



CURRENT AFFAIRS

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National

1. The Textiles Minister of India, Smriti Irani, inaugurated the 8th India International Silk Fair on the Virtual Portal. This fair is the biggest silk fair of India. The fair is being held under one roof of the virtual platform of Indian Silk Export Promotion Council. The fair is a five days long event. More than 200 overseas buyers have already registered. Further, around 200 overseas representatives in India will interact with more than 100 renowned and big Indian companies who are engaged in manufacturing and trading the silk and silk blended products.

2. The two-auto industry executives have recently highlighted that the Maruti Suzuki India Ltd will gain most from a government proposal to levy a green tax on petrol and diesel vehicles. Maruti is India's top carmaker and has the largest portfolio of compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles among all the domestic automakers. The Suzuki Motor Corp. unit has also planned to push its CNG vehicle sales to 200,000 units or more a year by 2022. In the financial year 2020, Maruti sold a record 106,443 CNG vehicles. The sales of such vehicles have grown with the average of 15.5% annually.

3. The Union Education Minister, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' addressed the ASEAN India Hackathon. Shri Pokhriyal highlighted that, The ASEAN-INDIA Hackathon was inaugurated to further strengthen the India and ASEAN ties. The minister highlighted that the ASEAN-India hackathon will provide a unique opportunity to India and ASEAN countries to solve their common identified challenges. The common challenges of the countries are categorized under two themes namely the "Blue Economy" and "Education".

4. The Fifteenth Finance Commission of India have submitted its final report for a five-year duration. The report has been submitted with the objective of transforming the financial governance of India's municipalities. The interim report for Financial Year 2020-21 was tabled in Parliament along with Budget 2020-21. The final report for Financial Year 2021-22 to Financial Year 2025-26 was tabled along with the Budget 2021-22.

5. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi applauded a girl from Odisha named Bhagyashree in his Mann Ki Baat programme. The girl has mastered the art of creating Pattachitra on various themes using the soft stones. The girl boosted her skill during the lockdowns and created pattachitra art works on unused bottles, electric bulbs and various glass and plastic materials. Pattachitra or Patachitra term generally used for the traditional, cloth-based scroll painting. The art form is based in the states of Odisha and West Bengal.

6. The Vice President of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu, have inaugurated the Aadi Mahotsav at Dilli Haat in New Delhi. The festival is being organised at Dilli Haat, INA. It comprises of the display and sale of tribal art & craft, medicine, cuisine and folk performances. The festival will be participated by some thousand tribal artisans, artists and chefs from across the 20 States of the country. The tribal communities will provide a glimpse of their rich traditional culture. The festival is being organised under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

7. The Chief Minister of Kerala, Pinarayi Vijayan, inaugurated the "Kerala Looks Ahead" on February 1, 2021. It is a three-day virtual global conclave. It seeks to lay down the roadmap for long-term development in Kerala. The roadmap will be laid down by factoring in perspectives from top economists, administrators, industry leaders and planners. The inaugural session was addressed by industry stalwarts Ratan Tata, Kumar Mangalam Birla, Azim Premji and Anand Mahindra along with the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. Nobel winner and economist Joseph Stiglitz and Soumya Swaminathan, who is Chief Scientist with World Health Organisation, will also address the inaugural session.

8. The Chief Minister of Punjab, Captain Amarinder Singh, has launched the 'Har Ghar Pani, Har Ghar Safai' mission virtually. This mission is the part of the government's campaign to complete the goal of 100 per cent potable piped water supply in all rural households by March 2022. The government has spent an average of ₹ 920 crore annually on water supply and sanitation schemes. As per the data, a total of Rs.

1450 crore had been spent on rural sanitation and rural drinking water supply since March 2017.

9. The Central government has announced that, it will soon set up a new Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM) in Chennai. This Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management will be set in a bid to address the knowledge gaps and specific research needs for the conservation and management of wetlands. The Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM) will be set up by the central government in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. This conservation centre would be a part of the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management. This national centre is an institution under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

10. Recently, the Villupuram district administration in Tamil Nadu has issued the first declaration under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The declaration was issued in a bid to declare Kaliveli wetlands as a bird sanctuary. This decision is highly appreciated by the Forest Department officials and conservationists since it will boost their efforts to protect the wetland which is home for diverse flora and fauna. The first declaration was issued under the Section 18 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

11. The Aero India 2021 show will start from February 3, 2021 in Bengaluru. The show will conclude on February 5, 2021. During the Aero show, a deal will be Signed worth Rs 48,000 crore to manufacture the 83 indigenous Teja Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-73. Another key highlight of the Aero India Show will be India's defence diplomacy. The order for 83 LCA's will be completed by 2030. A deal will be signed with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) to manufacture the Teja Light Combat Aircraft.

12. The commerce ministry is organising the Udyog Manthan. Under the Udyog Manthan, a series of webinars are being conducted. The Webinar is focusing on about 45 sectors including the pharma sector and electronics sector. The webinar under the Udyog Manthan is being organised with the focus on quality and productivity in all the major manufacturing sectors

and services sector. The Udyog Manthan in upcoming webinar will cover various sectors such as pharma, closed circuit camera, medical devices, electronics system design & manufacturing. It will also focus on new & renewable energy, aerospace, robotics and defence.

13. The Home Minister have recently presented the crime data in Parliament in the ongoing Budget Session. The ministry of Home Affairs informed in the Parliament that increasing use of the internet across the country has increased the instances of the cybercrime. It also highlighted that most of the cybercrime cases were of sexual exploitation and spread of hatred. Ministry further writes that, these crimes took place with the motives of fraud, personal revenge, piracy, sexual exploitation, inciting hate and stealing information.

14. Recently, rules have been amended by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to put cap on trans fatty acids (TFAs) in the food products. This decision was taken one week after it amended the norms for oils and fats. Under the new regulations, in the food products which comprises of the edible oils and fats as an ingredient the total amount of the industrial trans fats should not exceed 2% of the total oils or fats present in the product. This regulation will be applicable from January 1, 2022.

15. The New Development Bank (NDB) has announced to invest \$100 million into the NIIF Fund of Funds (FoF). With the NDB's investment of \$100 million, the NIIF FoF has now secured \$800 million in commitments. NDB has joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Government of India (GoI) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) as an investor in the NIIF FoF. The investment by the NDB is the first equity investment by it into India. It is also the first-ever investment into a Fund of Funds by the NDB.

16. Recently, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has identified 50 religious places to carry the interventions in order to ensure zero tolerance towards child labour. Shri Ram Janmabhoomi and Taj Mahal have also been included in the list of 50

religious places. The NCPCR will take up the intervention to eliminate the child labour at these 50 identified religious places. The interventions will be undertaken in a collaborative manner. NCPCR stated that multi-stakeholders including the anti-human trafficking unit, representatives from NGOs/CSOs, child welfare police officers and religious trust & groups shall work in collaboration to undertake the interventions.

17. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) recently released its report titled "Democracy in sickness and in health?" and also published the Democracy Index 2020. The Democracy Index report 2020 covers the 167 countries. It has classified the economies in categories such as flawed democracies, full democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes. The report highlights that, 23 countries are full democracies, 52 are flawed democracies, 35 countries are hybrid regimes while 57 countries are authoritarian regimes out of total 167 countries.

18. The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change has published its new research in Lancet Planetary Health Journal recently. The report has highlighted the benefits of adoption of the Paris Agreement to health. It highlights that the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are in consistent with the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement aims to limit the warming to below 2°C. The report also focuses on the crucial and overlooked incentive to tackle the climate change. The study was carried in countries that represent 50 per cent of the world's population namely, China, Germany, Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Nigeria, United Kingdom and United States. These countries also account for 70 per cent of the world's emissions.

19. The government has shared data on Lok Sabha on February 11, 2021 that India has suffered a huge crop loss on 18.176 million hectares of land. The crop loss on the 18.176 million hectares land amounts to roughly 8.5 per cent of the total gross cropped area. The crop loss occurred due to floods in the year 2017 to 2019. In 2018, 2.515 million hectares of land were affected while in the year 2017, 4.973 million hectares of cropped area were lost. Extreme floods were also witnessed in

Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. The floods were caused due to excess or large excess rainfall in the states.

20. The World Bank recently published its report titled "Traffic Crash Injuries and Disabilities: The Burden on Indian Society". This report was released by Union transport minister, Nitin Gadkari, on February 13, 2021. The report mentions the disproportionate impact of a road crash on poor households. It also throws light on the links between poverty, road crashes, inequality and vulnerable road users across India.

21. The Institute of International Finance (IIF) has reported that, the world has never been more indebted before and the debt will further rise in the year 2021 with more borrowing ahead amid the covid-19 led economic crisis. As per the IIF, governments, companies and households have raised \$24 trillion in 2020 in order to offset the economic toll. This has resulted into the all-time high increase in the global debt. This will increase by another \$10 trillion in the year 2021 since the political and social pressures push for more spending. This in turn will increase the debt load past \$92 trillion with the end of 2021.

22. The United Nations World Food Programmes (WFP) has released its report titled "The State of School Feeding Worldwide on February 24, 2021. As per the report, the COVID-19 pandemic risks have reversed the efforts that were made worldwide in a decade to provide nutritious food to the most vulnerable children across the globe. The report highlights that, one in two school children that would count as around 388 million children worldwide received the school meals when the pandemic was at its peak. This accounts for the highest number in history.

23. The state of Madhya Pradesh has launched a Police Museum at the police headquarters in Bhind, Madhya Pradesh. It is a unique museum themed on the dacoits to showcase their stories. The museum contains several unique items that were used by dacoits namely Phoolan Devi and Nirbhay Gujjar. It also showcases the stills from the making of Bollywood movie 'Chambal ke

Daaku'. Several other items related to the Chambal dacoits will come up at the police museum. The museum has not been built to praise and pay respect to the dacoits. But the museum will display their crimes. The museum will also highlight the sacrifices made by police to prevent any crime of the Chambal Dacoits.

24. The Karnataka Government recently notified that, the Vijayanagara has become the 31st district of Karnataka officially. The district has its headquarter at Hosapete. Vijayanagara is located in Hyderabad-Karnataka region. The district also be the home to UNESCO World Heritage sites namely the Hampi and Virupaksha Temple. Vijayanagara district has been named after the capital of the Vijayanagar Empire. The district was established out of the ore-rich Ballari district in accordance with the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964. The district will comprise of six taluks namely the Hosapete, kotturu, Kudligi, Hagaribommanahalli, Harapanahalli and Hoovina Hadagali.

25. The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and a United Kingdom based space agency have joined hands to work on a collaborative project on the impact-based flood forecasting. The project is supported by the national space innovation programme (NSIP). The NSIP programme is undertaken by HR Wallingford in association with the Oxford University, D-orbit and Sayers & Partners (SPL). This move will help in predicting the fluvial flood risks with respect to the expected loss to life, infrastructure disruption, injuries that occurs to the people, building collapse, and other economic damage. This move was taken by the administration because currently there is any effective impact-based flood forecasting mechanism in the UT. Further, the international collaboration to set up the system is specific because it will help in analysing the past flood events.

26. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has announced an increase in the fares of air travel on February 11, 2021. The fare has been increased up to Rs 5,600. The government highlighted that the fare hike was necessitated because of the opening of the aviation market. While, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)

said that the fare hike was a routine change. However, the aviation experts are saying the price has been increased due to increase in prices of fuel.

27. The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) recently issued orders to make FASTag compulsory at all toll plazas in effect from February 15, 2021 all across India. This decision was taken to promote fee payment using the digital mode, to reduce the waiting time and fuel consumption. It would also provide a seamless passage of vehicles through the fee plazas. In accordance with the NH Fee Rules 2008, If any vehicle which is not fitted with FASTag or vehicle which do not have a valid, functional 'FASTag' will enter into the 'FASTag lane' of the fee plaza will have to pay fee equal to two times the fee which is applicable in that category. As per the order, there would be no more extension of deadline.

28. The Health and Family Welfare Department of Odisha has announced recently to established a COVID-19 Warrior Memorial in Bhubaneswar. The memorial will be set to recognize and honour the sacrifice and services provided by the COVID-19 warriors. The press release of state Health and Family Welfare Department highlights that the memorial will be set in the Biju Patnaik Park in Bhubaneswar. This memorial will be inaugurated August 15, 2021 as the Odisha Government has planned. The works department of the Odisha Government have been tasked with the architect to finalise the structure and design of the memorial.

29. The Tata Electronics has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Tamil Nadu government in order to establish a facility to manufacture the mobile components. The project by the Tata Electronics will cost Rs 4684 crores. It will be established in Krishnagiri to manufacture the mechanical enclosures of mobile phones. The project can help in creating jobs for 18,250 people. Tamil Nadu has also signed a MoU with the Grasim Industries in order to establish a paint manufacturing unit at Cheyyar. It will be established with an investment of Rs 750 crore.

30. ACC Ready Mix Concrete has recently introduced its new low carbon range of concrete called ECOPact. It is a "Green Concrete" that has been introduced for a high-performing, sustainable and circular construction. ECOPact was launched in Mumbai and Hyderabad in the first phase. It will be rolled out across the country in a phased manner with in a few weeks. The ECOPact was rolled out with the objectives of enhancing the transition towards low-carbon and circular construction. The innovative manufacturing process of the ECOPact will reduce the CO2 emissions by up to 100 percent. It will also enhance the sustainable products offerings in the construction industry.

31. The Divya Coronil medicine by Patanjali has received the certification from AYUSH Ministry in accordance with the WHO certification norms. Coronil has now been certified as a drug which can be used as supporting measure to fight Covid-19 and as an immunity-booster. The drug has received the Certificate of Pharmaceutical Product (CoPP) from the Ayush section of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation. Patanjali has also released a booklet with nine peer-reviewed papers that certifies the efficacy of Coronil.

32. The Union Health Minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan, has launched the Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0. The mission will be conducted in two rounds. The first round will start from February 22, 2021 while the second phase will start from March 22, 2021. It will run across 250 districts or urban areas across the 29 States or Union Territories. Apart from that, the Minister also launched the IMI 3.0 portal and released Operational Guidelines for it.

33. The Uttarakhand government has put forward an ordinance providing the co-ownership rights to women in the ancestral property of their husband. The ordinance was put forward in the backdrop of large-scale migration of men from hill areas of the state to look for livelihood. Uttarakhand has become the first state that provides co-ownership rights to women in ancestral property of their women.

34. The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has prepared a report on two-way mass migration of the blue earthworms in the state of Meghalaya. The blue earthworms, measuring up to 1.6 feet in length, migrate up and down to 300 metres in the East Khasi Hills of the state. Uphill migration of the earthworms starts in April-May. With the onset of monsoon, they emerge from the rivers and streams. Downhill migration occurs during September-October when the vegetation starts to dry and temperature & humidity drop. The locals in the state beat them when they observe these earthworms because of they play a major role in enhancing the fertility of soil.

35. The Ministry of AYUSH (MoA) has formulated the Common Yoga Protocol (CYP) training programme recently. The programme was initiated in the backdrop of the ministry's effort to enhance the acceptance and adoption of the practice of Yoga in India as well as abroad. The training programme is the soul of the upcoming international Yoga Day observance. The protocol facilitates the harmony in the millions of people who join the observation of the International Day of Yoga (IDY).

36. The "International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation" was observed on 6 February. This year the day was observed under the theme:- "No Time for Global Inaction, Unite, Fund, and Act to End Female Genital Mutilation." The day is observed every year to spread the awareness and put more efforts to eradicate the Female Genital Mutilation. The day was first introduced in the year 2003 by the United Nations. This day is observed to amplify the ways and attempts taken to stop the practice of Genital Mutilation.

37. The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, will inaugurate the World Sustainable Development Summit 2021 on 10th of February through video conferencing. The World sustainable development summit will be organised under the theme- 'Redefining Our Common Future: Safe and Secure Environment for All'. The year will mark the 20th edition of summit. The summit will be organised with the aim to bring together a wide number of governments, academicians, business leaders, climate scientists,

civil society and youth to fight against climate change.

38. The "World Pulses Day" is observed on February 10 every year since 2018. This day is dedicated to the importance of pulses. In the year 2021, the day was celebrated under the theme:- "Nutritious Seeds for a Sustainable Future." On this occasion, big event was held virtually in New York. The event was held with main focus on raising the awareness and recognizing the contribution of pulses in maintaining the sustainable food systems and healthy diets.

39. The world celebrates the International Day of Women and Girls in Science every year on the 11th day of February. The year 2021 marked the 6th International Day of Women and Girls in Science. The day was celebrated under the theme: "Women Scientists at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19". The event was held at the United Nations Headquarters through video conferencing. The event marked the role of women who were at the frontline in the fight against COVID-19.

40. The World Radio Day (WRD) is being celebrated across the world on February 13, 2021. This year, the marks the 10th anniversary of the proclamation of the world radio day and more than 110 years of radio. The day will be observed under the theme, "New World, New Radio". The theme highlights the services provided by the radio amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The day was proclaimed by the members of UNESCO in 2011. The day was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in the year 2012 as an International Day.

41. The Governor of West Bengal, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, inaugurated the 11th edition of 'Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav' on February 14, 2021. The event was inaugurated in the presence of Minister of State (I/C) for Culture and Tourism, Shri Prahlad Singh Patel. It was inaugurated at Cooch Behar Palace in West Bengal. Ten editions of the festival have successfully been organised ever since the festival was started in November, 2015. These 10 editions were organised in Delhi, Bengaluru, Varanasi, Tawang, Karnataka, Gujarat, Tehri and Madhya Pradesh.

42. The World Day of Social Justice is observed on February 20 every year. The day is dedicated to advantages and issues which can be tackled by Social Justice. In the year 2021, the day was celebrated under theme:- – "A call for social justice in the Digital Economy." The day is observed to show its fight for the greater good which can be achieved by fighting the unemployment, poverty, by upholding the human rights and by promoting Gender Equality. It also talks about the equal opportunities that is needed in all aspects.

43. The first geothermal power project of India will be established at Puga village of eastern Ladakh. This decision was taken because, Puga village was identified as the hotspot of geothermal energy by the scientists. The project will be completed in four phases. A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish and implement the first phase was signed on 6th February, 2021 between ONGC Energy; LAHDC, Leh and the Power Department of UT Ladakh

44. An earthquake of magnitude 6.3 hit Tajikistan on February 12, 2020. The tremors were felt in Delhi-NCR, Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh. The seismology department at first gave the epicentre as Amritsar because of software error later confirmed epicentre as Tajikistan. Shaking of the surface of the Earth because of a sudden release of energy in the lithosphere of earth is called as earthquake. It results into the formation of seismic waves. When the epicentre of the earthquakes is on surface, it results into shaking and displacing the ground. If the epicentre is located offshore, it results into the displacement of the seabed causing a tsunami.

45. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) will hold its 3rd ministerial meeting on February 18, 2021. The meeting will be held to exchange their views on global and regional issues. It will focus on the practical areas of cooperation in order to maintain an open, free and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. The 3rd ministerial meeting of the Quad members namely, India-Australia-Japan-US will involve the participation of their foreign ministers. They all will be presenting different agendas during the meeting.

46. Kerala, which is home to India's biggest art event called Kochi-Muziris Biennale, is now aspiring to become a museum hub in the country. In that context, Dr Venu V who is the Additional Chief Secretary, Kerala and manage the departments of Archaeology stated that the old notion with respect to the museums is needed to change. There is a need that the museums should be able to converse with the visitors specially with the youngsters. In order to comply with the objectives, the Kerala government has launched an initiative which aims to establish and promote mini museums in state.

47. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually lay the foundation stone of the Maharaja Suheldev Memorial on February 16, 2021. Apart from that, the foundation stone for the development work of Chittaura Lake in Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh will also be laid down. Chief Minister of UP Yogi Adityanath and Governor Anandiben Patel will also be attending the virtual event. The project comprises of the installation of the equestrian statue of Maharaja Suheldev and development of various tourist amenities including a guest house, cafeteria, and the children's park.

48. The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, has announced to rename the Hoshangabad city of MP as Narmadapuram. This announcement was made by him while he was addressing the Narmada Jayanti programme that was held in Hoshangabad. He stated that, the proposal to change the name will be sent to the centre. The decision was taken after asking the gathering on the banks of Narmada.

49. Mumbai will start the first undersea tunnel of India in 2023 which is being constructed as part of Coastal Road project of Mumbai. Two tunnels will be built under the Mumbai Coastal Road Project. The tunnel will have the length of 2.07 km out of which 1 kilometre portion will be under the sea. It is the first undersea road tunnel in India. It will pass through Arabian Sea near Girgaon Chowpatty. The tunnel will start from the Priyadarshani Park and will terminate at the Netaji Subhash Road in Marine Drive.

50. The Horticulture Department of Karnataka will set up a flower processing centre in collaboration with the International Flower Auction Bangalore (IFAB). The centre will be set up in order to convert the unsold flowers into its useful products. The flower processing centre will process the flowers and convert them into value-added products like floral arts, natural dyes, incense sticks, floral papers, floral embedded works, flower petal powder for cosmetic usage and silica-stored flowers. This flower processing facility was needed because flower farmers are suffering with huge losses whenever there is market disruption.

51. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is under pressure to consider the India's proposal of Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver on Covid-19 vaccines. Pressure increased on WTO after several European Union lawmakers and group of least developed countries (LDC) provided their support to India's proposal of waiving the TRIPS on vaccines. The European Commission and the European Council put forward a declaration after a group of 115 members of European Parliament asked them to drop their opposition to India's proposal at WTO.

52. India and Mauritius have signed a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA). This was first ever trade agreement with any African country. It was signed in the presence of Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Jugnauth and the external affairs minister of India, S Jaishankar. CECPA was approved by the Indian Cabinet on February 17, 2021. It will come into effect from March, 2021.

53. The Third India Tourism Mart was organised on February 18, 2021. It was addressed by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan. The event was organised by the Federation of Associations in India Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) through video conferencing. The event was participated by over 250 delegates from 60 countries virtually. It will be held from February 18, 2021 to February 20, 2021. The event will bring together a mix of right buyers from world and right exhibitors from India.

54. The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, addressed the India-Australia Circular Economy Hackathon (I-ACE) on February 19, 2021. During the hackathon, Narendra Modi said that there is a need to look at India's consumption patterns. India also needs to look upon how to reduce their ecological impact. The prime minister further said that the Circular Economy can be a key step to solve many of the challenges with respect to the consumption pattern. Prime Minister further highlighted that once should must make the recycling & reusing things, eliminating waste and improving resource efficiency a part of the lifestyles.

55. The 11th India-European Union macroeconomic dialogue was held in the virtual mode on February 19, 2021. The Indian Delegation was led by the Secretary of Economic Affairs, Tarun Bajaj. Director-General of Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission led the European Union delegation. Indian delegation also comprised of the representatives from Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs and Department of Revenues. The press release from the Finance Ministry stated that the bilateral relation between India and European Union has evolved into a multifaceted relation over time.

56. The north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram observed their statehood day. Both of the states received their statehood on February 20, 1987. On this occasion, President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers and chief ministers wished the states. It is a state in Northeast India. The state shares the border with Assam and Nagaland to its south. It also has its international borders with Bhutan to the west and Myanmar to the east. The state also has disputed border with China to the north at McMahan Line.

57. The Mandarin duck which is a colourful duck from eastern Asia was spotted in Assam recently after 118 years. Spotting of the Mandarin has raised hopes for the wetland which was affected by a blowout and inferno at a natural gas well in the year 2020. The Mandarin duck was spotted by the team of avian specialists in the Maguri-Motapung Beel of Tinsukia district in eastern

Assam. Mandarin duck is the habitat of eastern China and southern Japan. It landed in Assam too by accident.

58. The six-day Khajuraho Dance Festival was started on February 21, 2021. The dance festival is being organised at the Khajuraho Temple which is a UNESCO World Heritage site in Madhya Pradesh and known for its ancient Hindu temples as well as Jain temples. The festival is being held in the temple premises after 44 years. The permission was granted by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to organise the festival at the site. This year, the fee has also been waived off to organise the festival.

59. The 18th edition of BioAsia event will be held in between February 22, 2021 to February 23, 2021. It will be organised under the theme: 'Move the Needle'. This year, the BioAsia event will focus on Covid-19, pharma, medtech and global health. The event would comprise of a wide array of panels. The panel will focussing on how Covid-19 pandemic has resulted into various changes in the life sciences industry.

60. The IIT Council, which is the apex decision-making body of IITs. has set up four panels for autonomy on February 22, 2021. The panel will look after several issues ranging from funding to graded autonomy in the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). The panel has also decided to do the rationalisation of staff from current standard to a lower number. IIT Council was headed by education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal. The council will also look after the issues including mobility of faculties in between the classroom & industries, wider use of technology in education operations & dissemination, rationalisation of staff, grooming faculties to become directors.

61. The chief minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot, have announced a Universal Health Coverage for the state while presenting the state budget of state for 2021-22 on February 24, 2021. The government has allocated Rs 3,500 crore for the financial year 2021-2022. This was announced under the measures to reinforce the health infrastructure in the state. This budget will also ensure that healthcare gets more accessible to its

citizens. The government also announced to set up nursing colleges at 25 district headquarters. Other eight districts are already having one nursing college. Public Health Colleges will also be established in all seven divisional headquarters.

62. The Central government has notified the new guidelines on social media regulations on February 25, 2021. It is being called as "Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021". The new guidelines have been notified with the aim of regulating social media and OTT platforms. These rules were put into public by the union Ministers Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar. The Union Ministers also said that social media platforms have empowered the ordinary Indians. They praised these platforms for gaining popularity and huge users. They also welcomed the move by social media platforms to do business in India.

63. The task force on Interlinking of Rivers has approved the Mahanadi-Godavari Link on February 25, 2021. Approval was given to the preparation of final detailed project report on proposed Mahanadi-Godavari link. The linking project was approved by ensuring the utilisation of allocated Godavari waters by the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The decision was taken at the 13th meeting of the task force on interlinking of rivers which was held in New Delhi. In the meeting, three proposals were discussed and put forward by the task force chairman, Sriram Vedire. The proposals were based on draft detailed project report that was prepared with respect to the diversion of water from Godavari basin to Cauvery basin.

64. The Chief Minister of Karnataka, B.S. Yediyurappa, launched the 'Namma Cargo' services on February 26, 2021. The service was launched at the Vidhana Soudha. At this place, the State road transport corporations will transport the parcels so as to generate more revenue, except for the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC). The Cargo services will be implemented across 109 bus stations in Karnataka. It will also be implemented across the selected locations in Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Telangana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

65. Madhya Pradesh Cabinet has approved the "Penal Law (Madhya Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2021" on February 26, 2021. This bill was approved in order to give life imprisonment to food adulterers in states. It is a legal term which is used when a food product fails to meet any of the legal standards as prescribed by the authorities. Food Adulteration can be done by addition of another substance to the food item so as to increase the quantity of food item in either the raw form or prepared form. This results in the loss of actual quality of the food products.

66. The rare birds namely the Yellow-Billed Babbler, Green Sandpiper and Grey-Necked Bunting Were spotted in the Mangalore University. The team of birdwatchers spotted 108 species of birds in Mangalore University while they were running the campus bird count (CBC). The campus bird count is the part of the Great Backyard Bird Count which is organised by the Bird Count of India. Yellow-Billed Babbler, Green Sandpiper, and Grey-Necked Bunting are new additions to the avian that are found in the campus.

67. The first-ever National Toy Fair will be starting from the February 27th, 2021. The festival will conclude on March 2, 2021. It will be organized in the virtual format. During the event, the Centre for Creative Learning (CCL), which is based in IIT Gandhinagar, will showcase its 75 toy creations in the fair. IIT Gandhinagar is the only IIT in the country which is running this centre for creative learning. The CCL helps in developing the scientific temperament in the students and teachers by developing various scientific and educational toys.

68. The International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD) Symposium on Sustainable Development of Dams & River Basins was inaugurated by the Minister for Jal Shakti, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, on February 24, 2021. The Symposium on Sustainable Development of Dams & River Basins is being organised by the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD) in association with the Dam Rehabilitation Improvement Project (DRIP), Central Water Commission (CWC) and National Hydrology Project (NHP).

69. The Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister, Narendra Singh Tomar, has inaugurated the Saras Aajeevika Mela 2021 on February 26, 2021 at Noida Haat. On this occasion, Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Kailash Choudhary, was also present. Narendra Singh Tomar while inaugurating the event highlighted that the Ministry of Rural Development is working to include more women under the Self-Help Groups (SHGs). He also said that, the SHGs has always played a vital role to increase the family income. It has also improved the quality of life for them.

70. The Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, attended the G20 Central Bank Governors' meeting on February 26, 2021. This was the first ever G20 Central Bank Governors' meeting that was held under the Italian Presidency. During the meeting, the finance minister highlighted regarding the India's policy response with respect to COVID-19 pandemic and the world's largest inoculation drive with their G-20 counterparts. She further stated that, India's domestic policies is based broadly on the supporting citizens using the measures like direct transfer, credit guarantees, economic stimulus packages, food guarantees and accelerating structural reforms.

71. The NITI Aayog and Invest India have associated with the National Bamboo Mission to conduct the National Conference on Opportunities and Challenges for Bamboo in India. The National Conference on Opportunities will be organised with the aim to discuss on the bamboo ecosystem in order to promote holistic growth of the sector across the entire value chain system. The discussion by experts and stakeholders from several fields will further accelerate the efforts of National Bamboo Mission in order to bring about solutions regarding the issues that sector is facing.

72. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has approved the creation of the fifth tiger reserve in Tamil Nadu. The tiger reserve will surround the Meghamalai and the Srivilliputhur Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuaries within it. The approval was given in the backdrop of the demand by the environmental activists. The activists were demanding for the creation of a

tiger reserve linking the two sanctuaries in the adjoining areas of Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala.

73. Recently the Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, while addressing the business leaders, chartered accountants and tax professionals in Mumbai stated that the central government will work with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to execute the plan of the privatization of the banks. The minister further said, the Centre have not made plan to form any bank investment company in order to house the government's bank holdings.

74. Recently, a massive glacier burst occurred at Chamoli in Uttarakhand. The exact reason for the burst is not yet known. But the incident has brought the focus again to the dangers of climate change. This incident is also being seen as the Glacial Lake Outburst flood. A type of the outburst flood which occurs when the dam comprising a glacial lake gets fail. The failure of the dam can happen because of water pressure, erosion, earthquake, avalanche in rock or heavy snow or volcanic eruptions under the ice.

75. The Denmark has recently given its approval for the plan to construct the first energy field island of the world. The energy island will be constructed in the North Sea. The energy island will be used to produce and store enough green energy to meet the electricity demands of around 3 million European households. The artificial island in the North Sea will be equal to the size of the 18 football fields. The energy island will be linked to hundreds of offshore wind turbines so as to supply power to the households.

76. An avalanche and flash floods triggered in Alaknanda river in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand following a glacial breach. Snow and Avalanche Study Establishment (SASE) is investigating the matter. SASE works under the nodal head Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Exact reason for the flooding is not yet known. Experts points that, this avalanche was caused probably due to glacial breach. The glacial breach also breached a lake in the Raini village in Chamoli district.

77. In the month of January-February six elephants died at the Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary in Kalahandi. Following that, a central team was set up by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change. The team in its preliminary report highlighted that, the elephants died because of haemorrhagic septicaemia which is caused by bacteria *Pastuerella multoceda*. The report further highlights that, the elephants might have contracted the bacteria from cattle residing at Tentulipada village. Tentulipada village is a small hamlet of 12 households in Odisha.

78. A group of scientists of three institutes have discovered a new species of alpine plant in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The details were published in *Biodiversitas: Journal of Biological Diversity*. The plants that grow in the alpine climate. Many of the plant species and taxon grow as a plant community in such alpine tundra including perennial grasses, forbs, sedges, mosses, cushion plants and lichens. These plants are adapted to harsh alpine climatic of environmental conditions such as dryness, low temperatures, wind, drought, ultraviolet radiation, poor nutritional soil and a short growing season.

79. The Bhakti Movement Saint Guru Ravidas Jayanti is being observed on February 27, 2021 across the country. He was an Indian poet-sant of the Bhakti movement. He founded the Ravidassia religion in the 15th to 16th century CE. He is respect as a guru in the region of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. He was a social reformer and a spiritual saint. The poems of Ravidas have also been included in the Panch Vani text of the Dadupanthi tradition within Hinduism. The saint taught the removal of social divisions of caste and gender. He also promoted the unity in the light of personal spiritual freedoms.

80. The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has released its State of Environment Report, 2021 on February 25, 2021. The report highlighted how the Covid-19 pandemic will impact the children across world. As far as sustainable development is concerned, India ranked 117 among 192 nations. The Central Pollution Control Board highlighted that, out of 88 major industrial clusters in the country, 35

went through environmental degradation, 33 went through worsening air quality, 45 clusters comprised of polluted water and while 17 clusters had land pollution

81. The Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister, Narendra Singh Tomar, has inaugurated the Saras Aajeevika Mela 2021 on February 26, 2021 at Noida Haat. On this occasion, Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Kailash Choudhary, was also present. Narendra Singh Tomar while inaugurating the event highlighted that the Ministry of Rural Development is working to include more women under the Self-Help Groups (SHGs). He also said that, the SHGs has always played a vital role to increase the family income. It has also improved the quality of life for them. The event was started on February 26, 2021 and will conclude on March 14, 2021. It is being organised by the Ministry of Rural Development. In the event, more than 300 rural self-help groups and craftsman from 27 states have participated. It is being organised from 11AM to 8PM daily.

82. The mass nesting of the Olive Ridley turtles has finally began in Puducherry coastline. Though, the traditional migration season of the turtles has delayed possibly due to climate change or change in the climatic conditions because of the influence of Cyclones Nivar and Burevi. Now, the female Olive Ridley turtles are leaving hundreds of eggs at nesting spots. So far, the team has collected over 4,000 eggs.

83. ACC Ready Mix Concrete has recently introduced its new low carbon range of concrete called ECOPact. It is a "Green Concrete" that has been introduced for a high-performing, sustainable and circular construction. ECOPact was launched in Mumbai and Hyderabad in the first phase. It will be rolled out across the country in a phased manner with in a few weeks. The ECOPact was rolled out with the objectives of enhancing the transition towards low-carbon and circular construction. The innovative manufacturing process of the ECOPact will reduce the CO₂ emissions by up to 100 percent. It will also enhance the sustainable products offerings in the construction industry.

84. The Scientists have recovered the oldest DNA on record from the teeth of Siberian Mammoths. The DNA was extracted from the molars of mammoths. These mammoths were found in the north-eastern Siberia some 1.2 million years ago.

DNA was recovered and sequenced from the remains of three individual mammoths. The mammoths were among the large mammals who dominated Ice Age landscapes.

International

1. The United Nations counter terrorism chief have asked the countries to repatriate the 27,000 children who are stranded in massive camp in north-eastern Syria. Many of the children are sons and daughters of Islamic State extremists who controlled the large swathes of Iraq and Syria. It is the largest camp for refugees and displaced Syrians in the country. The camp is presently home to almost 62,000 residents. More than 80% of the residents are women and children. They have fled to the camp after Islamic State militants lost their last Syrian stronghold in the year 2019 in the wake of Syrian Civil War.

2. The Bangladesh Authorities recently moved around 1,750 Rohingya Muslims to a controversial island in the Bay of Bengal called the "Bhashan Char Island". This move by Bangladesh was opposed by the refugees already living on the island. The island is also known as Char Piya. It is in Hatiya Upazila, Bangladesh. The island is located in the Bay of Bengal at about 6 kilometres from Sandwip island and 60 kilometres from the mainland. It has an area of 40 square kilometres.

2. The Bangladesh Authorities recently moved around 1,750 Rohingya Muslims to a controversial island in the Bay of Bengal called the "Bhashan Char Island". This move by Bangladesh was opposed by the refugees already living on the island. The island is also known as Char Piya. It is in Hatiya Upazila, Bangladesh. The island is located in the Bay of Bengal at about 6 kilometres from Sandwip island and 60 kilometres from the mainland. It has an area of 40 square kilometres.

3. The military of Myanmar has taken control of the country and a one-year state of emergency has been announced. Further, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other government leaders have

been detained. Now in Myanmar, telecommunications have been halted. Internet and phone access have also been blocked. Social media accounts of many people have been temporarily suspended. Barbed wire road blocks were set up and the military units have overtaken the government buildings. Further, there is a fear of crackdown on human rights defenders, journalists, and others critics of the military because, even before the military takeover, journalists, free speech advocates and critics of the military have faced legal actions many times.

4. The SpaceX of Elon Musk has recently announced to launch its first all civilian mission to the space. It is an American aerospace manufacturer and space transportation services. SpaceX is headquartered in Hawthorne, California. It was founded in 2002 by Elon Musk. It was founded with the objective of reducing the space transportation costs in order to enable the colonization of Mars. It has developed several launch vehicles, Dragon cargo spacecraft and Starlink satellite constellation. It has also flown humans to the International Space Station on the SpaceX Dragon 2.

5. The Central Government has confirmed in a written reply to Lok Sabha about the presence of 1600 tonnes of lithium deposits in Mandya district of Karnataka. However, the significance and the quantity of the lithium in the region can only be confirmed after exploring the entire area. Further, commercial exploitation for the deposits can start only after the technical, social and economic feasibility studies are done.

6. Recently, the launch vehicle Stardust 1.0 was launched from a former military base in US called Loring Commerce Centre. The launch vehicle will be used to launch the small satellites called CubeSats into space. The satellite will be launched

in less toxic and relatively cheaper manner as opposed to the traditional rocket fuel. The Stardust rocket launch vehicle has been manufactured by bluShift.

7. Pakistan successfully test-fired its nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missile called Ghaznavi. The missile was test fired on February 3, 2021. The ballistic missile has a striking capability of up to 290 kilometres. The Ghaznavi missile was launched to mark the culmination of Annual Field Training Exercise of Army Strategic Forces Command. The missile has been tested for both day and night modes.

8. The 1st meeting of the Joint Working Group between India and Kingdom of Bahrain in the field of Renewable Energy held virtually on February 4, 2021. In the meeting, both sides underscored the importance of renewable energy in order to meet climate change goals. They also discussed the initiatives that the government has taken, progress that have been made and the future targets which are set by their respective governments.

9. The Military regime in Myanmar has announced the establishment of a new State Administrative Council. The military of Myanmar took the control of the country and a one-year state of emergency was announced on February 1 2021. The State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other government leaders were also detained. This happened in the backdrop of victory of Suu Kyi's party in election that was held in November 2020. The military took over the country because it regarded the victory a result of frauds. Following that, the Myanmar Civil Disobedience Movement has been started in opposition to the military's takeover.

10. The Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) Council recently held its meeting. During the meeting, the council has approved the setting up of the world's largest radio telescope. The telescope will help the astronomers to know details regarding how the universe began to grow, how when stars were born. It would also help in knowing the life-cycle of a galaxy. It will make exploring whether there is any technologically-active civilizations anywhere else in the galaxy

easier for the astronomers. It would also help in understanding from where the gravitational waves come. Further, the As NASA highlighted that this telescope will boost the scientific goals by measuring the neutral hydrogen in the cosmic time. It would also help in accurately timing the signals from pulsars from the Milky Way. Lastly, it would help to detect many galaxies.

11. The Environment Ministry of China recently announced to set up a new Public Information Platform that will allow the public to track emissions from the polluting enterprises. China in the past has struggled often to collect the information that are required to make the system work. It has also faced obstruction and data fraud from many of the polluting firms. Thus, this platform will be launched in order to get the information about the polluting firms and in turn will help in penalize them with the motive of reducing the emission of pollutants.

12. The 1st High Level Dialogue (HLD) on Trade Investment was held between India and European Union (EU). The dialogue was co-chaired by Shri Piyush Goyal, the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Mr. Valdis Dombrovskis, the European Union Executive Vice-President & Trade Commissioner. The dialogue was held on February 5, 2021. The dialogue was held in the backdrop of the commitment that both the countries have made during the 15th India-EU Leader's Summit held in July 2020. India and EU have committed to establish this Dialogue. Both the countries wanted to set up the HLD with the objective of setting up of a ministerial level guidance to enhance the bilateral trade and the investment relations.

13. The space industry of Russia announced that the country is going to launch 40 satellites into orbit from 18 different countries of the world in March 2021. The satellites will be launched using the Soyuz-2 carrier rocket. Soyuz 2.1 is a carrier rocket with the Fregat booster. It will be blast off with the South Korean Compact Advanced Satellite 500 space vehicle called CAS500-1. The Soyuz-2.1 payload will launch satellites from Russia, Saudi Arabia, Japan, South Korea, UAE, Israel, Thailand, Germany, Brazil, Canada, Italy,

Hungary, Argentina, Netherland, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia and the United Kingdom.

14. The Denmark has recently given its approval for the plan to construct the first energy field island of the world. The energy island will be constructed in the North Sea. The energy island will be used to produce and store enough green energy to meet the electricity demands of around 3 million European households. The artificial island in the North Sea will be equal to the size of the 18 football fields.

15. India and Afghanistan have inked the deal to build a dam, called Sahtoot dam, in order to supply water to the Kabul City. Following the deal, the prime minister of India called for a ceasefire in Afghanistan in order to end a spike in violence. In order to start the project, External affairs minister of India, S Jaishankar and the Afghan counterpart Haneef Atmar have signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) to build the Lalandar or Shatoot dam.

16. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has put a probe called Hope in the orbit around the MARS. By doing so, UAE has become the fifth country to launch the spacecraft into the orbit of MARS after United States, Soviet Union, Europe and India. It is a UAE Space Agency space exploration mission to Mars. In the process UAE had launched the Hope orbiter 19 July 19, 2020. The orbiter reached Mars on February 9, 2021. It was launched from the Tanegashima Space Center in Japan. The orbiter was launched with the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries H-IIA launch vehicle which is a Japanese launcher.

17. The Joe Biden administration in United States is all set to re-join the UN Human Rights Council. The United States had withdrawn from the council in the year 2018 under Presidency of the Donald Trump. The UNHRC held three regular sessions in a year. The session lasts for a total of 10 weeks. The session take place for four weeks in the month of March, three weeks in the month of June and three weeks in the month of September. The sessions are held at the UN Office Geneva in Switzerland.

18. The President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, have unveiled the ambitious 10-year space program of his country on February 9, 2021. The announcement that the President made is however being criticised because the space programme would require vast sums of money at a time when its economy is suffering. On the other hand, it is being praised because the space programme will create jobs for researchers.

19. The President of United States, Joe Biden, announced sanctions on the military leaders in Myanmar on February 10, 2021. The military in Myanmar took over the control in the country and announced one-year state of emergency on February 1, 2021. The military also detained the State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other government leaders. This step was taken by the military in the backdrop of victory of Suu Kyi's party in election that was held in November 2020. The military took over the country as it found the victory a result of frauds. Following that, the Myanmar Civil Disobedience Movement has been started in opposition to the military's takeover.

20. A Chinese spacecraft named Tianwen-1 has successfully entered the orbit around Mars on February 10, 2021. The probe entered the MARS Orbit after making the journey of 6 and a half month from the Earth. This mission is China's first independent mission on the red planet. After reaching near to the orbit, robotic probe initiated and completed its 15-minute burn of the thrusters. Burning of the thrusters slowed down the speed of the spacecraft so that it could be captured by the gravity pull of the MARS.

21. The Reserve Bank of India has announced that the Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) will provide USD 400 million to Maldives project. It will provide the fund for the Greater Male Connectivity Project. The relation of India with Maldives was established in the year 1966. India is among those countries that recognized the Maldives after it gained its independence in 1965. Both the countries share an ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural and commercial links. Currently, the Maldives is home to 25,000 Indian nationals. Both the countries are the founding members of SAARC. India also consider Maldives a part of its 'Neighbourhood First'

Policy. In the line, India is a part of 'India First' policy of Maldives.

22. The President of United States, Joe Biden, has revoked the emergency order that was issued by former President Donald Trump to construct the US-Mexico border wall. The order was revoked on February 11, 2021. The President Biden revoked the order given by former President Donald Trump by announcing that it shall be the policy of the new administration that American taxpayers' money will not be diverted to construct a border wall now at the United States' border with Mexico.

23. The Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Raj Kumar Singh, in a written reply in Rajya Sabha on February 12, 2021 has said that the Government of India and the Government of Japan signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in January, 2021 on training of the skilled workers. As per the MoC, skilled Indian workers from fourteen sectors have been identified for the enhanced job opportunities in Japan.

24. The Prime Minister of Italy, Mario Draghi, has put the climate change at the centre of his plans to run Italy. He has created a super ministry to ensure a transition to green energy drives recovery in the country. The super ministry has been established with the objective of making full use of European Union funds with respect to the climate change. The recovery plan of the Italy has to be handed to the European Commission by April 2021 in order to get more than 200 billion euros (\$240 billion) of funds.

25. The Indian government has gifted 2000 metric tonnes of rice to Syria in a bid to strengthen the food security with the middle east countries. The Ministry of external affairs stated that; India has always stood in solidarity with the people of Syria. The bilateral relation between both the countries continued through the development and capacity buildings project in Syria. It continued even during the internal conflicts in the country.

26. Russia has launched a new progress cargo ship into orbit in February 14, 2021. The cargo ship was launched in order to deliver the cargo to the

seven crew members in the International Space Station (ISS). It is a 152-foot-tall or 46-meters launch vehicle comprising of the three-stages. The rocket will head on a north-easterly trajectory to reach the ISS. The second stage of the rocket which is also called the core stage has been is powered by one RD-108A engine. The second stage is designed in a way that it continues firing for approximately three more minutes before shifting to the third stage of the rocket called the RD-0110 engine.

27. The Government of India had decided to supply the Coronavirus vaccines to Canada. This decision was taken by the Indian side following a personal request made by the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau to Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. Trudeau has asked for support of India to Canada and assistance for Covid-19 vaccines in order to fight the pandemic. PM Modi has also assured the Canadian prime minister that, India will completely support the vaccination program in Canada.

28. The Nigerian economist Ngozi Okonjo Iweala has been appointed as the head the World Trade Organization. She has become the first woman to take this position. She has also become the first African to hold this charge amid rising protectionism. Okonjo-Iweala was named as the director-general by the representatives of the 164 member countries of WTO. The WTO is the organisation dealing with the rules of trade between the nations on the basis of negotiated agreements.

29. The Union External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar recently said that the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project is in the final stages however, the project was delayed because of various challenges. It is a US\$484 million project that connects the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata with Sittwe seaport in Rakhine State, Myanmar through the sea route. The project will link the Sittwe seaport in Myanmar to Paletwa in Chin State through the Kaladan river boat route. Then the project will connect the Paletwa by road route to the Mizoram in Northeast India. Currently, the Sittwe port, river dredging and Paletwa jetty projects are completed. This project is also seen as an important component of India's

Act East Policy that seeks to link up India with Southeast Asia through Myanmar.

30. The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) has appointed Preeti Sinha as its Executive Secretary. She is an Indian-origin investment and development banker. The UNCDF was established in the year 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly to promote the economic development across the world. It is headquartered in New York. The organisation helps in providing the micro-finance access to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). It also has the mandate to unlock full potential of public and private finance. The organisation makes public and private finance work for the poor in 47 least developed countries (LDCs) of the world.

31. The lower house of the French parliament has approved the Ant-Radicalism bill in a bid to fight the Islamic radicalism. The bill seeks to strengthen the government oversight of mosques and religious schools. It will also take strong actions against the polygamy and forced marriage. The bill provides for measures with the aim of rooting out the Islamic radicalism. It is a part of the broader French efforts that it initiated with the aim of fighting extremism.

32. India has joined the "Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt 2021" which is a two-day naval exercise. The exercise is being held in the northern part of the Indian Ocean. The drill was participated by the forces and vessels from navy divisions of both the Iranian army and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Several vessels from the Russian navy also participated in the drill. Indian Navy has also joined the exercise with selected vessels. The drill will also be participated by the Chinese Navy. It will cover an area of 17,000 square kilometres. The naval exercise will carry the range of activities including the shooting at sea targets, air targets, liberation of the hijacked ships, anti-piracy operations and search & rescue operations.

33. India is all set to host the virtual health secretary-level meeting with the member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The virtual meeting will be held on February 18, 2021. During the meeting

the members will discuss the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Pakistan has also been invited to attend the meeting. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also proposed a Coronavirus Emergency Fund COVID-19 crisis. for the SAARC region in March 2020 during a video conference of the SAARC Heads of State.

34. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has approved the signing of a comprehensive economic cooperation and partnership agreement (CECPA) between India and Mauritius. This approval was given on February 17, 2021. It is a kind of a free trade agreement between India and Mauritius. This agreement was signed with the aim of liberalising the norms to boost a two-way commerce. This agreement will cover 310 export items for India such as foodstuff & beverages, textile & textile articles, base metals, agricultural products, electricals & electronic items, plastics & chemicals, wood & its articles. Mauritius will also get preferential market access into India for some 615 products. These products would range from specialty sugar, biscuits, frozen fish, mineral water, fresh fruits, juices, beer, alcoholic drinks, medical & surgical equipment, soaps, bags and apparel. This agreement is India's first such trade agreement with any African nation.

35. The Secretary-General of United Nations, Antonio Guterres, has asked the G20 nations to prepare a "Global Covid-19 Vaccination Plan" on February 17, 2020. The UN asked do so while it condemned the wildly uneven and unfair distribution of COVID-19 vaccines across the countries. He stated that, the 10 wealthier countries have administered 75 percent of global vaccinations across the world. He emphasized that, this is a critical moment, thus, the vaccine equity is the biggest moral test for the global community.

36. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) have planned to launch the World Solar Bank (WSB) at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow that is scheduled for November 2021. The WSB have planned to disburse around \$50 billion to the member countries of ISA over next 10 years. The WSB will be launched because many member countries of the ISA face the

challenge of raising finances on their own. Further, it was launched to assist the 800 million people who do not have access to power.

37. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) will hold its 3rd ministerial meeting on February 18, 2021. This grouping is also called as Quad or Asian NATO. It is an informal strategic forum comprising of Japan, United States, Australia and India. The grouping held semi-regular summits, military drills and military information exchanges between the member countries.

38. The tech-giant Facebook has recently blocked the Australian users from reading and sharing any local and international news. Facebook has initiated this move in the backdrop of the dispute over new media payment law that Australia has initiated. The Facebook has retaliated over the new legislation that was brought by Australian government. This legislation pushes the tech companies to pay publishers for the news content they share. With this act, the Australian government wants the tech giants like Google and Facebook to pay for the news which is shared on their platform.

39. India – Singapore CEO Forum, that was launched in November 2018, again held their meeting. The meeting was organized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and FICCI on February 18, 2021. During the meeting, Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has stated that, both the countries can work together in the arena of e-commerce, smart manufacturing, fintech and healthcare. In these areas, the countries offer a large market. The minister further said that if the countries will work together in these areas, it will transform India's own effort to give best to the people.

40. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Arbor Day Foundation have recently recognized Hyderabad as a 2020 Tree City of World. Hyderabad was selected for the recognition following its commitment to grow and maintain the urban forests. This recognition was a testament for city's sustained and institutional efforts of planting, nurturing and celebrating trees. It also marks the

development of the urban and peri-urban forestry actions, projects besides the strategic planning & commitment of building healthy city.

41. Israel has announced in February 18, 2021 that it is developing a new ballistic missile shield named "Arrow-4" in collaboration with the United States. This missile is being developed as another layer in the defensive system by keeping an eye towards Iran. It is a family of anti-ballistic missiles. It has been designed to make the Israeli missile defense system more effective against the ballistic missiles in comparison to other surface-to-air missile that country has procured. These missiles are being jointly funded and produced by Israel and United States. The missiles started developing in the year 1986. The missile system is overseen by Israeli Ministry of Defense and the U.S. Missile Defense Agency. The missile system comprises of joint production of hypersonic Arrow anti-missile interceptor and Israel Aerospace Industries Brown Hazelnut.

42. The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, addressed the India-Australia Circular Economy Hackathon (I-ACE) on February 19, 2021. The India Australia Circular Economy Hackathon was launched by the NITI Aayog Atal Innovation Mission (AIM). This hackathon was launched in association with the commonwealth scientific and industrial research organisation (CSIRO) of Australia. It focuses on identification and development of the innovative technology solutions provided by students, MSMEs and start-ups from both the countries. It will help in encouraging a sustainable circular economy. This hackathon was launched with the aim of increasing long-term health and resilience.

43. Joe Biden is all set to make the first big appearance on a global stage as president on February 19, 2021. He has also offered Group of Seven (G7) allies and other foreign leaders a part into his plans of dramatically reshaping the US foreign policy. This move will be taken by him even as he is dealing with a number of international crises. Biden will be giving virtual appearances at a G-7 meeting and Munich Security Conference. The New administration has announced major reversals of Trump administration policies.

44. The United States has officially re-joined the Paris climate accord on February 19, 2020. It has joined the deal again after 107 days it left. Under the Paris Agreement, there is a long-term goal of keeping the average temperature to well below 2 °C above the pre-industrial levels. It also seeks to put efforts in order to limit the increase to 1.5 °C. This will help in reducing the risks and impacts of climate change. The agreement further aims to increase the ability of parties so as to adapt with the adverse impacts of climate change. It also seeks to make the flow of finance towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.

45. India and Ethiopia have signed two agreements on February 20, 2021. These agreements are related to visa facilitation and leather technology. These agreements were signed in the presence of Demeke Mekonnen Hassen, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Ethiopia and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. The deputy prime minister of Ethiopia is on a 4-day visit to India. Both the countries had useful and productive discussions on several of bilateral and regional issues.

46. The 11th India-European Union macroeconomic dialogue was held in the virtual mode on February 19, 2021. The Indian Delegation was led by the Secretary of Economic Affairs, Tarun Bajaj. Director-General of Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission led the European Union delegation. Indian delegation also comprised of the representatives from Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs and Department of Revenues.

47. The Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and the Greenstat Norway signed an agreement to set up the Centre of Excellence on Hydrogen. This agreement was signed some days after India unveiled its national hydrogen mission. The National Hydrogen Mission was announced by the Finance Minister in her Union budget for 2020-21. This mission was announced with the aim of generating hydrogen from the green power resources.

48. The 10th round of Corps Commander Level Meeting between India and China on February 21, 2021. It was held on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control in Molde. In the meeting, both the sides appraised the smooth completion of disengagement of troops at the Pangong Lake area. Both the sides, noted that disengagement is a significant step forward and it will provide a good basis to resolve the remaining issues along the LAC in Western Sector. Both the countries held an in-depth exchange of views on other issues pertaining along the Western Sector of LAC.

49. The state of Uttar Pradesh is all set to export a consignment of 20 tonnes of Kala Namak rice to Singapore. This move is a major boost to the farm exports from the state. Consignment of 20 tonnes will be sent to Singapore from Siddharth Nagar. Rice is being packaged in glass jars which also mentions the qualities of rice on it. The packaging of the rice comprises the popular quote of Mahatma Buddha as: "The unique aroma of the rice will remind people about me". Soon, the state will start observing the Kala Namak Rice festival on the line of the Strawberry Festival. The government has also planned to set up a Kala Namak Rice Research Centre at Siddharth Nagar in association with the International Rice Research Centre, Varanasi.

50. Saudi Arabia has opened up the armed forces for Women. Following the order, the female recruits can now trade their abayas for military uniforms. Rights of the women in Saudi Arabia have been limited when compared to the rights of women in many of its neighbouring countries. There is a strict interpretation and application of sharia law in the country. However, in the year 2017, Mohammed bin Salman was appointed the Crown Prince. Since then, he has been bringing a series of social reforms witnessing the women's rights.

51. India and Mauritius have signed a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA). This was first ever trade agreement with any African country. It was signed in the presence of Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Jugnauth and the external affairs minister of India, S Jaishankar. CECPA was approved by the Indian Cabinet on February

17, 2021. It will come into effect from March, 2021. As per this limited agreement, India will be given preferential access to the markets in Mauritius and vice versa. India will get access to 310 products on the other hand, Mauritius will get access to 615 products.

52. Bangladesh has become the first country that has banned the painkiller ketoprofen. This painkiller is used widely to treat the cattle. But this painkiller is toxic to vultures. Earlier, veterinary diclofenac was also banned some 10 years ago. This is a landmark move to save the remaining population of globally threatened vultures. Experts say, similar steps need to be taken by India, Pakistan, Nepal and Cambodia in order to save the population of vultures.

53. China has again become India's top trading partner in the year 2020. The reason was that India was still dependent on the import of heavy machines, telecom equipment and home appliances from China. The provisional data from the trade between both the countries in the year 2020 stood at \$77.7 billion. However, the trade had decreased as compared to the 2019 trade total of \$85.5 billion. The imports of heavy machines etc outweighed India's efforts to cut down its dependence on trade. As a result of which, the bilateral trade gap of India with China was \$40 billion in the year 2020.

54. Japan has appointed the first ever Minister for Loneliness amid the increasing suicide rates in Japan. Suicide rates in Japan has increased for the first time in 11 years in the current COVID-19 pandemic situation. Japan has appointed the loneliness minister on the line of United Kingdom which became the first country in world to create a similar position in the country in 2018. Tetsushi Sakamoto, who is in charge of combating Japan's falling birth rate and revitalising regional economies, was also appointed as the Loneliness minister. Japanese government has also created an "isolation or loneliness countermeasures office on February 19, 2021 within its cabinet.

55. Recently, a kangaroo painting was identified in Australia with the help of some ancient wasps. The kangaroo painting was created over 17,000 years ago by Aboriginal community artists. The

painting was identified as Australia's oldest intact rock art. The painting is a two-metre-long artwork. It was discovered on the sloped ceiling of rock shelter in Kimberley region of Western Australia. This artwork was painted in an early naturalistic style. The naturalistic style often features the life-sized renderings of animals.

56. The parliament of Australia has passed the landmark legislation called the "News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code" on February 25, 2021. The Parliament in Australia had proposed this legislation targeting Google and Facebook. Under this legislation, they are required to make payment negotiations with the media companies in order to use their content. However, Facebook Google had pointed out that these media industry were already benefiting from the traffic routed to their websites through these digital platforms.

57. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is under pressure to consider the India's proposal of Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver on Covid-19 vaccines. Pressure increased on WTO after several European Union lawmakers and group of least developed countries (LDC) provided their support to India's proposal of waiving the TRIPS on vaccines. The European Commission and the European Council put forward a declaration after a group of 115 members of European Parliament asked them to drop their opposition to India's proposal at WTO.

58. India has started its BRICS Chairship with the inaugural three-day-long Sherpas' meeting on February 25, 2021. The spokesperson of Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Anurag Srivastava stated that the Secretary (CPV & OIA) chaired the meeting and highlighted the themes, priorities, and calendar for the BRICS 2021. Earlier, the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had launched India's BRICS 2021 website at Secretariat of BRICS at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan.

59. The militaries of India and Pakistan announced that both sides have agreed to stop cross-border firing along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir. This agreement will come into effect from February 2021. Both

India and Pakistan have been in contact on a hotline level since the year 1987. DGMOs of both countries also stay in touch through this established mechanism. The cross-border firing had increased in the region since 2014 along the LoC. SO, both the DGMOs agreed that existing 2003 understanding over the firing will be implemented in letter and spirit now.

60. India and Ireland held the bilateral consultations on UN Security Council issues on February 26, 2021 in the virtual mode. During the bilateral consultations, both the countries congratulated each other for their election to United Nation Security Council (UNSC). They also held discussions and briefed each regarding the UNSC priorities. They further held discussions on several issues on UNSC agenda and they agreed to work closely during their terms at the UNSC in 2021-2022.

61. The Global anti-terrorism watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF) decided to maintain Pakistan into Grey List till June 2021 on February 25, 2021. This decision by the FATF was taken in the light of country's failure to fully comply with the 27-point action plan of to combat the terrorism. This decision was taken following a virtual plenary session that was over three days. The FATF has decided to keep the Pakistan into the grey list and will remain under the increased monitoring because serious deficiencies were observed with respect to the terror financing.

62. The Director-General of World Health Organisation (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, lauded India and the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, for sharing the Covid-19 vaccines and supporting the "Vaccine Equality" across the world. The Chief of WHO also hoped that other countries will follow the same path to distribute the vaccines equally. WHO chief made a statement that, India's commitment to COVAX and sharing the covid-19 vaccines have helped more than 60 countries as they have started vaccinating their health workers and other priority groups. He further stated that if everyone acts together and share the knowledge, this pandemic could be stopped to save lives and livelihoods of the people.

63. A new highly contagious Covid-19 variant, which is being called as B.1.526, is causing severe damage in the city of New York. A study published on the Columbia University website states that the new Covid-19 variant is carrying a highly dangerous mutation which have the potential to weaken the efficacy of the vaccine. The study highlighted that the highly contagious variant was initially identified in samples which were collected in November 2020. As per the study, the about 12.3 percent of the total cases till mid-February of 2021 were due to this new variant of the corona virus.

Defence

1. The Aero India 2021 show will start from February 3, 2021 in Bengaluru. The show will conclude on February 5, 2021. During the Aero show, a deal will be Signed worth Rs 48,000 crore to manufacture the 83 indigenous Teja Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-73. Another key highlight of the Aero India Show will be India's defence diplomacy. The order for 83 LCA's will be completed by 2030. A deal will be signed with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) to manufacture the Teja Light Combat Aircraft. Following that, the first aircraft will be handed over in the next three years. In total, nine years will be required to hand over the crafts to the Indian Air Force.

2. The Defence Minister of India, Rajnath Singh, has inaugurated a new plant for the production of Light Combat Aircraft (LCA). The plant was inaugurated at the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in Bengaluru. This plant will double the production of India's indigenous fighter jet – LCA Tejas. The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited has got an order of Rs 48,000-cr from the armed forces. This is going to be the biggest indigenous defence procurement that will give a boost to the Indian aerospace sector. The minister also highlighted that India will reach its target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore in the defence manufacturing soon. This is the first time that Indian private players have

joined hands to produce the aircraft wings and fuselage.

3. The Indian Ocean Region Defence Ministers' Conclave was hosted by India on February 4, 2021. The event took place in the backdrop of Aero India 2021 which is the largest Aero show of Asia. The conclave was attended by 18 countries. Among them, the Defence Ministers of 4 countries Comoros, Maldives, Madagascar, and Iran took part in the conclave. From six countries namely Australia, Kenya, Myanmar, Kuwait, Mauritius and Seychelles, six High Commissioners or Ambassadors participated. From 10 countries, the service Chief participated besides, the Defence Secretary of Sudan.

4. The central government has recently given the approval for 26 more green zone site for drones. The approval was given in the light of facilitating the operations by No-Permission-No-Take-off (NPNT) compliant drones. NPNT is an automated green signal. Without this green signal, drones are not authorised to fly. To handle such automatic flight authorisation, the Digital Sky is currently being developed.

5. The 16th edition of Indo-US joint military exercise 'Yudh Abhyas' will begin in Rajasthan from February 8 and it will be concluded in February 21, 2021. Indian Army will be represented by the 11th Battalion of Jammu and Kashmir Rifles which is the part of the South Western Command. US Army will be represented by the troops of 2nd battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment. These troops belong to the 1-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team. Respective brigade headquarters will also represent the army along with the troops.

6. Recently, a maiden contingent of 34 CRPF women personnel were inducted into the specialized jungle warfare commando force called CoBRA. The contingent would now be deployed in the anti-naxal operations grid of India. The commandos of the CoBRA are required to be mentally and physically tough. They are mostly deployed in the Maoist violence-affected states of the country. They are also deployed for the insurgency operations.

7. The Supreme Court have put a stay on the dismantling of the INS Viraat that was decommissioned recently. This decision was taken in the backdrop to restore the everlasting glory of this legendary warship of the Indian Navy. The SC's stay on the dismantling while hearing a petition filed by a firm. The firm filed the petition seeking a permission to convert INS Viraat into a maritime museum and a multi-functional adventure centre.

8. The biennial Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX 21) which is the largest wargame of the Indian Navy was started in January 2021. The exercise is still underway and it will end in the third week of February 2021. The exercise is observing the participation of all operational units of Indian Navy such as submarines, ships and aircraft. The units of Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Coast Guard are also participating in the biennial exercise. The exercise is being held in the Indian Ocean Region and its adjunct waters. The exercise is being looked by the Naval Headquarters along with the participation of all three Commands of Indian Navy besides the Tri-Services Command.

9. The Defence Minister of India, Rajnath Singh, has launched the e-Chhawani portal on February 16, 2021. With the launch of this portal, the residents of Cantonment areas can now register their complaints with respect to the civic issues. The portal would also help in resolving the complaints regarding the civic issues from home. This portal will work with the objective of refining the system and improving the Ease of Living for people. The e-Chhawani project was launched with the aim of providing online municipal services for more than 20 lakh citizens.

10. India has joined the "Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt 2021" which is a two-day naval exercise. The exercise is being held in the northern part of the Indian Ocean. The drill was participated by the forces and vessels from navy divisions of both the Iranian army and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Several vessels from the Russian navy also participated in the drill. Indian Navy has also joined the exercise with selected vessels.

11. The Indian and the Indonesian navies held the PASSEX military exercise in the Arabian sea on February 18, 2021. This military exercise was organised in order to enhance the operational interoperability and the overall cooperation. INS Talwar represented the Indian naval ship. The Indonesian Navy was represented by the multirole corvette KRI Bung Tomo. India's maritime cooperation with Indonesia have gained a momentum in last few years. Indian Navy also participated in the several maritime exercise notwithstanding the covid-19 pandemic. It held the maritime exercises with countries like Russia, Japan, Australia and the US.

12. The Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICG) named as C-453 was commissioned into services in Chennai on February 19, 2021. This was the 17th interceptor boats out of the 18 which are being indigenously built by Larsen & Toubro Ltd. It is a 27.80-m-long interceptor boat. The boat has a displacement of 105 tonnes. It can attain a maximum speed of 45 knots (85 kmph). It is capable to undertake the multifarious tasks such as surveillance, close-coast patrol, interdiction, and search & rescue. Interceptor boat will be based in Chennai under operational control of Commander of the Coast Guard Region (East).

13. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully launched the two indigenously designed and developed Vertical Launch Short Range Surface to Air Missile (VL-SRSAM) on February 22, 2021. The

missiles were launched with the help of static vertical launcher. They were launched from Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the Odisha Coast. Launch of the missiles were monitored by the senior scientists from the labs who helped in developing and designing the system.

14. The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved the acquisition of 118 Arjun Mark 1A tanks on February 23, 2021. The approval was given for the Indian Army at a cost of ₹ 6,000 crores. This move will be a boost for the indigenisation in defence sector. The approval was given for 58-tonne weight DRDO-developed tanks. These tanks will be ready for delivery within the 30 months of signing the contract. Tanks have been fully designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in collaboration with the Indian Army.

15. The Indian Army is in process of acquiring niche technology by procuring quantity 556 Augmented Reality Head Mounted Display (ARHMD) System. The army will procure it under Make-II Category. The ARHMD System is seen as a capability enhancement for the Land Based Air Defence Weapon Systems. The land-based air defence weapon systems include ZU 23mm 2B AD Gun System and the IGLA shoulder fired Infra-Red Homing Air Defence Missile System. These systems will provide operator with radar and Thermal Imaging (TI) sight outputs.

Business, Economy & Banking

1. The government has decided to include 14 new minor forest produce items under the mechanism for marketing of minor forest produce by the minimum support price scheme. This new mechanism will help to provide remunerative and fair prices to tribal gatherers of forest produces. The items which have been included in the scheme include- Tasar Cocoon, bamboo shoot, elephant apple dry, wild dry mushroom and malkangani seed.

2. The two-auto industry executives have recently highlighted that the Maruti Suzuki India Ltd will gain most from a government proposal to levy a green tax on petrol and diesel vehicles. Maruti is India's top carmaker and has the largest portfolio of compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles among all the domestic automakers. The Suzuki Motor Corp. unit has also planned to push its CNG vehicle sales to 200,000 units or more a year by 2022. In the financial year 2020, Maruti sold a record 106,443 CNG vehicles. The sales of such

vehicles have grown with the average of 15.5% annually.

3. The Finance minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, have proposed for the "Voluntary Vehicle Scrappage Policy". This proposal was made during the presentation of the Union Budget for Financial Year 2022. The voluntary vehicle scrappage policy will help to scrap out the unfit and pollution-causing vehicles. The new policy will help in encouraging the fuel-efficient and environment-friendly vehicles. Thus, it will reduce the vehicular pollution and cut the India's huge oil import bills.

4. The Finance minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, announced a Rupees 3.05 trillion electricity distribution reform programme while presenting the Union Budget 2021. The electricity distribution programme will help in reducing the losses and improve the efficiency of electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs). A framework that allows a choice of electricity supplier to consumers was also announced during the budget presentation.

5. The finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, has announced during the presentation of the Union Budget 2021 that a new asset reconstruction and asset management company will be set up in India. The new Asset reconstruction and asset management company will look after the Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) of stressed banks. New amendments will be incorporated so that the Asset reconstruction depositors can get easy and time-bound access to their savings. This in turn will help depositors in banks that are currently under stress.

6. The Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, have proposed no change in the Income Tax Slabs in the Union Budget 2021. The income tax structure has been kept as earlier. However, some relief have been announced for the senior citizens. It was announced that the senior citizens above the age of 75 years will be exempted from filing the income tax return. The government has announced to introduce a National Faceless Income Tax Tribunal for the small taxpayers. The government has also extended the tax benefits to the senior citizens

aged above 75. They nor will not require to file the income tax return.

7. The Fifteenth Finance Commission of India have submitted its final report fir a five-year duration. The report has been submitted with the objective of transforming the financial governance of India's municipalities. The interim report for Financial Year 2020-21 was tabled in Parliament along with Budget 2020-21. The final report for Financial Year 2021-22 to Financial Year 2025-26 was tabled along with the Budget 2021-22.

8. The Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, has announced two new centrally sponsored scheme namely, the PM AatmaNirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana and the Mission Poshan 2.0 while presenting the Union Budget 2021. As per the announcement, a new centrally sponsored scheme called PM Aatma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana will be launched. Further, an outlay of Rs. 64,180 crores for over 6 years have been announced for the PM Aatma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana. This was announced in addition to the National Health Mission (NHM).

9. The 2021-22 Union Budget was presented amid the COVID-19 pandemic on February 1, 2021. Since the 2020 budget, the Indian economy have reduced from 2.24 lakh crore nominal GDP to Rs 1.94 lakh crore. This reduction in the size of the economy was due to the lower revenue growth and higher expenditure in the year 2020 because of coronavirus pandemic. The fiscal deficit for 2021-2022 was estimated to be 6.8% of the GDP. Estimates of Rs. 34.83 lakh crore BE for expenditure in 2021-2022 including Rs. 5.54 lakh crore as capital expenditure, rest is revenue expenditure. The fiscal deficit in BE 2021-2022 is estimated to be 6.8% of GDP.

10. The Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, announced an agricultural infrastructure and development cess (AIDC) on some goods while presenting Union Budget 2021. AIDC was announced to provide support to those sector that has been one bright spot amid the COVID-19 pandemic. AIDC will be applied on a small number of items. Under the norms, no additional burden will be placed on consumers on most items. AIDC was announced because there

was an immediate need to improve the agricultural infrastructure in order to produce more along with conserving and processing agricultural output efficiently.

11. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted, while presenting the union budget for 2021-2022, that the fiscal deficit in the next financial year is estimated as 6.8 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). The finance minister highlighted that the fiscal deficit is estimated to increase up to 9.5% in the Financial Year 2020-21. The rise in the fiscal deficit is the result of the rise in the expenditure amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the moderation in revenue during the current fiscal year. The minister further highlighted that the nationwide lockdown has adversely impacted the economic activities. It also resulted in the contraction of the economy by 7.7%.

12. Recently, the Maritime body MUI urged the government to take cognisance of "Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change" in order to formulate the Maritime India Vision 2030. The "Maritime India Vision 2030" will be formulated by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways of India. The Neptune Declaration was signed by more than 450 organizations. The declaration highlights the main actions that are required to be taken in order to resolve the crew change crisis.

13. The Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, while presenting the Union Budget 2021 has announced that the government has put forward the proposed to launch a portal to formulate social security scheme for the workers of the India's gig economy. A gig economy is a free market system where temporary positions are common. In such system the organizations hire the independent workers for short-term commitments. The gig economy includes the work arrangements including the independent contractors, Project-based workers, freelancers, and temporary or part-time hires. It is part of a shifting cultural and business environment including the sharing economy, gift economy and barter economy.

14. The Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, announced during the Union Budget 2021

presentation that the Government has proposed a "Mega Investment Textiles Parks (MITRA) scheme". It is a Central Sector scheme. The scheme was notified in April 2020 for the Large-Scale Electronics Manufacturing. This was notified with the objective of providing the financial incentives for domestic manufacturing of goods. The scheme also seeks to attract large investments. It was initially launched for the domestic manufacturing of Mobile Phones and Specified Electronic Components. In the later phase, it was rolled out for the pharmaceutical ingredients and medical devices.

15. The NITI Aayog has recently released its plan for Little Andaman. The plan is named as "Sustainable Development of Little Andaman Island Vision Document". It has been planned for the sustainable and holistic development of the island in Andaman and Nicobar. The Little Andaman is a 680 sq km fragile Island in the Andaman and Nicobar island group. The fragile environment of the island has raised alarm among conservationists. The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, also declared in the year 2020 that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands will be developed as a "maritime and start-up hub". The document by NITI Aayog has been formulated in that context only.

16. The commerce ministry is organising the Udyog Manthan. Under the Udyog Manthan, a series of webinars are being conducted. It is a marathon that are focused on the sector-specific webinars. The webinars are focused on promoting the Quality and Productivity in Indian Industry. The webinar was started on January 4, 2021 and it will conclude on March 2, 2021. It comprised of 45 sessions that covers the various major sectors of manufacturing and services. Udyog Manthan will help in identifying the challenges, opportunities and bring about the solutions and best practices. The Udyog Manthan involves the participants and representatives from the testing, industry and standardization bodies.

17. The ministry of corporate affairs (MCA) has amended definition of the small companies by amending the Companies Rules. The new amendment allows the non-resident Indians (NRIs) to incorporate one person companies

(OPCs) in India. The notification contains several amendments regarding the OPCs. It has substituted the words "whether resident in India or otherwise" in the clause. The rule earlier had the provision that only an Indian resident can incorporate an OPC. Further, the latest notification also reduces the number of days a person has to stay in India so as to qualify as a resident as opposed to the earlier provision of 120 days. Apart from that, the ministry has also allowed the voluntary conversion of OPCs to a private or public company. However, it is subject to the minimum requirements of board members and paid-up capital in accordance with the Companies Act.

18. A domestic manufacturing programme for critical power and renewable energy equipment will be launched by the ministry of Power in the Financial Year 2021. The programme has at an outlay of Rs 1,500 crore. This scheme was announced in the Union Budget. It would set up the three manufacturing zones per year. The scheme would also call for the offers from the states to submit the applications in order to set up these zones.

19. The Rating agency Moody's have recently forecasted that the nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of India will rise closer to 17% in the Financial Year 2021. India has projected fiscal deficit of 9.5% of GDP for the Fiscal year 2020 that will end in March. So, the rating agency highlighted that, the greater transparency on off-balance-sheet food subsidy expenditure and conservative revenue assumptions have increased the government's fiscal deficit in 2020.

20. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on has introduced a risk-based internal audit (RBIA) system. It has made it mandatory for select non-banking financial companies and urban co-operative banks (UCBs). As per the norms, all the deposit-taking non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) with the asset size of Rs 5,000 crore will have to implement this system. Also, the UCBs having asset size of Rs 500 crore will have to implement the system. The system is required to be implemented by March 31, 2022. The performance of the RBIA system will be looked by the board of the entity or its audit committee.

The board of the entity is already responsible to look after the internal audit function of the organisation.

21. The Central Government has confirmed in a written reply to Lok Sabha about the presence of 1600 tonnes of lithium deposits in Mandya district of Karnataka. However, the significance and the quantity of the lithium in the region can only be confirmed after exploring the entire area. Further, commercial exploitation for the deposits can start only after the technical, social and economic feasibility studies are done.

22. Recently, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) stated that a panel of Ministers would take final decision regarding the number of public sector companies that will be retained in each of the strategic sectors. The panel of ministers will comprise of Nirmala Sitharaman, the Finance Minister and Nitin Gadkari, the Road Transport Minister. The finance minister recently, while presenting budget 2021, unveiled the government's plan of the Disinvestment or the Strategic Disinvestment Policy.

23. Andhra Pradesh has become the second State to implement the power sector reforms that was put forward by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance. The state has implemented the one of the three reforms that was bought in 2020. Under the reform, the state has started the Direct Benefit transfer (DBT) of electricity subsidy to farmers with effect from September, 2020 itself. After implementing the reform, State is now eligible to mobilise additional financial resources equal to 0.15 percent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). Andhra Pradesh has also completed One Nation One Ration Card reform, Ease of Doing Business Reforms and Urban Local Bodies Reforms besides the power sector reforms.

24. The Monetary Policy Committee of the central bank recently held its meeting on February 3 to February 5, 2021 to discuss the current macroeconomic financial developments in India. The committee highlights that, the Inflation in last two months was better than expected. Inflation has come down to the Upper tolerance level of 6

percent for the first time since covid-19 pandemic breakdown. Committee also highlights that, factors that could change the food inflation trajectory include the Good Rabi Crop, Huge Kharif harvest, huge winter supplies of vegetables and soft poultry demand.

25. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently decided to set up an expert committee on Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs). The committee would involve all the stakeholders so as to provide a medium-term road map. The medium-term roadmap in turn will help to strengthen the sector. It will also enable the faster rehabilitation or resolution of UCBs. The committee will also examine other critical aspects related to these entities.

26. The Governor of Reserve Bank of India, Shaktikanta Das, recently announced that the central bank will set up a 24*7 helpline platform in order to strengthen the digital payment services in India. This announcement was made through the Statement on Development and Regulatory policy. RBI has come up with many safety and security features apart from the measures to redress the grievances of the users in the past as well. This announcement will further enhance the digital payments experience of users in India.

27. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced that it will integrate the consumer grievances redressal under a single ombudsman as opposed to the three grievance redressal schemes working at present. Currently, there are dedicated ombudsman schemes for the consumer grievance redressal in the banking, non-bank finance companies and digital transactions. Now, the bank has decided to integrate the three Ombudsman schemes. The central bank has also operationalized the complaint management system (CMS) portal as a one stop solution. This portal will be used for the alternate dispute resolution of the customer complaints which are not resolved by regulated entities.

28. The National Horticulture Fair will start on February 8, 2021. It is a five-day event that will be organised at the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) campus. People from all across India will also participate the event virtually. It is

an autonomous organization. It is engaged in doing the basic, strategic, anticipatory and applied research on various aspects of horticulture. It is headquartered in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The institute is a subsidiary of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). It works under the nodal head of the Ministry of Agriculture.

29. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) will launch the data analytics-driven MCA21 Version 3.0 by October 2021 in the financial year 2021-22. It is the e-governance initiative that was launched by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. This project is one among the 31 Mission Mode Projects of the National e-Governance Plan. This project was launched because in 2002, the Ministry has faced the problem to provide services to around 7.5 lakh corporate entities. For that matter, huge paperwork was required to be done. Number of documents held were increasing constantly. Thus, this project was launched to ease the task of the ministry. National Institute for Smart Government (NISG) is the body that does the task of managing the bid process. It is being implemented by Tata Consultancy Services under the Build Own Operate and Transfer (BOOT) model.

30. The Central government has allocated Rupees 16,000 crores for the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) for the upcoming fiscal year 2021-22. This allocation was done in order to boost the safety of farmers' crops. The amount will also ensure that maximum benefit of crop insurance reaches to the farmers. The budgetary amount has increased this year by around ₹ 305 crore as compared to the fiscal year 2020-21.

31. The Business Confidence Index (BCI) was recently published by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER). NCAER is a New Delhi based non-profit economic think tank. The NCAER do research in the field of economics. It was established in the year 1956. Currently, Nandan Nilekani is president of the governing body. The director general of the think tank is Dr Shekhar Shah.

32. Recently, rules have been amended by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to put cap on trans fatty acids (TFAs) in the food products. This decision was taken one

week after it amended the norms for oils and fats. Under the new regulations, in the food products which comprises of the edible oils and fats as an ingredient the total amount of the industrial trans fats should not exceed 2% of the total oils or fats present in the product.

33. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have announced that it will purchase four government securities (G-Secs) that amounts to ₹ 20,000 crore. The central bank will purchase it on February 10, 2021 under the open market operations (OMOs). This move was announced in aftermath of the yields that was moving up to touch the intra-day high of 6.1634 per cent recently. The RBI was concerned about the higher government borrowing.

34. The Union Fisheries Minister Giriraj Singh announced on February 7, 2021 that an investment of ₹ 400 crore will be made in Goa to make this state a fisheries hub of India. This industry in India employs 145 million people. The country ranks second in aquaculture while it is ranked third in the fisheries production. Fisheries sector amounts to 1.07% of the Total GDP of India.

35. In the Union Budget 2021, Rs. 1050 crore budget has been allocated for Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) for the financial year 2021-2022. The Agricultural mechanization is crucial for the agriculture sector because this helps in improving the efficiency and effectivity of the inputs that are used in the crop production. It also helps in increasing the productivity of crops. Thus, this scheme was launched with the objective of increasing the efficiency, effectivity and productivity of the crops.

36. In the Union Budget 2021-2022, total of Rs.913.43 crores have been dedicated to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR). This amount to 32% increase in the revised estimate of budget 2020-21. Out of the Rs. 913.43 crores, Rs.593 crores have been provided under the Scheme Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA). Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. 200 crores has been allocated for scheme-SVAMITVA. For the pilot phase of

the scheme, Budget Outlay of Rs.79.65 crore have been allocated.

37. Recently, a committee was set up by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) on the request of some insurers. The committee has recommended to introduce the index-linked insurance policies (ILIPs). The ILIPs offer a greater transparency. Index-linked products can fit in between the traditional products with less transparency and the Unit-linked products with higher transparency. In the ILIPs the investment risks will be completely borne by the policyholders as in the cases of Unit-Linked products.

38. The Union Minister for Steel, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, said in a written reply in Parliament that the Government has given its approval for inclusion of 'Specialty Steel' under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme. In a deregulated and open market scenario, the domestic steel price is determined through the market forces of demand and supply. It also depends upon the trends in prices of raw materials. The price of the steel is also influenced by the global steel trade conditions.

39. The government of India has set up a Nodal Authority in order to frame the Approved Standardised Deep-Sea Fishing Vessels Design and Specifications (ASDDS). It would help the fisheries departments of states to implement the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). The PMMSY was launched with an estimated investment of Rs 20,050 crores. Out of this amount, an investment of about Rs 12,340 crores is allocated for the beneficiary-oriented activities in Inland fisheries, Marine and Aquaculture. Rs 7,710 crores was allocated for fisheries infrastructure.

40. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched the Financial Literacy Week (FLW) for the year 2021. The literacy week started from February 8 and it will conclude on February 12, 2021. This year, the Financial Literacy week will focus on 'Developing the credit discipline and encouraging availing of the credit from the formal financial institutions as it is required'. During the week, similar activities will be conducted all across the

country. Some special financial literacy programs will also be organized by all the banks and financial literacy centres on the selected subjects.

41. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has announced to launch 'NPCI PayAuth Challenge'. It is a global-level hackathon that will be organised to get the alternatives of the authentication of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions. One such alternative options is the use of biometric while making transactions. NPCI PayAuth Challenge hackathon is supported by APIX. APIX is the first cross-border and open architecture API marketplace of the world besides being a sandbox platform.

42. The New Development Bank (NDB) has announced to invest \$100 million into the NIIF Fund of Funds (FoF). With the NDB's investment of \$100 million, the NIIF FoF has now secured \$800 million in commitments. NDB has joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Government of India (GoI) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) as an investor in the NIIF FoF. The investment by the NDB is the first equity investment by it into India. It is also the first-ever investment into a Fund of Funds by the NDB.

43. India is going to launch its first-ever diesel tractor that has been converted to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) on February 12, 2021. The CNG Tractor will be formally launched by Nitin Gadkari, the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways. The conversion of the Diesel tractor into the CNG tractor was carried out jointly by Rawmatt Techno Solutions and Tomasetto Achille India. The conversion of the diesel to CNG will help the farmers to increase their income. It will lower the costs and help to create job opportunities for the people living in rural India. The CNG tractor will also help the farmer to save more than one lakh rupees on the costs of fuel annually.

44. Goa has become the 6th State in the country that have successfully completed the Urban Local Bodies reforms. These Urban Local Bodies reforms were set up by the Department of Expenditure. Finance Ministry highlighted that the state of Goa will now eligible to mobilise the

additional financial resources of 223 crore rupees with the help of Open Market Borrowings. Apart from Goa, five other states namely Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Manipur and Telangana have already completed the Urban Local Bodies reforms. These five states have also been granted a total additional borrowing permission of ten thousand 435 crore rupees.

45. The Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) have launched a job portal called SAKSHAM to map the skills of workers as required by the MSMEs. It also launched a Seaweed Cultivation Mission. TIFAC highlighted that the Saksham portal will help in eliminating the middlemen and labour contractors. It will also help to identify the skill proficiency level. The portal will also help in the development of skill cards for 'shramiks' (workers).

46. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has announced an increase in the fares of air travel on February 11, 2021. The fare has been increased up to Rs 5,600. The government highlighted that the fare hike was necessitated because of the opening of the aviation market. While, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) said that the fare hike was a routine change. However, the aviation experts are saying the price has been increased due to increase in prices of fuel.

47. The Insurance sector regulator Insurance Regulatory Authority of India (IRDAI) has advised all the Insurance companies to issue digital insurance policies using the government's Digilocker app. Issuance of the policies through the Digilocker app will result in to better customer experience. Using this app, claims processing and settlement of the policies will be faster. This app will also reduce the disputes and reduction in fraud. To promote the of adoption of Digi locker in the insurance sector, IRDAI have advised all the insurers to enable their IT systems so as to interact with Digi locker facility.

48. The Finance Ministry has decided to infuse Rs 3,000 crore capital into the state-owned general insurance companies in the current quarter. This decision was taken in the backdrop of the proposal cleared by the Union Cabinet headed by Prime

Minister Narendra Modi to provide the capital support to National Insurance, United India Insurance and Oriental Insurance. Union cabinet had also decided to increase authorised share capital of the insurers. The share capital had to be increased to Rs 7,500 crore for National Insurance Company Limited (NICL). While, it had to be increased to Rs 5000 crore for each of United India Insurance Company Limited (UIICL) and Oriental Insurance Company Limited (OICL).

49. The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) recently issued orders to make FASTag compulsory at all toll plazas in effect from February 15, 2021 all across India. This decision was taken to promote fee payment using the digital mode, to reduce the waiting time and fuel consumption. It would also provide a seamless passage of vehicles through the fee plazas. In accordance with the NH Fee Rules 2008, If any vehicle which is not fitted with FASTag or vehicle which do not have a valid, functional 'FASTag' will enter into the 'FASTag lane' of the fee plaza will have to pay fee equal to two times the fee which is applicable in that category.

50. The Union Textile Minister, Smriti Irani, has launched the commercial Jute seed distribution scheme on February 15, 2021. The Commercial Jute Seed Distribution Scheme was launched in the backdrop of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Jute Corporation of India and the National Seeds Corporation. The MoU was signed in the year 2020 for the commercial distribution of 1 thousand Metric Tonne certified jute seeds in the year 2021-22. The Union Minister while rolling out the scheme highlighted that the central government has also increased the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Jute in order to help Jute farmers in the country.

51. India has liberalised its regulations on geospatial data starting from February 15, 2021. It has now allowed the private companies to conduct surveying and mapping without getting government approvals in advance. The new policy has allowed to share the data for various applications ranging from the logistics and transport to road safety and e-commerce. Further, the geospatial data generating from government agencies like Survey of India and Indian Space

Research Organisation will be made available to public and private companies. It also restricts the terrestrial mapping and survey to public and private Indian entities.

52. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently released its data on the Bank Credit and Deposits. It refers to the amount of credit which is available for a business or individual from any banking institution. It is credited in the form of loans. Thus, the total amount of money that a person or business can borrow from any bank or the financial institution is called Bank Credit. The bank credit of the borrower depends upon their ability to repay the loans. It also depends upon the total amount of credit available by the banks or financial institutions to lend. Car loans, personal loans and mortgages are the examples of bank credit.

53. The Union telecom ministry has decided to set up an intelligence unit and a consumer protection system. These systems will be set up in the effort to tackle the threats associated with the pesky calls. It would also help in taking strict action against the financial frauds that happens using telecom resources. The union telecom ministry decided to set up such system following a direction from the telecom minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. The minister chaired a high-level meeting to find ways in order to address the rising concerns of consumers regarding the unsolicited messages on mobile phones, harassment through SMS pertaining to loan transactions in fraudulent ways. This move of the government aims to making digital transactions more safe and secure.

54. The Reserve Bank of India revealed the credit default swaps (CDS) and has allowed the retail users to do the transactions in permitted credit derivatives in order to hedge their underlying credit risk. As per the guidelines, the non-retail users will be allowed to do the transactions in credit derivatives for the purpose of hedging as well as other purposes. The person who is resident in India and a non-resident can participate in the market. As per the guideline, the exchanges can offer standardised single-name CDS contracts by specifying guaranteed cash settlement. The commercial papers, listed or unlisted rated rupee corporate bonds, Unrated bonds issued by the

special purpose vehicles, certificates of deposit and non-convertible debentures of maturity up to 1 year are eligible to be a reference or deliverable obligation in the CDS contract.

55. The government will bring about amendments in the two acts in order to facilitate the privatisation of public sector banks (PSBs). Amendments will be made in the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970 and Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1980. These two acts had facilitated for the nationalisation of banks in two phases. Now, in order to privatise the PSU Banks, provisions of these acts have to be changed.

56. The Ministry of Earth Sciences has asked for suggestions on the Draft Blue Economy Policy for India. The stakeholders such as NGOs, industry, academia and citizens have been asked to submit their inputs and ideas by 27th February 2021. The Draft Blue Economy Policy was created by the government outlining the vision and strategy that can be adopted to utilize the oceanic resources that are available with the country.

57. The Labour Minister, Santosh Gangwar, will launch the software applications for five all India surveys on February 18, 2021. The All-India Survey on Domestic Workers will be carried with the objective of estimating the proportion of Domestic Workers in the workforce coming from across India. The survey will calculate the percentage distribution of these domestic workers and households that employ them.

58. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually launch 'Mahabahu-Brahmaputra' initiative in Assam on February 18, 2021. He will lay the foundation stone for the Dhubri Phulbari bridge. PM will also perform the bhumi puja for the construction of Majuli Bridge in Assam. PM while announcing the details stated that, it will be a landmark day in the development journey for Assam as Mahabahu-Brahmaputra initiative is going to be launched.

59. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has approved the signing of a comprehensive economic cooperation and

partnership agreement (CECPA) between India and Mauritius. This approval was given on February 17, 2021. It is a kind of a free trade agreement between India and Mauritius. This agreement was signed with the aim of liberalising the norms to boost a two-way commerce. This agreement will cover 310 export items for India such as foodstuff & beverages, textile & textile articles, base metals, agricultural products, electricals & electronic items, plastics & chemicals, wood & its articles.

60. The Reserve Bank of India has approved the takeover of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd (DHFL) by Piramal Group on February 18, 2021. The decision was taken by RBI after a month a Committee of Creditors of DHFL voted in favor of Piramal's bid. The bid got the 94 per cent votes. Following this, the resolution plan of the company has been approved by the RBI. Now, the Piramal Group will require to take permission of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) to take over the DHFL.

61. The Indian government has decided to appeal against the international arbitration award of worth \$1.2 billion that was won by Cairn Energy Plc. in tax dispute. India's decision to appeal against the award shows the government's commitment to defend the sovereign rights in taxation. The government has also kept the possibility of a resolution open within the existing Indian laws.

62. The SWAMIH Fund is all set to deliver its first finished apartments in the year 2021. It is a 250-billion-rupee fund set up by Indian government. This fund was created to complete the stalled housing projects. The fund offers a solution of the problem that hindered savings of home buyers and bankrupted developers. The fund will hand over 16 projects comprising of more than 4,000 homes in the financial year 2021-2022. SWAMIH stands for 'Special Window for Completion of Construction of Affordable and Mid-Income Housing Projects'.

63. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has successfully achieved 100 percent cashless toll collection at the National Highway fee plazas in the entire country. All lanes across

the fee plazas on National Highways have been declared as FASTag lanes in effect from February 16, 2021. The roll out of 100 per cent cashless tolling is being positively received by the Highway users. Ever since the FASTag norm was notified, over two lakh 50 thousand tags have been sold.

64. The Union Minister of Road, Transport & Highways, Nitin Gadkari, had launched the 'Go Electric Campaign' on February 19, 2021. This campaign was launched in order to spread awareness with respect to the benefits of Electric Vehicles Charging Infrastructure. The campaign would also raise awareness regarding e-mobility and electric cooking across India. Go Electric campaign is the future of India. It will help in promoting the environmental-friendly, cost-effective and indigenous electric products in the country. While launching the campaign, the power minister, R.K. Singh, also stated that this energy transition is the need of the hour so as to reduce the dependency on the imported fossil fuels. The minister also urged the people to adopt the electric appliances.

65. The Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and the Greenstat Norway signed an agreement to set up the Centre of Excellence on Hydrogen. This agreement was signed some days after India unveiled its national hydrogen mission. The National Hydrogen Mission was unveiled by the Indian government to accelerate their plans to generate the carbon-free fuel from renewable sources. The government has also pledged in the Union Budget for 2021-22 to focus on generating hydrogen from the green power sources.

66. The agriculture ministry was allowed to use drones for the purpose of remote sensing data collection under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). The conditional permission was granted to use the Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Directorate General of Civil Aviation. The RPAS will be used by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoAFW) for remote sensing data collection in the agricultural areas of 100 districts.

67. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has brought the State Bank of Sikkim under its regulation. The state of Sikkim was made an associate state and then given the status of a state at a later stage. It was made a part of India following a referendum in the year 1973. Thus, this state enjoys a special status under article 371F. Following which, Banking Regulation Act 1949 and Companies Act does not extend to Sikkim. It still follows the old laws as per the Article 371F of the Constitution. Further, the central direct taxes are also not extended to Sikkim. As per Sec 10(26AAA) any income arising to the Sikkimese through any source in the State or through the dividend or interest on securities are not included in the total income. The people are also not subject to Income Tax. This, the RBI had limited agreement to manage the public debt of the bank.

68. The state of Uttar Pradesh has become the first Indian State that has tabled the paperless budget. The State finance minister, Suresh Khanna presented the State Budget for 2021-2021 on February 22, 2021 in the paperless mode. The members of the State Legislature were provided with the iPads so as to keep a tab on the budget highlights. Budget highlights were also displayed on two big screens in the house. Budget document was also made available on the budget App of the Uttar Pradesh named as "Uttar Pradesh Sarkar Ka Budget". This app can be downloaded from the Google Play Store.

69. Mumbai will start the first undersea tunnel of India in 2023 which is being constructed as part of Coastal Road project of Mumbai. Two tunnels will be built under the Mumbai Coastal Road Project. The tunnel will have the length of 2.07 km out of which 1 kilometre portion will be under the sea. It is the first undersea road tunnel in India. It will pass through Arabian Sea near Girgaon Chowpatty. The tunnel will start from the Priyadarshani Park and will terminate at the Netaji Subhash Road in Marine Drive.

70. The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) have signed an MoU to promote the Export-Oriented Marine Product. The MoU was signed in order to synergise the programmes related to export-

oriented capture and culture in fisheries sectors and other allied sectors. It was signed by the chairman of MPEDA, KS Srinivas and the managing director of NCDC, Sundeeep Kumar Nayak.

70. The Central government has launched the 'National Urban Digital Mission' on February 23, 2021. The National Urban Digital Mission was launched by the Union Housing & Urban Affairs Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri and Minister of Electronics & IT, Ravi Shankar Prasad. While launching the mission, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry (MoHUA) stated that, this mission will institutionalise the citizen-centric and ecosystem-driven approach for the urban governance and service delivery in cities by the year 2022. It will also be providing these service deliveries in all cities and towns by 2024.

71. The Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot, led Congress government presented its third state budget and the first paperless budget on February 24, 2021 in the state assembly. The Chief minister holds the finance portfolio and he finalised the budget on February 23, 2021. The state legislative assembly of Rajasthan is the unicameral legislature. This assembly meets at the Vidhan Bhavan in Jaipur. The members of the state Legislative assembly are directly elected by the people. They are elected for a term of 5 years. Currently, the legislative assembly is comprising of 200 members.

72. The Union Cabinet has approved the production-linked Incentive scheme for IT Hardware on February 24, 2021. The PLI scheme proposes an incentive to boost the domestic manufacturing. It also proposes to attract large investments in value chain of IT Hardware. The proposed scheme includes the target segments like tablets, laptops, all-in-one PCs and servers. Total cost of the proposed scheme is around Rs.7,350 crore for 4 years.

73. The finance ministry has allowed all the private sector banks to participate in business related to government such as small savings schemes and collection of taxes pension payments. Currently, only some of the big private sectors are allowed to conduct government-related

businesses. So, now embargo has been lifted and this move will enhance the customer convenience and simulate the competition. It will also simulate the higher efficiency in standards of customer services.

74. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has set up the working group committee so as to relook its information and security guidelines. The need to set up the panel was felt in the aftermath of exponential increase in cyberattacks across the world amid the ongoing covid-19 pandemic. The economic situation particularly the financial sector has seen an exponential increase in cyber-attacks amid the pandemic. The rising threat of the cyberattacks has necessitated the Regulators to relook into the Cyber Security Guidelines.

75. Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) and Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on February 25, 2021. The MoU was signed and is now in the force for data exchange between both the organisations. It was signed by Joint Secretary of MCA, Shri Manoj Pandey and the ADG of CBIC, Shri B. B. Gupta. MoU comply with the vision of both the organisation to harness the data capabilities so as to ensure effective enforcement. With the signing of the MoU, MCA and CBIC will benefit from getting access to each other's databases.

76. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) has launched a standard personal accident cover called Saral Suraksha Bima. This accident cover will be mandatorily offered by the general and health insurers from April 1, 2021. This product has assured maximum sum of Rs 1 crore while the minimum assured sum of Rs 2.5 lakh. Beyond this specified range, insurers are free to offer the sum assured on their own. For such sum assured, same name can be given if all terms and conditions are same. The product also comprises of a basic cover for which entire sum assured will be paid by the insurance company after the death of insured person because of injury sustained in accident. In such cases, death occurs within 12 months from the date of accident.

77. The Ministry of consumer affairs had decided to integrate the Common Service Centres (CSCs) with the E-Daakhil portal to facilitate the consumers for e-filing. This online grievance redressal portal is now operational in 15 States and Union Territories. The e-daakhil portal empowers the consumer and their advocates to file consumer complaints online. It also facilitates to make payment of requisite fees online from anywhere in order to redress their complaints. The portal also facilitates the consumer commissions to scrutinize the complaints online to accept, reject or forward any complaint to the concerned commission in order to proceed further.

78. A Currency and Finance (RCF) report by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) official has recommended that, the time span that was considered to measure whether monetary policy-setting panel has failed in achieving its objectives or not should be of four quarters rather than

current time period of three-quarter. However, RBI made it clear that the report does not represent any institutional view with respect to it. The report also recommends that roll the terms for the members in six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in order to moderate the political influence at the place of current appointments for the fixed term.

79. The National Statistical Office (NSO) recently released its data on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the financial year 2021. As per the NSO, the Indian economy will be expanded by 0.4% in the December quarter. Thus, with this, the economy will be emerged from the recession which was induced by the covid-19 pandemic. The report also highlights that, the recovery of the economy is expected to strengthen because the vaccination programme in India is progressing smoothly. Because of this, public has gained the confidence to shop, dine out and travel.

Science & Technology

1. The SpaceX of Elon Musk has recently announced to launch its first all civilian mission to the space. The SpaceX is planning for the launch of Inspiration4 on Falcon 9. This would be the first all-commercial astronaut mission in the world. The spacecraft will start orbiting in the fourth quarter of this year. The mission will be launched from the Launch Complex 39A at the NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

2. Recently, a team of researchers led by David Baker, who is the professor of biochemistry and director of the Institute for Protein Design at UW Medicine, have created a new protein-based biosensor that will detect the Coronavirus. The protein-based biosensors will detect the proteins that make up the pandemic coronavirus. It would also help in detecting the antibodies against it. The biosensor will glow when mixed with components of the virus or specific COVID-19.

3. Recently, the launch vehicle Stardust 1.0 was launched from a former military base in US called Loring Commerce Centre. The launch of the vehicle is significant in the light that this is the 1st

commercial space launch that is powered by biofuel. Launching the Stardust 1.0 is also significant for Maine because, it is the first commercial rocket launch for the state. The launch vehicle will be used to launch the small satellites called CubeSats into space. The satellite will be launched in less toxic and relatively cheaper manner as opposed to the traditional rocket fuel

4. The Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) Council recently held its meeting. During the meeting, the council has approved the setting up of the world's largest radio telescope. Astronomers use the radio telescopes ever since the discovery of the radio signals in the 1930s. They used it to detect the radio waves emitting from different objects in the universe. However, the field of radio astronomy got evolved after the World War II.

5. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) will launch the data analytics-driven MCA21 Version 3.0 by October 2021 in the financial year 2021-22. It is the e-governance initiative that was launched by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. This project

is one among the 31 Mission Mode Projects of the National e-Governance Plan. This project was launched because in 2002, the Ministry has faced the problem to provide services to around 7.5 lakh corporate entities. For that matter, huge paperwork was required to be done. Number of documents held were increasing constantly. Thus, this project was launched to ease the task of the ministry. National Institute for Smart Government (NISG) is the body that does the task of managing the bid process. It is being implemented by Tata Consultancy Services under the Build Own Operate and Transfer (BOOT) model.

6. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has released the first images of the glacier burst that happened in the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. The glacial burst has so far caused 32 lives. After the incident, more than hundred people are still missing. Scientists are still investigating about the reason for the glacial burst or the avalanche or the release of the accumulated water. But the experts are pointing that climate change can be blame. This is so because, the warming temperatures is resulting into the shrinking of glaciers across the world.

7. A Chinese spacecraft named Tianwen-1 has successfully entered the orbit around Mars on February 10, 2021. Tianwen-1 is an interplanetary mission by the China National Space Administration (CNSA). Under the mission, the CNSA sent a robotic spacecraft to Mars. The spacecraft consists of an orbiter, a deployable camera, a lander and a rover. The spacecraft was successfully launched on July 23, 2020 from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site. It was launched from a Long March 5 heavy-lift launch vehicle. The spacecraft has been named Tianwen-1 means "Questions to Heaven" following the Chinese poem that was written two millennia ago. It is China's first independent MARS mission after its probe that was co-launched with Russia failed in the year 2011.

8. The astronomers have discovered a concentration of smaller black holes in the cluster NGC 6397. Small black holes were discovered instead of one massive black hole at the heart of the cluster. The Globular clusters are a dense stellar system that host the closely packed stars.

Such systems are typically very old. For instance, the cluster NGC 6397 is as old as the universe. NGC 6397 cluster is located around 7,800 light-years away.

9. Indian Astronomers have detected one of the strongest optical flares in one of the oldest astronomical objects that is supermassive black hole or blazar called BL Lacertae. Blazars are the feeding supermassive black holes situated in the heart of distant galaxies. The blazars receive a lot of attention due to their complicated emission mechanism. They emit jets of charged particles. The jets travel equally at the speed of light. They are the one among the most luminous and energetic objects found in the Universe.

10. A new artificially intelligent "mathematician" which is called as the "Ramanujan Machine" have the potential to reveal the hidden relationships between numbers. Ramanujan machine comprises of the algorithms that seek out the mathematical conclusions. These mathematical conclusions are likely to be true but have not been proved. The set of algorithms has been named after the Indian mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan. The new AI mathematician has been designed to pull out promising mathematical patterns from large sets of potential equations.

11. The Pi Beam, which is an IIT Madras-incubated start-up, recently launched the electric two-wheeler called 'PiMO'. Pi Beam has set an aim of selling 10,000 vehicles by the end of financial year 2021-22. The bike was founded by an IIT Madras Alum Visakh Sasikumar. 100 customers have already pre-booked the e-bike. The e-bike stands between an electric bicycle and the entry-level electric scooter. It has a top speed of 25 kmph. The e-bike provided a higher travel range when compared to the electric bicycle category. The bike also offers a Battery Swapping' Technology.

12. The National Informatics Centre (NIC) has launched an app called Sandes. This instant messaging platform is similar to WhatsApp. It can be used for any type of communications by anyone. It requires a mobile number or an email id to get registered with the app. The need to launch the app was felt to ensure a secure communication

between the employees because the "Work from Home" culture has gained the momentum in the backdrop of nationwide lockdown that was imposed in March 2020 amid the spread of Covid-19.

13. The Hyundai Motor Group have designed a walking car concept robot. It is being called as TIGER which stands for transforming intelligent ground excursion robot. The robot comprises of the wheels having capability to adapt to navigate in the challenging terrain. The ultimate mobility vehicle (UMV) uses its ability to walk when it gets stuck or when required to travel in the difficult terrain not only on Earth but on other planets as well.

14. The science rover Perseverance of NASA landed on the Red Planet (MARS) on February 18, 2021. This rover is the most advanced astrobiology laboratory that has been ever sent another planet. It will firstly search the traces of ancient microbial life on the Planet. The rover sailed through space for nearly seven months. It covered the distance of 293 million miles or 472 million km before entering to the Martian atmosphere. It entered the MARS with a speed of 12,000 miles per hour or 19,000 km per hour.

15. The United States space agency, NASA, released the first audio from Mars on February 22, 2021. It was a faint crackling recording of the wind that was captured by Perseverance rover.

NASA has also released the first video of landing of the rover. The rover is on a mission to search if there is any sign of past life on the MARS (RED Planet). The rover sent a high-definition video clip of about three minutes and 25 seconds. Video shows deployment of a red-and-white parachute having 70.5-foot-wide canopy.

16. Recently, a study was published in the journal *Frontiers in Microbiology* that some microbes that are found on Earth might temporarily survive on the Mars. This study is significant for the success of future MARS missions. The endurance of the microorganisms was tested by the researchers from NASA and German Aerospace Center. It was tested by launching them into stratosphere which represents some the key conditions of the Red Planet. New way to expose bacteria and fungi on Mars-like conditions has been tested by using a scientific balloon to carry the experimental equipment up to stratosphere.

17. The countdown for the launch of Indian Space Research Organisation's PSLV-C 51 or Amazonia-1 mission started on February 27, 2021. The countdown began 8:54 am. PSLV-C51 is scheduled to be launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. It will be launched from the space centre on February 28, 2021 at 10:24 pm. This is the 53rd Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle mission of the ISRO.

Government Schemes

1. The Finance minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, announced a Rupees 3.05 trillion electricity distribution reform programme while presenting the Union Budget 2021. The electricity distribution programme will help in reducing the losses and improve the efficiency of electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs). A framework that allows a choice of electricity supplier to consumers was also announced during the budget presentation.

2. The Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, has announced two new centrally sponsored scheme namely, the PM AatmaNirbhar

Swasth Bharat Yojana and the Mission Poshan 2.0 while presenting the Union Budget 2021. As per the announcement, a new centrally sponsored scheme called PM Aatma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana will be launched. Further, an outlay of Rs. 64,180 crores for over 6 years have been announced for the PM Aatma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana. This was announced in addition to the National Health Mission (NHM).

3. Recently, the Maritime body MUI urged the government to take cognisance of "Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change" in order to formulate the Maritime India

Vision 2030. The "Maritime India Vision 2030" will be formulated by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways of India. The Neptune Declaration was signed by more than 450 organizations. The declaration highlights the main actions that are required to be taken in order to resolve the crew change crisis.

4. The Chief Minister of Punjab, Captain Amarinder Singh, has launched the 'Har Ghar Pani, Har Ghar Safai' mission virtually. This mission is the part of the government's campaign to complete the goal of 100 per cent potable piped water supply in all rural households by March 2022. Captain Amarinder Singh also inaugurated one Mega Surface Water Supply Scheme. The scheme will benefit 1.6 lakh residents from across the 155 villages in Amritsar, Tarn Taran, and Gurdaspur districts.

5. The Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, while presenting the Union Budget 2021 has announced that the government has put forward the proposed to launch a portal to formulate social security scheme for the workers of the India's gig economy. The framework for the scheme will be formulated by collecting the relevant information on gig workers and the the migrant workers population. This announcement has been made ahead of the implementation of labour codes.

6. Kerala is going to open its first Human Milk Bank (HMB) on February 5, 2021. This is a state-of-art facility that will be opened at the Ernakulam general hospital by the Health Minister of Kerala, KK Shailaja. The milk bank is being set up with the support of the Rotary Club of Cochin Global. The milk bank will ensure the availability of the breast milk for new-born babies who are not breastfed by their own mothers who are sick or deceased or due to insufficient production of breast milk.

7. The NITI Aayog has recently released its plan for Little Andaman. The plan is named as "Sustainable Development of Little Andaman Island Vision Document". It has been planned for the sustainable and holistic development of the island in Andaman and Nicobar. The Little Andaman is a 680 sq km fragile Island in the Andaman and Nicobar island group. The fragile

environment of the island has raised alarm among conservationists. The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, also declared in the year 2020 that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands will be developed as a "maritime and start-up hub". The document by NITI Aayog has been formulated in that context only.

8. The PGIMER, Chandigarh has launched its 'PGI Amputee Clinic' which is also the first such clinic in India. The launch of the clinic is a collective effort of various experts and departments of the institute who seeks to provide social, mental and physical support to the patients. The clinic was inaugurated by the PGIMER Director Prof. Jagat Ram. The clinic was set up to improve the amputation patient care by providing them a host of services under one roof and with significant coordination.

9. The chief minister of Maharashtra has launched a scheme to boost the start-up ecosystem in Maharashtra. Apart from that, the government has also proposed to set up an international standard Center for the Skill Development in Mumbai. Further, to boost the skill development courses in ITIs are also being updated in a timely manner. Recently, the state was ranked second in the India Innovation Index released by the NITI AAYOG.

10. A domestic manufacturing programme for critical power and renewable energy equipment will be launched by the ministry of Power in the Financial Year 2021. The programme has at an outlay of Rs 1,500 crore. In September 2020, the Union power ministry had released a list 80 items which are imported despite having sufficient domestic capacity. Thus, these facilities are being set up with the aim of setting up the manufacturing of new-age equipment which are not available in Indian market. Further, after the border clashes with China in Galwan valley of Ladakh, the Ministry of Power has also announced the import restrictions on equipment that are used for 'power supply systems and network' because of security threat and cyber-attacks. Thus, the setting of such facilities becomes significant.

11. The Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of State for Jal Shakti Rattan

Lal Kataria, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Animal Husbandry Minister Giriraj Singh have jointly launched a unified web portal. This web portal will be used for monitoring the progress of GOBARDHAN activities in India. This scheme was launched by the Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation GOBAR-DHAN scheme stands for Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources – DHAN scheme. This scheme is the part of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin). The scheme has its focus on keeping the villages clean, increasing the income of rural households. It also seeks to generate energy from cattle waste.

12. The redevelopment work of the central vista avenue has started with the Bhoomi Pujan ceremony. Central Vista Avenue is the area surrounding Rajpath. The Bhoomi Pujan was performed by the Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Singh Puri. The area was retained by the Government of India after independence. Because of safety concerns proposals for new structures started coming to forth after independence. In the line, the landscape of the Central Vista Avenue was altered after Independence. In 1980s, new rows of trees were also added. Further, in order to improve the north-south connectivity a new road Rafi Ahmad Kidwai Marg was constructed.

13. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MOHUA) and Zomato have signed a MoU under the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNidhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme. The MoHUA also signed a MoU with the Swiggy to empower Street Food Vendors with digital technology. It was also signed with the objective of facilitating the greater income earning opportunities to the street-vendors through these food-tech platforms.

14. The third phase of Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar mela is set to be held in Guwahati on February 6, 2021. The event will be attended by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The Assam government will be distributing the financial assistance of 3 thousand rupees to each of 7.5 lakh people who belongs to tea garden areas. The financial assistance would be provided under the Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar scheme. Recently, the Morigaon district administration in

Assam has distributed the allotment letters to 1,478 beneficiaries under the scheme.

15. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has informed to the parliament that the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana which is central government's maternity benefit scheme has crossed 1.75 crore eligible women till the financial year 2020. The central government initial estimate states that the government had the aim of covering 51.60 lakh women per year under the scheme. As per the written reply to the Parliament, sum total of ₹ 5,931.95 crore has been paid to the 1.75 crore eligible beneficiaries in the financial year 2018 to 2020.

16. The Uttar Pradesh government has introduced a system of issuing a unique 16-digit Unicode on February 7, 2020. This Unicode will be used to mark all kinds of landholdings in the state. The Unicode numbers for the land would comprise of the 16 digits. The first six digits is based on the population of the land. Next 4 digits in the line would determine the unique identity of the land. Digits from 11 to 14 would be the number of divisions of the land. Lastly, 2 digits would contain the details regarding the category. With the help of the last 2 digits, the category of the land viz. residential, agricultural and commercial land can be identified.

17. The Ministry of Education has decided that the Schools and hostels under the Samagra Shiksha scheme will now be renamed after Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The renaming of the scheme will help to create awareness regarding the facility of these residential schools and hostels in difficult areas. The residential facilities are provided under the scheme to the migrant and child labour rescued children. It is also provided to the children who got separated from their families and those who are without adult protection. So far, a total of 1,063 residential facilities including the 383 residential schools and 680 hostels have been sanctioned to states and union territories under the scheme.

18. As per data submitted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in the Parliament, the number of beneficiaries under the government's Anganwadi programme has declined

in the number of by nearly two crores. It is a kind of rural child care centre in India. These centres were started by the Indian government in the year 1975. The centres were established under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program to combat the child hunger and malnutrition.

19. The Government of India has launched a new Central Sector Scheme called the "Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Produce Organizations (FPOs)". The scheme has been launched with a clear strategy and committed resources in order to form and promote 10,000 new FPOs across India. For the making of FPOs, Rs 6865 crore have been allocated. The scheme has been launched because, the agriculture sector plays a crucial role in economic development and Nation building. The country is also be at the forefront in the development of agriculture across the world.

20. The Union Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, inaugurated 57,000 water structures under the "Jalabhishekam Water Conservation Campaign" on February 11, 2021 virtually from New Delhi. The Defence Minister highlighted that the 'Jalabhishekam' Campaign is fulfilling the aim of 'water for every farm and work for every hand'. The campaign would be helpful in the betterment of the villages. More than 57000 water structures were constructed during COVID era. The constriction work for the water structure was carried by linking it with the MNREGA scheme.

21. The second phase of Vigyan Jyoti programme was started on February 11, 2021. It was started on the occasion of International Day of Women and Girls in Science. The Vigyan Jyoti Programme will spread the programme to encourage the girls to take interest in science. It would improve by learnings of the past one year and will be expanded to more districts in country in order to empower the women.

22. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship recently rolled out the Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF) programme in all the districts India. The ministry of skill development has also joined hands with Kerala Institute of Local Administration so as to conduct

the capacity building programmes for district officials from the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry and Lakshadweep. The ministry highlighted that, this fellowship programme along with the recent launch of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 3.0 and other academic partnerships with IITs, IIMs, KILA and GIZ-IGVET under the SANKALP scheme will help in empowering the districts and ensure the demand-driven skilling.

23. The ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment will release the third edition of the Indian Sign Language (ISL) Dictionary on February 17, 2021. The new edition will comprise of 10,000 terms of daily. It will also include the academic, legal, medical technical, administrative and agricultural terms in it. The launch of the ISL dictionary is a step towards fulfilling needs of hearing and speech impaired in accordance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016. It also complies with the initiative by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) called "Accessible Digital Textbooks for All". The ISL will be essential in enhancing the vocabulary and the capabilities to understand concepts of the impaired.

24. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has launched a Pilot Pey Jal Survekshan. This was launched under the Jal Jeevan Mission- Urban (JJM-U). The mission also complements the Jal Jeevan Mission (Rural) that was launched to ensure the supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every household in rural areas. It will provide Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) in the rural areas by 2024.

25. The Union Health Minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan, has launched the Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0. The mission will be conducted in two rounds. The first round will start from February 22, 2021 while the second phase will start from March 22, 2021. It will run across 250 districts or urban areas across the 29 States or Union Territories. Apart from that, the Minister also launched the IMI 3.0 portal and released Operational Guidelines for it.

26. The Union Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan has launched a new scheme that integrates the Passport services with

the Digi Locker. With the launch of this scheme, the passport application in India had now been made even easier. Now the applicants can benefit from the DigiLocker platform while applying to passport-related services from anywhere in India. The new scheme would provide link to the specific documents of the applicants while applying for passport that they have uploaded in the Digilocker.

27. The Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan, has launched the operational guidelines to Integrate the Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) with National Programme for Prevention & Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS). It is an abnormal condition where fat accumulate in liver in the absence of secondary causes of fatty liver including the viral hepatitis, alcohol use or medications. It is a serious health concern as it encircles a spectrum of liver abnormalities. It can lead to more advanced liver abnormalities like non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), cirrhosis or Liver cancer from a simple non-alcoholic fatty liver or simple fatty liver disease.

28. The Central government has launched the 'National Urban Digital Mission' on February 23, 2021. The National Urban Digital Mission was launched by the Union Housing & Urban Affairs Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri and Minister of Electronics & IT, Ravi Shankar Prasad. While launching the mission, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry (MoHUA) stated that, this mission will institutionalise the citizen-centric and ecosystem-driven approach for the urban

governance and service delivery in cities by the year 2022. It will also be providing these service deliveries in all cities and towns by 2024.

29. The flagship scheme of the central government, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN) has completed its two years on February 24, 2021. The scheme was launched at Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. The scheme was launched with the objective of PM of augmenting the income of the farmers by giving all the landholding farmer's family an income support all across the country. Under this scheme, an amount of 6000 rupees per year is transferred to the bank accounts of farmers directly.

30. The Union Cabinet has approved the production-linked Incentive scheme for IT Hardware on February 24, 2021. Currently in India, laptops of worth Rs 30,000 crore and tablets worth Rs 3,000 crore are sold in India. Out of them, 80 per cent of are imported. Thus, this new PLI scheme was launched with which, government hopes to pull the top 5 global companies to India which controls 50 per cent of the international market.

31. The Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, Manish Sisodia, announced that all departments of Delhi government will now use only electric vehicles. This transition to the electric vehicles will be done within 6 months. The Delhi government has over 2,000 cars in use. The minister is of the view that this decision will inspire other cities in the country as well as world which is a key decision to tackle the issues like pollution and climate change.

Awards & Honours

1. The Bangladesh Authorities recently moved around 1,750 Rohingya Muslims to a controversial island in the Bay of Bengal called the "Bhashan Char Island". This move by Bangladesh was opposed by the refugees already living on the island. The island is also known as Char Piya. It is in Hatiya Upazila, Bangladesh. The island is located in the Bay of Bengal at about 6 kilometres from Sandwip island and 60

kilometres from the mainland. It has an area of 40 square kilometres.

2. The Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama have recently launched his new book "The Little Book of Encouragement". The book comprises of 130 quotes. The book has been edited by Renuka Singh while published by Penguin Random House. The Dalai Lama while launching the book highlighted that, he is one among more than seven

billion human beings who are alive today amid the COVID-19 pandemic. So, he has committed to promote the human happiness.

3. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has recently extended the last date for submission of nomination for Nari Shakti Puraskar-2020. The last date has been extended till February 6, 2021. Nari Shakti Puraskar are conferred every year on the occasion of International Women's Day. The award is conferred by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It is conferred for recognizing the exceptional work done by individuals in the area of empowering the women. The Nari Shakti Puruskar is awarded to individuals or groups or NGOs or institutions.

4. The year-long Birth Centenary celebrations of legendary classical singer Pandit Bhimsen Joshi will begin on February 04, 2020. The Rithwik Foundation for performing arts also organised a two-day event in Mumbai to commemorate the timeless legacy of the great musical maestro. The event to celebrate the Birth Centenary is named as "SwarBhaskar 100". The event will start with Jayateerth Mevundi's rendition of some compositions of the Pandit Bhimsen Joshi. Apart from this event, Arya Sangeet Prasarak Mandal also organised a musical programme called 'Abhivadan'. This was organised at the Ganesh Kala Krida Manch in Pune.

5. The SERB Women Excellence Award was announced on the occasion of International Day of Women and Girls in Science 2021. Four young women fellows from the National Science Academies have been awarded for excelling in science and engineering. The SERB Women Excellence Award will provide them a grant of Rs. 15 lakhs. The grant would be provided for a period of three years to the awardees in order to pursue their research ideas.

6. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually lay the foundation stone of the Maharaja Suheldev Memorial on February 16, 2021. Apart from that, the foundation stone for the development work of Chittaura Lake in Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh will also be laid down. Chief Minister of UP Yogi Adityanath and

Governor Anandiben Patel will also be attending the virtual event. The project comprises of the installation of the equestrian statue of Maharaja Suheldev and development of various tourist amenities including a guest house, cafeteria, and the children's park.

7. S. Theodore Baskaran who is a writer, a historian, a naturalist and an activist has won the Sanctuary Lifetime Service Award, 2020. The award was instituted by the Sanctuary Nature Foundation. Theodore Baskaran was chosen for the award in the light of his dedication to the wildlife conservation. He won the award for his writing prowess in English and Tamil contributing towards the conservation discourse. He was also chosen for the award in the backdrop of inspiring the young naturalists.

8. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Arbor Day Foundation have recently recognized Hyderabad as a 2020 Tree City of World. Hyderabad was selected for the recognition following its commitment to grow and maintain the urban forests. This recognition was a testament for city's sustained and institutional efforts of planting, nurturing and celebrating trees. It also marks the development of the urban and peri-urban forestry actions, projects besides the strategic planning & commitment of building healthy city.

9. The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Prakash Javadekar, inaugurated the Atal Paryavaran Bhavan at Lakshadweep on February 19, 2021. While inaugurating the Atal Paryavaran Bhavan, the minister said that, Lakshadweep will undergo a comprehensive development that too without compromising the UT's commitment to nature. The minister attended high level meetings with the Secretaries of various departments in UT's administration. He will also attend programmes at Suheli, Kadmat and Bangaram islands and evaluate major innovative initiatives of the Forest and Environment Department of the Union Territory.

10. An Indian social activist, Anjali Bhardwaj, who works on issues of transparency and accountability has been selected for the "United

State International Anti-Corruption Champions Award" along with the other 11 anti-corruption champions. These names were announced by Joe Biden administration. Biden administration is of

the view that, these issues can be tackled only by working in coordination with the committed partners.

Sport

1. Manika Batra has won the 82nd Senior National Table Tennis Championship. She beaten Reeth Rishya by 8-11, 10-12, 11-1, 11-9, 11-5, 11-6 at the Tau Devi Lal Sports Complex in Panchkula. Batra will now compete at two WTT Contender events which will start on February 28. This will be followed by the World Olympic qualifiers and Asian Olympic qualifiers in Doha which is scheduled for March 14 and 18 respectively.

2. The chief minister of Karnataka, BS Yeddyurappa, announced that Karnataka will be hosting the second Khelo India University Games (KIUG) in the year 2021. The Khelo India University Games will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Games will be held in the Jain University and other venues of the state. Jain University will organise the games in collaboration with the Association of Indian Universities (AIU).

3. The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, has inaugurated the world's largest Stadium at Motera,

in Gujarat on February 24, 2021. The Motera stadium was later renamed as the Narendra Modi Stadium. This stadium has surpassed the Melbourne Cricket Ground and became the largest stadium in the world. This stadium is going to make history by hosting the second home pink-ball test match on February 24 between India and England.

4. The second edition of the Khelo India Winter Games began at Gulmarg in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on February 26, 2021. This is a five-day event and will conclude on March 2, 2021. It is a national level multidisciplinary grassroot winter games in India. The winter events comprise of the snow rugby, snow skiing, snow ice stock, snow baseball, snow shoe, ice hockey, snow mountaineering, figure skating and speed skating. The Khelo India Winter Games was started in the year 2020 following the success of multiple editions of Khelo India Youth Games.

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- #1 [Aptitude MCQ](#)
- #2 [Reasoning MCQ](#)
- #3 [English MCQ](#)
- #4 [GK MCQ](#)
- #5 [Computer Fundamental MCQ](#)