior to United Nations Climate Conference (COP-25) to be held in Spain from 2 December 2019. It states that GHG emissions have increased by 1.5% since last decade and that carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions have reached an all-time high figure of 55.3 gigatons. China, United States of America (USA), European Union (28) and India are among the top four greenhouse gas emitters.

UNEP report highlights that India is regularly considering deadlines and targets to curb carbon emission. As per the report, India's per capita emission is one of the lowest within G20 countries. Also, India is one of the leading countries that are looking for electric vehicle development.

22. SURYA KIRAN, a joint military Exercise of India with which country?

- [A] Nepal
- [B] Sri Lanka
- [C] Myanmar
- [D] Bhutan

Answer: Nepal

'Surya Kiran XIV' between India and Nepal will be conducted at Salijhandi, Rupendehi district of Nepal from 3 to 16 December 2019. The exercise will comprise of 300 soldiers from both the Indian Army and Nepal Army who will be sharing their experiences in the conduct of various counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations, as also various humanitarian assistance missions by both Armies.

23. Who won 55th Jnanpith Award-2019?

- [A] Rajeev Alunkal
- [B] Lalithambika Antharjanam
- [C] Akkitham
- [D] Rafeeq Ahamed

Answer: Akkitham

Eminent Malayalam poet Akkitham has been chosen for the 55th Jnanpith Award, the Jnanpith Selection Board announced on November 29. "The Jnanpith Selection Board has announced the recipient of the 55th Jnanpith Award for the year 2019. It went to Shri Akkitham, eminent Indian poet writing in Malayalam. Born in 1926, Akkitham Achuthan Namboothiri, popularly known as Akkitham is one of the most revered names in Malayalam poetry. Apart from poetry, his literary excellence has footprints in genres like drama, reminiscence, critical essays, children literature, short stories and translation.

24. Who has been appointed as first chairman of steering committee panel on Code for Responsible Lending (CRL) in Micro-Credit?

- [A] Sonia Krishnankutty
- [B] H R Khan
- [C] P Satish
- [D] Harsh Shrivastava

Answer: H R Khan

H R Khan, former deputy governor of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been appointed as first chairman of steering committee panel on Code for Responsible Lending (CRL) in Micro-Credit. Members of panel include: P Satish of Sa-Dhan, Sonia Krishnankutty of L&T Finance, Harsh Shrivastava of MFIL and Srinivas Bonam of IndusInd Bank among others.

25. The sixth Dornier aircraft squadron of Indian Navy was recently commissioned in which state/UT?



- [A] Goa
- [B] Punjab
- [C] Gujarat
- [D] Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Answer: Gujarat

The Indian Navy has commissioned its sixth Dornier aircraft squadron in the Porbandar town of Gujarat. It aims to give a fillip to coastal security near the sea border with Pakistan. It was commissioned by Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Vice-Admiral M S Pawar. Dornier aircraft squadron: The Indian Naval Air Squadron 314 is called Raptors. It will operate with four newly-inducted, next-generation Dornier aircraft.

26. Which one is the maximum fine that can be imposed by the government for the misuse of National Emblem?

- [A] Rs.5 lakh
- [B] Rs.2 lakh
- [C] Rs.1 lakh
- [D] Rs.4 lakh

Answer: Rs.5 lakh

The Government of India has proposed increasing the fine for illegal and improper use of national emblems for commercial gains from Rs.500 to Rs.1 lakh. It also suggested change also includes jail time and a fine of Rs.5 lakh for repeat offenders. The aim is to crack down on their misuse. The Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 of India prohibits the misuse of the national flag, the Ashoka Chakra, the official seal of the President or Governor, the coat-of-arms used by a government department, the pictorial representation of Mahatma Gandhi and the Prime Minister.

27. Which online trucking platform, has partnered with IDFC Bank and Yes Bank to provide FASTags?

- [A] Blackbuck
- [B] Trunk pool
- [C] Freight
- [D] Integrated logistics

Answer: Blackbuck

BlackBuck, the online trucking platform, has partnered with private lenders IDFC Bank and Yes Bank on 28 November. The partnership aims to provide FASTags to truck owners free of cost. With this partnership, the Truck owners can order FASTags on BlackBuck's Boss App. It will be delivered at their doorstep free of cost until 31 December 2019. The initiative will help over 3 million trucks in India become FASTag compliant.

28. The police of which Indian city has recently received SKOCH award for clean stations?

- [A] Hyderabad
- [B] Chennai
- [C] Amravati
- [D] Panaji

Answer: Chennai

On November 29, 2019 the Greater Chennai Police received the Union government's SKOCH Award under the category 'Swachh Police Station', for maintaining cleanliness in all their police stations. This comes after the police's efforts to clear up abandoned and unclaimed vehicles from all station premises. A huge pile of abandoned and unclaimed vehicles around nearly all police stations in the Greater Chennai area used to take up a lot of space, besides giving the stations a shabby look. On the instruction of



Commissioner of Police A.K. Viswanathan, senior officers took account of all these vehicles in each police station in the city.

29. Which cricket player has recently become the fastest to reach 7,000 Test runs?

- [A] Joe Root
- [B] David Warner
- [C] Steve Smith
- [D] Ross Taylor

Answer: Steve Smith

Steve Smith on November 30, 2019 became the fastest man to score 7,000 Test runs, shattering a record that had stood since 1946, while moving past Donald Bradman to become Australia's 11th highest scorer. The 30-year-old took a single off Muhammad Musa during the second Test against Pakistan in Adelaide to reach the milestone and take possession of a record held for 73 years by English great Wally Hammond. Hammond reached the mark in 131 innings, while Smith, who played his first Test nine years ago, made the grade in his 126th. India's Virender Sehwag is the third fastest in 134 innings.

30. The Small Industries and Export Corporation of which state has recently launched a Web-based Geographic Information System?

- [A] Andhra Pradesh
- [B] Madhya Pradesh
- [C] Punjab
- [D] Uttar Pradesh

Answer: Punjab

The Punjab Small Industries and Export Corporation (PSIEC) has launched the Estate Management System (EMS) and Web-based Geographic Information System (Web-GIS) on 28 November 2019. PSIEC launched it under the leadership of Capt. Amarinder Singh. The aim of the system is to ensure transparency. The system also promotes ease of doing business in the State.

31. Mitra Shakti is a joint military exercise of India with which country?

- [A] Nepal
- [B] Bhutan
- [C] Sri Lanka
- [D] Iran

Answer: Sri Lanka

The seventh Indo-Sri Lanka joint military exercise Mitra Shakti was held on December 1, 2019 at Aundh military station. The main objective of the exercise is to build and promote positive relations between the countries. The exercise was scheduled to be conducted at the Foreign Training Node in Pune between December 1 and December 14, 2019.

32. Which country has become the first country to make entire Haj process digital?

- [A] Pakistan
- [B] India
- [C] UAE
- [D] Kuwait

Answer: India

India has become the first country in the world to completely digitize the Haj process. Various services have been added to the online application service like e-visa, haj mobile app, e-messiah health facility, stay and traffic information in Mecca Medina and Haj pilgrimage information. It is for the first time when



digital pre-tagging has been arranged by the airlines so that Haj pilgrims will get all kinds of information in India itself. Haj pilgrims will get prior information about which room of which building in Mecca Medina and what number bus will have to be taken after landing at the airport.

33. Who has been elected as the new speaker of the Maharashtra Assembly?

- [A] Praful Patel
- [B] Nana Patole
- [C] Dilip Walse Patil
- [D] Kisan Kathore

Answer: Nana Patole

Congress MLA Nana Patole has been elected as Speaker of the Maharashtra Assembly. Mr Patole's election came after the BJP took back the name of Kisan Kathore as the party's nominee with minutes to go before the 10 am deadline. It is a tradition in the Maharashtra Assembly for the Speaker to be elected unopposed.

34. Who recently took charge as the new Controller General of Accounts?

- [A] Giriraj Prasad Gupta
- [B] Archana Nigam
- [C] J.P.S. Chawla
- [D] Soma Roy Burman

Answer: Soma Roy Burman

The government on December 1, 2019 appointed Soma Roy Burman, a 1986-batch Indian Civil Accounts Service Officer, as the new Controller General of Accounts (CGA). Ms. Burman is the 24th CGA and is the seventh woman to hold this position. During her 33-year long career, she has held cadre positions at different levels in ministries such as Home Affairs, Information & Broadcasting, Industry, Finance, Human Resource Development and Shipping, Road Transport & Highways.

35. Which became the first Asian country to be the 'Guest of Honour Country' at the International Book fair, Mexico?

- [A] China
- [B] Japan
- [C] India
- [D] Australia

Answer: India

International Book Fair is the biggest book fair in the Spanish-speaking world. This is the 33rd edition of Guadalajara International Book Fair and will continue till 8 December, 2019. India is the 'Guest of Honour Country' in this book fair and it becomes the first Asian country to participate as 'Guest of Honour' in the Fair. The National Book Trust (NBT), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) Government of India, is participating as the nodal agency of the Government in this book fair.

36. 13th South Asian Games have recently been inaugurated in which country?

- [A] China
- [B] Vietnam
- [C] India
- [D] Nepal

Answer: Nepal

13th South Asian Games have formally begun in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. President of Nepal



Bidya Devi Bhandari declared games open in a glittering ceremony at Dasaratha Rangshala in Kathmandu on December 1. Vice President Nanda Bahadur Pun, Chairman of National Assembly Ganesh Timilsina, Deputy Prime Minister Ishwor Pokharel, Ministers from South Asian countries and a large number of other dignitaries also graced the opening ceremony. Over 2700 athletes from seven South Asian Countries participated in the march past.

37. Who won the Women's Singles title at 2019 Syed Modi International badminton tournament?

- [A] P.V. Sindhu
- [B] Carolina Marin
- [C] Baek Ha-na
- [D] Alina Davletova

Answer: Carolina Marin

Carolina Marin won second title in 71 days but Sourabh Verma faltered at the final hurdle of the \$150,000 Syed Modi International badminton tournament on December 1, 2019. Marin, a three-time World champion and ranked 18th in the world, went about her job in a business-like manner. She was comfortably ahead in the opening game. In the second, she easily bridged a five-point deficit. In fact, she won 15 of the last 20 points. In January, Marin suffered a nasty fall during the Indonesia Masters final against Saina Nehwal and underwent a surgery on her right knee. Following an eight-month layoff, in six tournaments, Marin won the China Open in September, lost the French Open final and now added a second title.

38. Which city is to organize the 3rd edition of Khelo India Youth Games?

- [A] Chandigarh
- [B] Nashik
- [C] Guwahati
- [D] Patna

Answer: Guwahati

The third edition of the Khelo India Youth Games which is scheduled to be held from January 10 to 22, 2019 in Guwahati. The third edition will have two additional sports – Cycling and Lawn Bowls as over 10,000 participants from across the country participate in a total of 451 medal events during the 13 action-packed days. The Khelo India Games was launched in 2018 to imbibe a culture of sports in the country.

39. International Day for the Abolition of Slavery is observed on which date?

- [A] November 30
- [B] December 1
- [C] December 2
- [D] December 3

Answer: December 2

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery is a yearly event on December 2, organized by the United Nations General Assembly. The Day was first celebrated in 1986. The convention for the suppression of the traffic in persons and of the exploitation of the prostitution of others was approved by the United Nations General Assembly on December 2, 1949. Besides, by resolution 57/195 of 18 December 2002, the Assembly proclaimed 2004 the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition.

40. The National Pollution Control Day is observed on 2 December every year in order to honor the lives that were lost because of the Bhopal gas calamity. The calamity occurred due to discharge of which gas?



- [A] Propane
- [B] Methyl Isocyanate
- [C] Propyl Isocyanate
- [D] Methane

Answer: Methyl Isocyanate

The National Pollution Control Day is observed on 2 December. It is celebrated every year. The day is observed in order to honor the lives that were lost because of the Bhopal gas calamity. On this day, the Pollution Control Department will organize several programs in this regard in the education institutions. The day aims to spread awareness among the people about pollution and its control measures. The day also creates awareness about the problem caused by increasing pollution. The Bhopal gas tragedy happened on the night of 2nd and 3rd December of 1984. The tragedy occurred because of the unintentional discharge of the poisonous Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) and some other chemicals released from the Union Carbide Chemical Plant in Bhopal.

41. Who won the 2019 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix title?

- [A] Max Verstappen
- [B] Charles Leclerc
- [C] Valtteri Bottas
- [D] Lewis Hamilton

Answer: Lewis Hamilton

Lewis Hamilton ended another title-winning Formula One season by cruising to victory at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. In his 250th grand prix, Mercedes' six-time world champion qualified on pole for the first time since July's German Grand Prix and eased clear of the field to claim an easy victory at the Yas Marina Circuit. It marked Hamilton's 11th triumph of the campaign in a race where there was little on the line for most on the grid. Max Verstappen was second to ensure he finished third in the drivers' championship, with Charles Leclerc completing the podium, though Ferrari were due to meet with the stewards after the race over a fuel discrepancy in his car.

42. Which spacecraft of NASA has recently found the crashed Indian Moon lander Vikram?

- [A] CALIPSO
- [B] Aura
- [C] Landsat7
- [D] LRO

Answer: LRO

NASA satellite orbiting the Moon has found India's Chandrayaan-2 Vikram lander which crashed on the lunar surface in September. NASA released an image taken by its Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) that showed the site of the spacecraft's impact (September 6 in India and September 7 in the U.S.) and associated debris field, with parts scattered over almost two dozen locations spanning several kilometers.

43. Carl XVI Gustaf, who is on a visit to India, is the King of which country?

- [A] Sweden
- [B] Switzerland
- [C] Turkey
- [D] Scotland

Answer: Sweden

King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden are on a five-day visit to India aimed at strengthening



bilateral ties. The Swedish royal couple, who arrived in India on December 2, 2019 were accorded a ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Apart from Delhi, the royal couple is scheduled to visit Mumbai and Uttarakhand. The ties between India and Sweden have been on an upward trajectory in the last few years. The King is leading a high-level business delegation from his country. The bilateral trade volume was USD 3.37 billion in 2018.

44. Who is the author of the book 'The Vault of Vishnu'?

- [A] Ashwin Sanghi
- [B] Amish Tripathi
- [C] Devdutt Pattanaik
- [D] Sunil Dalal

Answer: Ashwin Sanghi

Bestselling author Ashwin Sanghi will come out with his next book, "The Vault of Vishnu", on January 23, 2020, announced publishing house Westland. The book, which will be the sixth installment of the author's famous mythological 'Bharat series', will be released at the upcoming Jaipur Literature festival (JLF). Setting a fictional timeline of mythological events, Sanghi said, the new book will also be a "combination of history, mythology, culture, philosophy, geology, and science".

45. Who recently became the 1st woman of Indian Navy to fly Dornier surveillance aircraft?

- [A] Shivangi
- [B] Punita Arora
- [C] Shaliza Dhami
- [D] Minty Agarwal

Answer: Shivangi

Sub-lieutenant Shivangi became the first woman pilot for the Indian Navy on December 2. Shivangi was born in the city of Muzaffarpur in Bihar. Shivangi was commissioned into the Indian Navy last year after her initial training. Shivangi joined operational duties at the Kochi naval base. She will be flying the Dornier surveillance aircraft of the Indian Navy.

46. Which Income Tax Act will be amended by the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019?

- [A] Income Tax Act 1922
- [B] Income Tax Act 1962
- [C] Income Tax Act 1961
- [D] Income Tax Act 2018

Answer: Income Tax Act 1961

The Lok Sabha on December 2, 2019 passed a Bill to replace an Ordinance promulgated in September for effecting reduction of corporate tax rates. Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019, will amend the Income Tax Act 1961 and the Finance (No 2) Act 2019.

47. Who has been appointed as the new President of Mauritius?

- [A] Ameenah Gurib-Fakim
- [B] Pravind Jugnauth
- [C] Pritivirajsing Roopun
- [D] Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

Answer: Pritivirajsing Roopun

On December 3, 2019 the former arts and culture minister Pritivirajsing Roopun was elected as president of Mauritius. His predecessor Ameenah Gurib-Fakim resigned in March 2018 after being embroiled in a scandal over her use of a credit card to buy luxury personal items. In Mauritius, the prime minister is



head of the government and holds most political power while the President is head of the state but has no executive role and is considered the guardian of the Constitution.

48. International Day of Persons with Disabilities was celebrated on December 3 under which theme?

- [A] Empowering persons with disabilities
- [B] The Future is Accessible
- [C] Ensuring inclusiveness and equality
- [D] Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all

Answer: The Future is Accessible

International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3) is an international observance promoted by the United Nations since 1992. It has been observed with varying degrees of success around the planet. The observance of the Day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life. It was originally called "International Day of Disabled Persons" until 2007. Each year the day focuses on a different issue. **The theme for 2019 is "The Future is Accessible"**

49. Who took charge as the Commander-in-Chief of Andaman & Nicobar Command?

- [A] Sam Manekshaw
- [B] Podali Shankar Rajeshwar
- [C] Bipin Rawat
- [D] Amarjeet Singh Bedi

Answer: Podali Shankar Rajeshwar

Lt Gen Podali Shankar Rajeshwar took over as the 14th Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command (CINCAN). He is a graduate of Indian Military Academy and was commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery in December 1980. A gunner and aviator, he is an alumnus of the Defence Services Staff College, Army War College and National Defence College in New Delhi and Philippines.

50. What is the name of the typhoon that recently hit Philippines?

- [A] Frank
- [B] Kammuri
- [C] Angela
- [D] Haiyan

Answer: Kammuri

A powerful typhoon is blowing through the central Philippines, damaging homes and heading toward the capital, Manila. Typhoon Kammuri hit the eastern coast overnight and was moving west through Quezon province ripping off roofs, toppling trees and knocking out power. It had maximum sustained winds of 155 km per hour and gusts of up to 190 kmph. Nearly 90,000 residents were evacuating coastal and low-lying areas prone to flash floods and landslides.

51. Which country has recently won the Christopher Martin-Jenkins Spirit of Cricket award for 2019?

- [A] India
- [B] Australia
- [C] New Zealand
- [D] West Indies

Answer: New Zealand

The national cricket team of New Zealand was awarded the Christopher Martin-Jenkins Spirit of Cricket award for the year 2019. England team captain Kane Williamson was presented with the award during



the drawn second Test between his team and England. The New Zealand team has been recognized for their sporting conduct following a dramatic defeat by England in ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2019 final at Lord's in July 2019. However, even though England lifted the trophy on basis of boundary count as runs were tied in both 50-over match and Super Over, the New Zealand team gained praise for their humility after losing the premier tournament. Thus, Kane Williamson-led team's on and off-field display during World Cup final earned them the award.

52. Which state won the Best State Award in cadaveric organ donation?

- [A] Maharashtra
- [B] Rajasthan
- [C] Kerala
- [D] Tamilnadu

Answer: Tamilnadu

For the fifth consecutive year, Tamil Nadu received the Best State Award in cadaveric organ donation from the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Along with this, the State received the best performing hospital award for the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH), and an award for plastic surgeon V. Ramadevi for performing a bilateral hand transplant at the Government Stanley Medical College Hospital.

53. The railway station of which city has been certified as first ever 'Eat Right Station' by FSSAI for food safety and hygiene?

- [A] Mumbai
- [B] Hyderabad
- [C] Amravati
- [D] Bhopal

Answer: Mumbai

The Mumbai Central Terminus of Western Railway has been certified as India's first 'Eat Right Station' with a 4-Star rating awarded by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), as a part of 'Eat Right India' movement launched in 2018. FSSAI is an autonomous body under Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW).

The honour came on basis of compliance of food safety and hygiene, food handling at preparation, promotion of local and seasonal foods, trans-shipment and retail or serving points, food waste management, availability of healthy diet, as well as creating awareness on food safety and a healthy diet.

54. India is to set up Healthcare Innovation Centre with the help of which country?

- [A] Netherlands
- [B] USA
- [C] Japan
- [D] Sweden

Answer: Sweden

India and Sweden has joined hands to set up a healthcare innovation centre to promote research, broadly in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and help scale-up Indian start-ups in the sector. Later, AIIMS, Delhi; AIIMS, Jodhpur, and Swedish Trade Commissioner's Office in New Delhi signed a Memorandum of Intent (MoI) to cement cooperation, to set up a healthcare innovation centre. The signing of MoI marks 10 years of India-Sweden health cooperation.

55. According to Euro Monitor International, which one is the rank of Delhi in the list top 100 destinations of



the world?

- [A] 12
- [B] 13
- [C] 11
- [D] 10

Answer: 11

The National Capital has been witnessing soaring popularity and wellness tourism across the world. According to Euro Monitor International, Delhi currently ranks 11th in the list of tops 100 destination of the world and is to gain 8th rank in 2019. The ranking was released by the organization on December 3, 2019 under the title "Top 100 city destination ranking". The report says that various cultural traditions and enriching history makes Delhi the most favorite places among international tourists. Also, air connectivity and world class airports have helped the city to increase its position in the ranking. India is also gaining attention for its Ayurvedic and Yoga practices.

56. What is the strike range of nuclear-capable Prithvi-II missile whose night trial was recently conducted?

- [A] 250 Kms
- [B] 350 Kms
- [C] 422 Kms
- [D] 450 Kms

Answer: 350 Kms

India has successfully conducted another night trial of its indigenously developed nuclear capable Prithvi-2 missile from a mobile launcher of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Odisha coast. The successful test fires were part of a routine user trial for armed forces and met all parameters. Earlier, the flight test of surface-to-surface missile was carried out barely a 15 days after two back-to-back trials of Prithvi-2 were conducted successfully at night from same base on 20 November.

It is a tactical surface-to-surface short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) with a strike range of 350 kilometres and is capable of carrying 500-1,000 kilograms of warheads. The state-of-the-art missile is powered by liquid propulsion twin engines and uses an advanced inertial guidance system with manoeuvring trajectory to hit its target.

57. India Ranking Society has been established to rank which type of public facilities?

- [A] Hospitals
- [B] Panchayats
- [C] Educational institutes
- [D] Banks

Answer: Educational institutes

On December 2, 2019, the Ministry of Human Resource Development informed Lok Sabha that the "Indian Ranking Society" was approved by the ministry in August 2019. The aim of the society is to develop methodologies and systems to rank higher educational institutions in the country. The proposal was approved in the 127th meeting of the AICTE Executive Council. At present, the educational institutes of the country are ranked according to the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).

58. World Wildlife Conservation Day was observed around the world on which date?

- [A] December 4
- [B] December 5
- [C] December 3
- [D] December 2

**Answer: December 4**

The world's best loved species are being slaughtered by widespread and dangerous criminal networks. On December 4, 2012, the first time that World Wildlife Conservation Day was officially recognized around the world and calls on individuals around the globe to sign its Wildlife Pledge to respect and protect wild animals.

59. Which American Telecommunications Company has partnered with Amazon on 5G in cloud computing expansion?

- [A] T-Mobile
- [B] AT&T
- [C] Sprint Corporation
- [D] Verizon

Answer: Verizon

Amazon.com Inc is extending its cloud to 5G networks in partnership with Verizon Communications Inc, so developers can run latency-sensitive programs on mobile and connected devices. The program, called AWS Wavelength, is one of several new ways that Amazon Web Services is pushing its cloud into new territory. At the company's annual re:Invent conference in Las Vegas, the world's top cloud provider also announced new infrastructure called Local Zones, debuting in Los Angeles, that will help nearby users run speed-intensive applications like gaming.

60. Which country is to organize the 2019 NATO Summit?

- [A] United States
- [B] United Kingdom
- [C] France
- [D] India

Answer: United Kingdom

The NATO 2019 summit will take place in Watford, UK. Some of the world's most important leaders will meet at The Grove Hotel at Chandler's Cross. NATO summits are a periodic opportunity for Heads of State and Heads of Government to meet and evaluate NATO's current strategies, evaluate the alliance's current position and brainstorm strategic direction.

61. Sarai Sewage Treatment Plant was inaugurated in which state?

- [A] West Bengal
- [B] Kerala
- [C] Gujarat
- [D] Uttarakhand

Answer: Uttarakhand

The 14 million litres per day (MLD) Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) Sarai in Haridwar, Uttarakhand started its functioning on 5 December 2019. The plant was completed before its scheduled timeline. It was inaugurated by their Majesties, King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden. The Sarai 14 MLD Sewage Treatment Plant is the first STP that was completed under the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) based Public-Private Partnership Model. The cost of the project was Rs.41.40 crores. The Plant is based on an advanced aerobic biological process which is capable of removing the nutrients during treatment.

62. Recently inaugurated Avantee Mega Food Park is located in which of the following locations?

- [A] Ujjain
- [B] Dewas
- [C] Itarasi



[D] Jabalpur

Answer: Dewas

Union Minister for Food Processing Harsimrat Kaur Badal inaugurated Steel Silo based Avantee Mega Food Park in Dewas, Madhya Pradesh. This is the first food park of central India. It is spread over 51 acres and has been constructed at a cost of about Rs.150 crore. Excess production compels farmers to sell their produces at low rates. Since the mega food park is now present in the region, farmers will be able to earn more through value addition by storing their produces after getting facility of food processing and storage.

63. INDRA is a Joint tri service exercise between India and which country?

[A] France

[B] Russia

[C] USA

[D] China

Answer: Russia

The Joint tri service exercise between India and Russia, INDRA 2019 is to be held between December 10-19, 2019 in Pune and Goa. The event is planned for 10 days between army, naval and air force forces of both the countries. The exercise is to be held in Pune and Goa simultaneously. Fighter aircrafts, company sized mechanized contingents and ships of respective armies are participating in the exercise. The forces are to be trained in tactical operation end drills like handling and neutralization of Improvised Explosive devices, arms smuggling prevention and anti-piracy measures. The exercise will be followed by 72-hour validation exercise.

64. Which education board in India is to introduce AI in schools from the session 2019-20?

[A] ICSE

[B] SSC

[C] CBSE

[D] HBSE

Answer: CBSE

The Indian Government has introduced Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a subject in class IX from the session 2019-20 in the schools affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). Centre has also launched a twelve hours Inspire module in which schools can take up with the students of class VIII. The move aims to enhance the multidisciplinary approach in teaching-learning and to sensitize the new generation.

65. According to a recent report, which country has recorded the highest estimated number of cervical cancer deaths in 2018?

[A] China

[B] Brazil

[C] India

[D] Mexico

Answer: India

A report by Lancet Global Health said India recorded the highest estimated number of cervical cancer deaths in 2018. The report titles Estimates of incidence and mortality of cervical cancer in 2018: a worldwide analysis said that the global cervical cancer cases reported in India and China together contributed 35% of the global cases in 2018. India contributed with 97,000 cases and 60,000 deaths and China recorded over 106,000 cases and 48,000 deaths.



66. International Civil Aviation Day is being observed on which date?

- [A] December 5
- [B] December 6
- [C] December 7
- [D] December 8

Answer: December 7

In 1996 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed that 7 December was to be the International Civil Aviation Day. The day has been celebrated by the International Civil Aviation Organization since 7 December 1994, the 50th anniversary of the signing the Convention on International Civil Aviation. The purpose of the day is to recognize the importance of aviation, especially international air travel, to the social and economic development of the world.

67. Which language has recently been used for the first time in Rajya Sabha?

- [A] Bodo
- [B] Dogri
- [C] Maithili
- [D] Santhali

Answer: Santhali

Santhali language on December 6, 2019 made its debut in Rajya Sabha when a lawmaker from Odisha used it to raise a matter of urgent public importance during the Zero Hour. Sarojni Hembram of the Biju Janata Dal spoke in Santhali, an Austroasiatic-Munda language spoken mostly by tribals in Odisha. She also demanded Bharat Ratna for Raghunath Murmu, who in 1925 created the Ol Chiki script for the Santhali language.

68. Which mobile game has crossed 170 million downloads in just 2 months of its release?

- [A] Diablo Immortal
- [B] Wild Rift
- [C] Call of Duty
- [D] Mario Kart Tour

Answer: Call of Duty

'Call of Duty: Mobile' (CODM) has reaped nearly \$87 million in global player spending and more than 172 million downloads in its first two months. The game picked up nearly 21 million installs in November, compared to almost 146 million in October, revealed analytics firm Sensor Tower recently. As per report, the game has been a hit in the US, where it has seen nearly 28.5 million installs, or 16.6% of all downloads. India came in second with 17.5 million installs, or 10.2%, and Brazil ranked third with 12 million installs, or 7%. Google Play generated the majority of downloads over 89 million, or 52%. The iOS version, meanwhile, accumulated nearly 83 million downloads, or 48%.

69. Which state has recently partnered with WEF to promote electric mobility?

- [A] Andhra Pradesh
- [B] West Bengal
- [C] Punjab
- [D] Telangana

Answer: Punjab

Punjab State government partnered with the World Economic Forum (WEF) to design a Public-Private pilot on shared, clean and electric mobility. The move aims to combat the growing problem of environmental pollution in the state. The state is preparing its own EV policy to support the adoption of



e-vehicles. WEF chose Punjab, as it is well-positioned for shared EV transition. WEF has already housed an existing auto component manufacturing base, besides having skilled labour and being a power surplus.

70. Which city organized the National Florence Nightingale Awards-2019?

- [A] Bengaluru
- [B] Ahmedabad
- [C] Pune
- [D] New Delhi

Answer: New Delhi

The President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind presented the National Florence Nightingale Awards to nursing personnel in New Delhi on 5 December 2019. The event will be held from 5-6 December 2019. The nurses play a vital role in delivering quality and cost-effective healthcare, addressing multiple health challenges and responding to the health needs of individuals, families, and communities. The nurses are a symbol of seva, karuna, and shushrusha.

71. Who has been appointed as a Senior Security Advisor in the Home Ministry?

- [A] C. Sylendra Babu
- [B] K Vijay Kumar
- [C] Walter Devaram
- [D] Sandeep Bharadwaj

Answer: K Vijay Kumar

K Vijay Kumar is appointed as a Senior Security Advisor in the Union Home Ministry. He will be advising the Home Ministry headed by Amit Shah on security-related matters of Union Territory of JK and Left Wing Extremism (LWE). K Vijay Kumar, 67, is a 1975-batch officer of the Indian Police Service (IPS). He served as the Director-General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Director of the National Police Academy in Hyderabad.

72. The 4th India Water Impact Summit was being organized in which city?

- [A] New Delhi
- [B] Mumbai
- [C] Chennai
- [D] Hyderabad

Answer: New Delhi

The 4th India Water Impact Summit was held from 5-7 December 2019 at the Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The Summit was organized by the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga) led by IIT Kanpur. Theme: The theme of the 2019 summit is Valuing Water | Transforming Ganga. The theme focuses on the Financing of High Impact Projects in the water sector.

73. According to recent report, which police station is the best police station of India?

- [A] Ajk Burhanpur Police Station
- [B] Balasinor Police Station
- [C] Aberdeen Police Station
- [D] Bakani Police Station

Answer: Aberdeen Police Station

Aberdeen in Andaman and Nicobar Islands is the best police station in India, followed by Balasinor in Gujarat and Ajk Burhanpur in Madhya Pradesh. The government has prepared a list of best performing



police stations in the country. These rankings were based on a range of parameters such as addressing the number of offences related to property disputes, crime against women and crime against weaker sections at a police station.

74. Which state has launched Anti Depredation Squads in forests to avoid human-wildlife conflicts?

- [A] Arunachal Pradesh
- [B] Nagaland
- [C] Assam
- [D] Sikkim

Answer: Assam

Aiming to control the human-elephant conflicts, the Assam government launched Anti-Depredation Squads of the state forest department which would be stationed at 15 major human-wildlife conflict districts in order to mitigate the problem and to ensure safety of both humans and wildlife. Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched 15 Anti-Depredation Squads during a programme held in state capital Guwahati. The state forest department engaged specially trained 50 frontline staff to handle conflict situations.

75. Which railway station has become the 5500th station of India to get free wifi facility?

- [A] Hazaribagh Railway Station
- [B] Arigada Railway Station
- [C] Mahuamilan Railway Station
- [D] Ranchi Railway Station

Answer: Mahuamilan Railway Station

Jharkhand's Mahuamilan railway station has become the latest among these to get the facility. Mahuamilan station becomes the country's 5500th station to get free wifi facility. Free Wi-Fi service to passengers are being provided under RailWire. The Railways began the service of providing free WiFi at their stations from January 2016 from the Mumbai Central station.

76. Which state has distributed free laptops to Plus Two (+2) meritorious students under the 'Biju Sashaktikaran Yojana'?

- [A] West Bengal
- [B] Maharashtra
- [C] Odisha
- [D] Telangana

Answer:

Odisha government on December 6, 2019 distributed free laptops to Plus Two (+2) meritorious students under the 'Biju Sashaktikaran Yojana' as part of their government's youth policy in Odisha. The state government had started distributing free laptops with the aim to inspire and upgrade the skill of the young people of the state. 90,203 students have been covered under the scheme. The top 15,000 students from different streams were selected on a merit basis at the state level.

77. The provisions of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 are not applicable to tribal areas of which state?

- [A] Nagaland
- [B] Jharkhand
- [C] Meghalaya
- [D] Chhattisgarh

Answer: Meghalaya



Indian Government will introduce the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 in Parliament. The Bill proposes to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955. The Bill seeks to grant citizenship to undocumented non-Muslims (Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Parsi, Jain and Sikh) from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan who came to India on or before December 31, 2014. Purpose of the Bill is to enable acquisition of Indian citizenship by persons who were forced to seek shelter in India due to persecution on grounds of religion. The Bill shall not apply to: Tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura as included in the sixth schedule of the Constitution.

78. Who has been appointed as the new chairman of National Stock Exchange?

- [A] Vipin Anand
- [B] Ashok Chawla
- [C] T C Suseel Kumar
- [D] Girish Chandra Chaturvedi

Answer: Girish Chandra Chaturvedi

Leading stock exchange NSE on December 6, 2019 appointed Public Interest Director Girish Chandra Chaturvedi as its new chairman. The appointment comes following the approval of the markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). The position was vacant since Ashok Chawla resigned as the chairman of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) in January 2019.

79. 5th edition of annual 'MED – Mediterranean Dialogues' is being held in which city?

- [A] Rome
- [B] Paris
- [C] Madrid
- [D] Amsterdam

Answer: Rome

The fifth edition of "MED – Mediterranean Dialogues", the annual high-level conference promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and ISPI (Italian Institute of International Political Studies), is held in Rome from December 5 to December 7, 2019. The core of MED has not changed since the first edition put the spotlights on the positive development in the region. The event aims at drafting a "positive agenda" for the Mediterranean by stimulating debate and promoting new ideas, rethinking traditional approaches and addressing shared challenges at both the regional and the international level. The conference builds upon four pillars: Shared Prosperity, Shared Security, Migration, and Civil Society and Culture.

80. Global Migration Report 2020 is published by which organization?

- [A] UNESCO
- [B] International Organisation for Migration
- [C] League of Nations
- [D] UNICEF

Answer: International Organisation for Migration

India continues to be the largest country of origin of international migrants with a 17.5 million-strong diaspora across the world. It received the highest remittance of \$78.6 billion from Indians living abroad. The International Organisation for Migration said in its 'Global Migration Report 2020' that the number of international migrants in 2019 is now estimated at 270 million and the top destination remains the US, at nearly 51 million.

81. 'The Diwali – Power of One- 2019' awards were organized in which city?

- [A] New Delhi



- [B] London
- [C] Melbourne
- [D] New York

Answer: New York

Four eminent diplomats have been honoured with the 'Diwali – Power of One' award in recognition and of their work, especially at United Nations (UN), for a secure and peaceful world. The Winner were honoured with the 'Power of One' awards during a ceremony at UN Headquarters in New York, United States. The award annually honours those who have made exemplary contributions in upholding the values that the United Nations stands for.

The awards which have now come to be known as 'Oscars of Diplomacy' were established by Diwali Foundation USA, Inc in 2017. The awards seeks to promote a peaceful and consensus-based process to achieve societal good, as befitting high hopes and ideals of humanity enshrined in UN Charter. The co-organisers of this year Diwali Foundation USA's Power of One awardees were- Permanent Missions of Belarus, Georgia and India to UN, along with 32 co-sponsors.

82. Which country has recently recorded the first polio case in 27 years?

- [A] Vietnam
- [B] Singapore
- [C] Malaysia
- [D] Indonesia

Answer: Malaysia

Malaysia has reported the first case of Polio in 27 years, when a three-month-old Malaysian infant boy was diagnosed with polio. The last polio case in Asia-Pacific country occurred in 1992, and in 2000, after which the country was declared polio-free. In this recent case, the child was confirmed to be infected with vaccine-derived poliovirus Type 1 (VDPV1) on 6 December 2019.

83. Who won the Miss Universe 2019 title?

- [A] Tyler Perry
- [B] Vartika Singh
- [C] Zozibini Tunzi
- [D] Catriona Gray

Answer: Zozibini Tunzi

Miss South Africa Zozibini Tunzi was crowned as Miss Universe 2019 at the event held at Tyler Perry Studios in Atlanta, United States. The 26-year-old Zozibini Tunzi was presented the crown by Philippines' Catriona Gray, who was the Miss Universe winner in 2018. India was represented by Vartika Singh in the beauty pageant. Vartika Singh failed to enter the top 10 of the Miss Universe 2018 competition. After Lara Dutta had won the crown in 2000, no Indian contestant has been able to win Miss Universe title in all these 19 years.

84. Who has been recently elected the youngest-ever as PM of Finland?

- [A] Sanna Marin
- [B] Katri Kulmuni
- [C] Li Andersson
- [D] Antti Lindtman

Answer: Sanna Marin

Sanna Marin has been elected as the Prime Minister of Finland. She became the world's youngest Prime Minister ever. She also became the third female government leader of the country. She defeated Antti



Lindtman to take over the government's top post from incumbent Antti Rinne. The new government will be approving her appointment quickly. Marin was a lawmaker since 2015. She was the Social Democratic Party's vice chairwoman. She served as the minister for transport and communications.

85. International Anti-Corruption Day is being observed on December 9, 2019 under which theme?

- [A] The Power of People's pressure
- [B] United Against Corruption
- [C] Fight Corruption
- [D] End of corruption

Answer: United Against Corruption

International Anti-Corruption Day is observed on 9 December. The day aims to raise awareness about corruption and the measures that can be taken to combat corruption. The theme for the year 2019 is United Against Corruption. The theme was set by the UN to support the 2030 Agenda. UN conducts the #UnitedAgainstCorruption. #UnitedAgainstCorruption: The campaign focuses on corruption as it is one of the biggest obstacles to achieve the SDG.

86. Which city in Karnataka recently conducted a Human Library event?

- [A] Bengaluru
- [B] Mysore
- [C] Hubli
- [D] Mangalore

Answer: Mysore

Karnataka conducted a Human Library event in Mysuru on 8 December 2019. Human Library is spread across various metropolitan cities including Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru in India. The aim of the Human Library event is to break long-standing prejudices and stereotypes of the past and create a safe framework for conversation by using a library analogy of lending people rather than books. The event aims to generate greater human cohesion across various social, religious and ethnic diversities.

87. The famous pilgrimage centre Omkareshwar, recently in news, belongs to which Indian state?

- [A] Bihar
- [B] Jammu and Kashmir
- [C] Madhya Pradesh
- [D] Maharashtra

Answer: Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh State government sanctioned a sum of Rs.156 crore for the development of Omkareshwar. It was approved in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Kamal Nath. The State government had earlier sanctioned Rs.300 crore for development of areas in and around Ujjains Mahakaleshwar and a jyotirlinga shrine located in Madhya Pradesh.

Omkareshwar: It is a famous pilgrimage centre. It houses one of the 12 jyotirlinga shrines of Lord Shiva. It is located about 80km from Indore.

88. According to a recent report, which Indian River has become one of the top 10 cleanest rivers of the world?

- [A] Ganga
- [B] Yamuna
- [C] Ravi
- [D] Kaveri

Answer: Ganga



Minister of Jalshakti said that Ganga has become one of 10 cleanest rivers in the world among the major rivers category. The announcement was made by the Jalshakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat at the 4th India Water Impact Summit, 2019 in New Delhi.

The Centre is committed to ensuring the cleanliness and uninterrupted flow of the Ganga. India has only 4% of the world's drinking water while 18% of the world's human and equivalent livestock population. The integrated water management is need of the hour and people's participation is also required to make it successful.

Ganga Aamantran Abhiyan, a massive river rafting expedition, was launched on 10 October 2019. Centre approved the establishment of the Clean Ganga Fund (CGF).

89. The satellite Duchifat 3, which is to be launched from India, belongs to which country

- [A] USA
- [B] Russia
- [C] Netherlands
- [D] Israel

Answer: Israel

Three youngsters, Alon Abramovich, Meitav Assulin and Shmuel Aviv Levi, from an Israeli school, will travel to India to launch a satellite, Duchifat 3. The three 17 to 18 years old are the students of Sha'ar HaNegev High school in Israel's southern region. The satellite was designed and built by the students aboard PSLV C48 from ISRO's Sriharikota launch site. The satellite is to be launched on 11 December.

Duchifat 3: Duchifat 3 is the third satellite made by the Israeli student. The satellite was jointly built by Herzliya Science Center and Sha'ar Hanegev High School students. The satellite was designed to serve children from across the country to observe the Earth. It is an imaging satellite that will be used for ecological research of Earth from space.

90. Sohae Satellite Launching Station is located in which country?

- [A] Japan
- [B] South Korea
- [C] China
- [D] North Korea

Answer: North Korea

North Korea carried out a very important test at its long-range rocket launch site, Sohae Satellite Launching Station, on 8 December. North Korea stated that the result of the latest test will have an important effect on changing the strategic position of North Korea. This latest test comes as N.Korea is ramping up pressure ahead of its 31 December deadline for the US to propose a new offer to kickstart stalled nuclear talks.

Sohae facility: Sohae is located on North Korea's northwest coast. It is ostensibly a facility designed to put satellites into orbit. North Korea had promised to close the Sohae facility. The site was rebuilt after having partially dismantled it at the start of denuclearization talks with the United States 2018.

91. Human Rights Day is celebrated on which date?

- [A] December 7
- [B] December 8
- [C] December 9
- [D] December 10

Answer: December 10

Human Rights Day is celebrated annually across the world on 10 December every year. The date was



chosen to honour the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation, on 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global enunciation of human rights and one of the first major achievements of the new United Nations. The formal establishment of Human Rights Day occurred at the 317th Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on 4 December 1950, when the General Assembly declared resolution 423(V), inviting all member states and any other interested organizations to celebrate the day as they saw fit.

92. What is India's rank in Human Development Index-2019?

- [A] 95
- [B] 117
- [C] 129
- [D] 125

Answer: 129

India climbed one spot to 129 among 189 countries in the 2019 human development index (HDI), according to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In India, 27.1 crore people were lifted out of poverty from 2005-06 to 2015-16, UNDP India resident representative Shoko Noda said. India was ranked 130 last year. The steady progress was due to nearly three decades of rapid development, which saw a dramatic reduction in absolute poverty, along with gains in life expectancy, education, and access to health care. As per the HDI, no other region had experienced such rapid human development progress.

93. Which city is host to the "BlockHash Live 2019" conclave?

- [A] Kochi
- [B] Ahmedabad
- [C] Bengaluru
- [D] Mumbai

Answer: Kochi

Top blockchain experts and thought leaders from around the world will take part in a two-day conclave, 'BlockHash Live 2019' to be held at Kochi from December 12, 2019. The experts will share ideas and lead discussions on collaborative opportunities in leveraging the technology for public good, and positioning Kerala as the country's blockchain hub. As a prelude to the event, KBA has planned BlockHack2019 on December 10 and 11 at Integrated Startup Complex (ISC), Kerala Technology Innovation Zone, Kalamassery.

94. Which city is to organize "Transforming Education Conference for Humanity 2019"?

- [A] Vishakhapatnam
- [B] Chennai
- [C] Amravati
- [D] Hyderabad

Answer: Vishakhapatnam

A three-day TECH (Transforming Education Conference for Humanity) 2019, being organised jointly by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), is being held at Novotel hotel in Vishakhapatnam from December 10. As a prelude to TECH 2019, the organisers brought together policy makers on digital learning, representatives from educational technology companies and other stakeholders at a Policy Forum on Digital Learning.

95. Who became the first Indian to play 150 Ranji matches?



- [A] Sairaj Bahutule
- [B] Amol Muzumdar
- [C] Wasim Jaffer
- [D] Devendra Bundela

Answer: Wasim Jaffer

Veteran opener Wasim Jaffer on December 9, 2019 became the first player in Indian cricket to feature in 150 Ranji matches. The 41-year-old from Maharashtra, who has been an important part of the title-winning Vidarbha team in the last two years, achieved the rare distinction during their Group A opener against Andhra Pradesh. The former India opener is now just 853 runs away from completing 20,000 runs in first class cricket. Jaffer is followed by Madhya Pradesh batsman Devendra Bundela (145 matches) and Amol Muzumdar (136 matches), who have played for Mumbai and Assam.

96. Who is to get the 'Gangadhar National Award' 2019?

- [A] Ashok Chakradhar
- [B] Suryakumar Pandey
- [C] Phoolchand Gupta
- [D] Viswanath Prasad Tiwari

Answer: Viswanath Prasad Tiwari

Eminent Hindi poet Viswanath Prasad Tiwari would be honoured with the prestigious 'Gangadhar National Award' during the 53rd Foundation Day celebrations of the Sambalpur University. The award, carrying a cash prize of Rs 50,000, a shawl and citation, would be presented to Tiwari in January. Instituted in memory of Odisha's renowned bard Gangadhar Meher, the award is conferred on a poet of national repute every year since 1991.

97. Which city organized the FICCI ARISE Conference 2019?

- [A] Gurugram
- [B] Sonapat
- [C] New Delhi
- [D] Noida

Answer: New Delhi

FICCI ARISE Conference 2019 in New Delhi on December 9-10, 2019 with theme: 'Future Ready Learners and Schools'. Inaugurating the FICCI ARISE Conference on School Education, M. Venkaiah Naidu called for value-based education and said that education is not just for employment but also for empowerment and enlightenment of individuals and the society. He stressed upon inculcating values such as patience, honesty, respect, tolerance and empathy in the students.

98. Who is the famous 'Sesame Street' puppeteer that recently passed away?

- [A] Caroll Spinney
- [B] Kevin Clash
- [C] Matt Vogel
- [D] Jerry Nelson

Answer: Caroll Spinney

Caroll Spinney, the puppeteer who brought beloved "Sesame Street" characters Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch to life, died. Spinney passed away at his Connecticut home after battling dystonia, a common movement disorder. He was 85. The legendary puppeteer was known for his "kind and loving view of the world," giving two of the show's most iconic characters the joyous (and grouchy) personalities that viewers around the world adored.



99. Which country recently abolished rules requiring restaurants to provide separate entrances for women?

- [A] UAE
- [B] North Korea
- [C] China
- [D] Saudi Arabia

Answer: Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has abolished its age-old rule that mandated separate entrances and seating areas for men and women. The gulf nation's Municipal and Rural Affairs Ministry lifted the ban through a twitter announcement. Earlier, all restaurants in Saudi Arabia were required to have one entrance for women and families and another entrance for men dining on their own. Unrelated men and women were barred for decades from mixing in public places. This was decreed by the strict social rules put in place decades ago by the hardline clerics.

100. A MoU has been signed between NSIC and Aramco for the development of MSME Ecosystem in India in Oil & Gas Sector. Aramco belongs to which country?

- [A] UAE
- [B] Saudi Arab
- [C] Russia
- [D] Israel

Answer: Saudi Arab

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed between National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) and Saudi Aramco (Asia) for the development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Ecosystem in India in Oil & Gas Sector. The MoU will pave a way for accredited Indian MSMEs to carve out a space as vendors in Global space.

Saudi Aramco: It is a Saudi Arabian national petroleum and natural gas company based in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. It is world's largest Oil & Gas Company and is one of the largest companies in world by revenue.

101. International Mountain Day is observed on which date?

- [A] December 11
- [B] December 8
- [C] December 9
- [D] December 10

Answer: December 11

International Mountain Day is observed on 11 December. The day aims to raise awareness about conserving the mountains. A report says that 15% of the world's population lives in the mountains. It is necessary to conserve the mountains. Mountain conservation is a crucial factor for sustainable development Goal 15 (SDG-15). The theme of the 2019 International Mountain Day is Mountains Matter for Youth.

102. How many 'Must See Monuments' have been identified by Archaeological Survey of India?

- [A] 101
- [B] 138
- [C] 156
- [D] 142

Answer: 138

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has identified 138 monuments as 'Must See Monuments'. This



information has been made available on 'Must See' portal of ASI. There are 38 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India, which includes 30 cultural sites, 7 natural sites and 1 mixed-criteria site. India has the 6th largest number of sites in the world. Out of 38, the 22 cultural sites including monuments, buildings and caves are under the protection of ASI. Therefore, the 'Must See' list features outstanding Indian monuments and archaeological sites, under the protection of ASI, including those that feature on World Heritage List of UNESCO.

103. National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) has selected which Bollywood actor as its brand ambassador?

- [A] Akshay Kumar
- [B] Salman Khan
- [C] Suniel Shetty
- [D] Imran Hasmi

Answer: Suniel Shetty

National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), India's anti-doping body has selected Bollywood actor Suniel Shetty as its brand ambassador. NADA hopes that his celebrity status would help its efforts to clean up sports in the country from the menace.

104. Which rank has been achieved by India in the Climate Change Performance Index?

- [A] 9
- [B] 7
- [C] 8
- [D] 12

Answer: 9

India has ranked 9th in the high category of 2019 Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) presented on 10 December at the COP25 climate summit in Madrid, Spain. This is the first time India has ranked among the top 10 among the list. The current levels of per capita emissions and energy used in India are still comparatively low for the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and energy use categories. The report suggest the Indian government to develop a roadmap for the phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies that would consequently reduce the country's high dependence on coal.

105. 'Iron Union 12', a joint military exercise of USA with which other country?

- [A] India
- [B] China
- [C] Iran
- [D] UAE

Answer: UAE

'Iron Union 12', a joint military exercise between ground forces of United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United States, commenced on 10 December 2019 in presence of UAE Commander of Land Forces Major General Saleh Mohamed Saleh Al Amiri and Commander of US Army Central (USARCENT) Lieutenant General Terry Ferrell. It is aimed at enhancing combat efficiency and tactical expertise between two countries.

106. The first fully electronic flight in the world recently took off from which country?

- [A] USA
- [B] Russia
- [C] Canada
- [D] Netherlands

Answer: Canada



The first fully electronic flight in the world completed its test flight successfully on December 10, 2019. The flight is to operate from Vancouver, Canada to the nearby islands. The zero emission completely electronic flight proved that all-electric commercial aviation is possible. The electrical aircraft designed was a 6-seater seaplane that was retrofitted with an electric motor. The first flight lasted for 15 minutes. The electrical flight was designed by the company Harbor Air. India also promotes and incentivizes the use of electric vehicles.

107. Which country has topped the medal tally of 13th South Asian Games-2019?

- [A] China
- [B] Nepal
- [C] India
- [D] Japan

Answer: India

South Asian Games 2019 concluded on 10 December, 2019 in Nepal, with India finishing on top with a best-ever medal haul of 312 medals comprising of 174 gold, 93 silver and 45 bronze. Host Nepal remained second and Sri Lanka got third place in the regional multi-sporting. The year 2019 marks the 13th edition of South Asian Games.

India finished on top, continuing its undisputed domination in regional multi-sporting event by finishing on top for the 13th time-in-a-row. India has topped the medal tally of every South Asian Games since its establishment in 1984.

108. Which country is to be the partner country of India at the BioAsia-2020 conference?

- [A] Israel
- [B] Russia
- [C] Nepal
- [D] Switzerland

Answer: Switzerland

The BioAsia 2020 is scheduled to be held in Hyderabad in between February 17 and 19, 2020. On December 10, 2019, the Ministry of Industries and Commerce and IT informed that Switzerland will serve as India's partner at the conference.

India is Switzerland's 8th largest trading partner. The trade between the countries amount to 19.7 billion USD. Also, India is one of the eight non-EU countries with which Switzerland intends to deepen its scientific relations.

109. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has recently added how many species to List of Threatened Species?

- [A] 840
- [B] 640
- [C] 1240
- [D] 1840

Answer: 1840

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) added about 1,840 new species to its updated "Red List of Threatened Species", a catalogue of plants and animals that risk extinction. The list now contains over 30,000 species under threat of disappearing. The group released its Red List update in the middle of COP25 climate talks in Madrid, Spain. The year 2020 will see two global IUCN gatherings, first in June in Marseille, France and another in Kunming, China, in October.

110. Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has launched a pilot project for using



FASTags for parking purposes in which city?

- [A] Jaipur
- [B] Hyderabad
- [C] Chennai
- [D] New Delhi

Answer: Hyderabad

To ensure the benefits of FASTag beyond tolling, the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has launched a pilot project for using FASTags for parking purposes at Hyderabad Airport. Conceptualised as FASTag 2.0, the tag would cover parking payments, fuel payments, etc. After the success of project in Hyderabad, it will be launched at Delhi airport.

111. Gollapudi Maruti Rao, who recently died, was a famous personality of which field?

- [A] Actor
- [B] Musician
- [C] Pianist
- [D] Hockey Player

Answer: Actor

Renowned Telugu actor and writer Gollapudi Maruti Rao, who enthralled people with his writings and acting for several decades, passed away on December 12, 2019. He was 80. Rao, who acted in around 250 films in about four decades, passed away in Chennai following a cardiac arrest, his family members told reporters.

112. How many deemed Sanskrit universities will be converted into Central universities under Central Sanskrit Universities Bill?

- [A] 2
- [B] 3
- [C] 4
- [D] 5

Answer: 3

The Lok Sabha passed the Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019. The Bill seeks to upgrade three deemed Sanskrit universities into Central universities. They are: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Bhopal, Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi and Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth Tirupati.

113. Which company has launched First Audio Service 'Suno' of India?

- [A] Boss
- [B] Audible
- [C] Sony
- [D] Samsung

Answer: Audible

Audible, a part of e-commerce giant Amazon, on December 12 launched an India-first audio service 'Suno'. Audible Suno – which will be available via a separate Android app – provides free and advertising-free access to hundreds of hours of original audio entertainment in Hindi and English. Suno includes more than 60 original and exclusive audio series available at launch.

114. Parivara, Talwara and Siddi are the Scheduled Tribes of which Indian state?

- [A] Kerala
- [B] Karnataka



[C] Tamil Nadu

[D] Bihar

Answer: Karnataka

Rajya Sabha passed the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019 on 12 December 2019 by voice vote. The bill seeks to amend Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 to include three tribes namely– Parivara, Talwara and Siddi community of Dharwad and Belagavi districts, in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka. The bill was introduced by Tribal Affairs Minister of State Renuka Singh Saruta in Upper House.

115. Which country has recently left 2050 Climate Neutrality Agreement of European Union?

[A] Ethiopia

[B] Sudan

[C] Poland

[D] Greece

Answer: Poland

On December 13, 2019, Poland left 2050 Climate Neutrality Agreement of European Union as the Union demanded for more funds to support nuclear power and for economic transition. Poland, whose 80% of energy needs are relied on coal opted out of Climate Neutrality 2050 plan. The country requested to extend the plan execution deadline to 2070 availing longer period to cut emissions according to the plan. But net players like Netherlands refused to agree to the terms that led Poland to leave the plan.

116. Who has topped the Forbes' 2019 edition of 100 World's Most Powerful Women?

[A] Nancy Pelosi

[B] Ursula von der Leyen

[C] Angela Merkel

[D] Christine Lagarde

Answer: Angela Merkel

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has topped the Forbes' 2019 edition of 100 World's Most Powerful Women for the ninth consecutive year. She was joined in top spots by fellow prominent female political leaders. The 65-year-old German leader has made 14 appearances in list's 16-year history of Forbes magazine which releases a wide-ranging list intended to celebrate 100 most influential females. She was praised for standing up to US President Donald Trump and for allowing over a million Syrian refugees into Germany.

117. Who has been named as the 2019 Person of the Year by TIME magazine?

[A] Virat Kohli

[B] Bob Iger

[C] Greta Thunberg

[D] LeBron James

Answer: Greta Thunberg

The news magazine Time has named the teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg in 2019 Person of the Year. She was named as she inspired millions of people in 150 countries to protest climate change. She has also delivered blunt and powerful speeches to leaders urging them to address the issue. Others honoured by TIME for the year 2019: Disney CEO Bob Iger was named the Business Person of the Year. US Women's Soccer Team has been named as the Athlete of the Year. The US Public Servants was named as the Guardians of the Year Singer Lizzo has been named as the Entertainer of the Year.

118. The National Energy Conservation Day is observed on which date?



- [A] December 12
- [B] December 13
- [C] December 14
- [D] December 15

Answer: December 14

The National Energy Conservation Day is celebrated every year on 14 December. The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under Union Ministry of Power spearheads the celebrations of the day every year since 1991. BEE is also observing National Energy Conservation Week from 9-14 December 2019, in order to drive mass awareness about importance of energy efficiency and conservation.

119. The Narcotics Control Bureau is to destroy which drug plantation using drones in India?

- [A] Opium poppy
- [B] Peyote
- [C] Salvia
- [D] Marijuana

Answer: Marijuana

The Ministry of Home Affairs along with the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) will investigate illegal plantations of marijuana plantations and destroy them deploying drones before the plants are harvested. The ministry is to use the help of satellites to detect the crops.

India is currently on the steps of modus operandi adopted by the US to deal with marijuana plantations. US uses airplanes and drones to detect illegal plantations of marijuana. In 2018, India seized 414 tons of marijuana plants in more than 24,000 cases filed. According to NCB, the figure is expected to rise up.

120. Which Indian city became the first city to have an online waste exchange for municipal solid waste?

- [A] Pune
- [B] Indore
- [C] New Delhi
- [D] Chennai

Answer: Chennai

Chennai has become the first city to have an online waste exchange for municipal solid waste. Residents who want to sell their waste online will be able to contact 2,600 scrap dealers and other agencies across the city. The Madras Waste Exchange, which is both a web portal and an application, has been conceptualized by the Smart City Mission, with support from the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.